in rehearsal communities. They are places where the love of God is tested, explored, experienced, proved; places where it has room to grow. This must govern all our study of the Old Testament, for the Old Testament is precisely about this: a place and time where God's love was revealed, explored, tested, and for all the failure did in fact take root in men's hearts.

New Testament Studies

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It may be no accident that the examiners in the Honour School of Theology at Oxford commonly find that the worst performance in the examination is in the paper on the Four Gospels. If this is a symptom that candidates approach that paper with a certain diffidence, it is not too difficult to find an explanation. For among all the subjects which are usually included under the term 'theology', the study of the New Testament and in particular the study of the gospels is the one where the committed Christian is likely to find both his chief joys and his deepest sorrows. We hope to indicate the joys before we have finished, but we shall begin with the sorrows.

I ought to modify my statement about the peculiarly difficult nature of New Testament studies for the committed Christian by limiting it mainly to those who are of historical or literary bent. The more philosophically minded student will find his toughest challenge in the questions of natural theology. But Christianity being the religion that it is, no seriously inquiring Christians can evade the questions: What exactly happened in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and what precisely was the first evaluation of those happenings? If, to put it at its worst, it would be decisively shown that nothing happened or that nothing happened which could bear the weight which St Paul, for example, put upon it, the dogmatic theologian would find the ground moved from beneath his feet and his tower turned to solid ivory.

The study of the gospels constitutes a point of unease not only in the setting of theology in its widest sense but also within the Bible itself.

The student may absorb with equanimity the news that the great narrative of the exodus of Israel from Egypt and her wanderings in the wilderness is really a saga inflated from a quite modest kernal of history. He may not be dismayed to discover that the laws of Moses reflect the laws of Hammurabi and that the religion of Solomon's temple was remarkably like that of other kingdoms of the Ancient Near East. Being partly a Marcionite at heart, he will be able to contemplate without an acute sense of crisis both the results of the severest criticism of the Old Testament and the disentangling of the distinctive features of Israel's religion. If he discovers (and some 'devoutly reared' students still need to discover it, especially if the teaching of divinity was a weak point at their school) that the words of prophet and psalmist were not delivered with specific and intended reference to some act of Jesus at least he can see that the drift of Israel's religion is such that Jesus is a legitimate fulfilment of its hopes and needs.

But if in approaching the Old Testament the student feels a certain detachment, if the range of documents is ample and the span of history wide, in the matter of the New Testament none of these things is true. The number of documents is small and not only so, every one of them raises intractable problems, about which one can hold opinions but scarcely propound final solutions. About none of the authors do we have any reliable independent information: each speaks through his writings alone. Only in the case of St Paul do we have much of a picture of the personality of the man, and in his writings he displays little knowledge of, even interest in, the life and activity of Jesus. The crucial period of history is short—a mere handful of years—but again countless problems arise if we attempt to tell its story. The earliest witness, St Paul, tells us little. There is no outside contemporary evidence about Jesus worth having. The gospels consist of material which has been refracted through a series of prisms before reaching its final form, and to evaluate their effect is a delicate and sensitive task. Above all, the Christian student is anything but detached in approaching the gospels. Here is the record of the incarnate life of the one to whom he has committed his whole allegiance. From his earliest childhood probably, he has listened to sermons and instructions in which the words of Jesus have been quoted as absolute oracles. To say 'Jesus said so-and-so' meant that no further authentication was necessary or argument expected. But now he discovers that the truth is more complicated than he supposed: what appear to be the words of Jesus may be expounded to him as the words of Matthew or John or some indeterminate primitive Christians with a

particular identifiable view-point, even sometimes an axe to grind. Not only his intellectual 'fixed points' are affected but also his habits of prayer. He may have been taught to meditate on gospel incidents. They occurred in the life of Jesus, so they are an authentic manifestation of God and a profitable means of communication with God. How disabling then to discover that one's favourite subjects for discursive meditation are widely held to be perhaps legendary or mythological, or more probably the result of numerous modifications on the way from the life-time of Jesus to the evangelist's pen. Here are sharp blows for which the student is often unprepared by the implicit gospel fundamentalism of school or parish.

I am not concerned for the moment to mention balms which will satisfactorily ease the pain of these considerations: I merely want to show what peculiar and inescapable challenges the student of the New Testament is likely to face. I should go further and say that not only ought he to face them and suffer from them but if he does not he will be refusing to increase his stature. More of that later: already we see that intellectual, pastoral and ascetic problems are closely intertwined, and much pain comes from refusal to recognise this.

It is fair to say that I have painted the picture from the teacher's more experienced view-point. The student is likely to be less coherent about the troubles with which his work afflicts him. Only the cleverest will see where the strains really lie and set out to meet them constructively. Some of course will decide that the Noes have it and that the Christian edifice cannot survive, as far as they are concerned, on such uncertain ground. Many will be too immature to see what faces them. Their personal and intellectual experience is too narrow for them to see much beyond the requirements of next week's essay: one step enough for them! Such men will have no crisis of faith, no deep piety, no vision of the nature of the New Testament or of its place in relation to the faith: it will be simply a series of topics making up one subject among many which the degree examiners demand knowledge of. These students often emerge from their course with a faith and a piety as simple and untroubled as that with which they entered it, and it has never occurred to them that their work had any bearing upon either. They cannot be accused of having wilfully refused a challenge: they never noticed one. There are two types of student, however, in whom there is a positive, though unfortunate, reaction. The first is the one who has been raised in near-fundamentalist conservative evangelical tradition, or who has entered into that tradition. Such a man's religion and devotion will be

entirely founded upon the scriptures. Church and sacraments may well play an important part in practice but they will tend to be under-articulated; and there will be a lack of historical sense in relation to the Church, doctrine and liturgy. Sometimes a 'golden age' will be intruded between the New Testament and our own times, for example the teaching of Calvin or of Cranmer or Jewel or the Book of Common Prayer, invested with special authority. In such a case, where all appears to be threatened by the assault of gospel criticism, the only security turns out to be its rigid exclusion. One can learn what 'some scholars say' but one must not entertain for oneself an atom of their methods or conclusions. It might be supposed that to undertake a course of theological study thus disposed would prove an intolerable strain, with its dismemberment of religion from theology, heart from mind. But commonly it does not turn out so, and there have been cases of men obtaining excellent results in examinations entirely on the basis of what 'some scholars say' but they themselves radically abhor and do not even share by sympathy.

The second type is the man of (Anglo-) Catholic conviction to whom Church and sacraments are the heart of religion and for whom the Bible has tended to play a secondary part. Having taken a look at the difficulties raised by the criticism of the gospels, he is inclined to retire unconcernedly into infantile 'Loisyism': 'As long as we have the faith, Father, and the mass and valid orders, what does it matter whether the gospel stories happened just so?' There is a sense in which his remark could be seen to contain more than a grain of truth, but often it does not emerge from a real struggle with the evidence; rather it is uttered with a shrug, as the student turns away before any battle can begin.

Of course there are those who according to their various lights become fascinated with the problems partly for their own sake and partly too because they see their relevance for both faith and devotion. These are the men of open mind who will keep up their reading after they go down, whose theology will gradually turn out to be integrated with their whole intellectual and spiritual outlook, and who, whether they are very bright or not, will be in a position best to commend the faith to the increasingly educated and 'secular' community within which they will find themselves. The fact that students of this kind are not more common is partly a question of age. As Dr Monica Lawlor showed (in *Theology and the University*), it is difficult for the student of 18 to 20 years old to consider vital matters in terms of degrees of certainty or to tolerate a condition of suspended judgment on important questions: an answer must be found today, this week, and it must be clearly Yes or No. And

if any tutor will not provide it, why then I must have recourse to Pastor X or Father Y whose doctrine is clear and strident and who has no truck with gradations, nuances, ifs and buts. This raises the question of the best age for the study of theology. Partly because of the tools required, but largely because of the complications raised by theology's unique tangle with personal commitment and therefore the greater maturity needed for its satisfactory study, many teachers of the subject prefer their pupils to be graduates in some other discipline. At Oxford as many as half the people taking 'finals' may originally have come to university to read something else and certainly such students appear to profit much more from their course than those who came to it straight from school at eighteen years of age.

In such a course as this conference envisages, all the types of student which I have described would presumably appear, despite the fact that they would be much less interested in the subject as a professional training than most of those at present in our faculties. There will still be those whose religious background seriously inhibits an open, honest study; there will be those for whom it is a faintly interesting subject to be studied for a degree, no more a question of commitment—even though the student may be a Christian—than history or physics; there will be those who thrive under the stimulus provided and see the object of the enterprise, who refuse to divide their experience into separate compartments and grasp new ideas readily.

It may be supposed that in a rather general course, where the subject is one among a number of others, the acute tensions, raised by the study of the gospels in particular, would not be felt. It may indeed be possible to construct a satisfactory syllabus in which that would be the case; and it may be pastorally unwise (if one may raise such considerations) to arouse awareness of deep problems which there is no time to delve into with sufficient thoroughness to show the way to solution; but deliberately to avoid the difficult issues of historicity and variation among the teaching of New Testament writers is to shirk the only path to a real understanding of the nature of these writings and their place in the explication of the faith. If we do not give a right knowledge of what the gospels are and what questions we can legitimately ask of them, we shall leave our pupils with a wrong knowledge; if we do not show the real differences between the outlook of, for example, St Paul and the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, we shall fail to show the richness of either and leave the hazy impression that there is simply a rather platitudinous New Testament doctrine about this or that.

Often to bring to life a particular writer we must sharpen the distinctions as much as we can, as well as showing his relationships. Moreover, only by this purgative exercise will the student learn to discern the essentials of faith. I am thinking particularly of the issue of historicity, a peculiarly acute one for modern man with his strong sense of need for accuracy and factual knowledge. We say that our faith is historically-rooted, depends upon a revelation of God in history. But how much history do we need? How much of what we read in the gospels needs to be 'true' for this claim to be met? All of it, or some of it? And if only some of it, which parts? Nor is it simply a question of the student being led to grade the items of his accepted beliefs which he had previously seen as an undifferentiated list; the shepherds at the nativity alongside the last supper and even the doctrine of the incarnation itself. To do that is not difficult, for it is easy to see how a lapse of forty or fifty years led to incidental legendary growths and modifications in minor stories about Jesus. But there are points at which such a process of grading leads to the casting of doubt upon the historicity of stories which are represented in credal statements: the ascension or the virgin birth or the resurrection. Evidence is produced, of varying weight, for casting doubt upon the historicity of all these items of traditional credal belief.

At this point the student ought to be provoked out of a discerning re-appraisal of *the* faith (seen roughly as a series of beliefs) into a new understanding of faith itself. He ought to realise that if he is really concerned with truth the question of how much history is needed as the minimum for preserving the Christian religion is itself an inadmissable question. The student's first concern—as a Christian—is not to protect the Christian religion, but to discover the truth. He ought then to realise that his concern to protect the Christian religion was not prompted by the altruism of an intellectual crusader but was really a concern to protect his own religion. His question really was a personal one: how much history do I need in the gospels for me to remain a Christian?

Immediately two reflections follow. The first is a realisation of the deep element of insecurity involved in the act and condition of faith in God. The God who revealed himself in Jesus is such that his ways remain inscrutable, his being unfathomable. To learn this aspect of man's relationship with God is necessarily hard and purgative for the Christian used to thinking of 'having faith' as the acceptance of a sure body of knowledge, more vital indeed but analogous to other bodies of knowledge. The student of the New Testament will learn it best, though perhaps with an unnecessary bleakness and pessimism about the histor-

ical value of the gospels, from Rudolf Bultmann. Behind him, he will turn to the extremities of Kierkegaard, and lest he should suppose that this is a modern eccentricity, he will notice that when St Paul, in Romans 6, spoke of baptism, the act of faith, he saw it not as washing only, but as a self-abandonment to the drowning waters. The Lady Julian of Norwich, in chapter 10 of the *Revelations of Divine Love* used the same image to describe the soul's relationship with Christ, and Kierkegaard said faith was like swimming in the ocean with 23,000 fathoms below. Faith is risky: there are no proofs and no undeniable guarantees.

The second reflection is that the student of the New Testament is not self-sufficient. His text will not of itself solve all the questions it raises. If he really digests the fact that faith involves a radical element of insecurity and unprovability because its object is the incomprehensible God, he must next learn to grow in understanding his faith by way of coherence and experience: he will turn to the study of doctrine and of spirituality. In other words, the insecurity, to which his gospel studies have rightly led him, does not leave him speechless. He looks to the Old Testament and then to the single coherent Christian view of God; he examines the nature of man's—his own—inner relationship with God; and he asks what account of the phenomenon of Jesus is consistent with this whole picture. It might be objected that this is to frame the jig-saw around a central piece whose shape is known from the start even if for the sake of the game it is not inserted till the end. But it need not be so: there is a way of looking at reality—the Old Testament would be one witness to it—of which Christ can be seen as the confirmation and the New Testament as the expression.

Nevertheless, I think there is an improper use of this procedure and to my mind Fr Charles Davis, in his contribution to *Theology and the University*, came near to it in a way that seems to me unacceptable. In discussing the role of the biblical theologian in the context of the work of theology as a whole, he says that 'he is not entitled to present something as biblical teaching which is in apparent conflict with the present faith of the Church and say, "Well, that's what the Bible says; it's up to the theologian to solve the problem". No, the solution of the conflict is his business as much as that of the dogmatic theologian . . . The biblicist has no more right than other theologians to go his own way, using as an excuse the exigencies of scientific method.' This seems to me to claim an immunity or an outside frame of reference for the biblical scholar which would not stand a moment's scouting in a modern university nor, more important, in the light of Christian concern for truth. It is

difficult for a man trained to follow where the evidence leads suddenly to divert himself from the path; and if it be held that the magisterium of the Church might be in itself a source of evidence, the argument speedily turns out to be circular. For the magisterium of the Church itself stands as a concept derived from scripture, and it does not claim to enunciate truths which are at variance with scripture.

There can be no inherent reason why the quite revolutionary modern methods of New Testament study should not cast serious doubt on certain hitherto accepted truths. In the case of the Old Testament, this result has slowly won acceptance among almost all Christians in numerous cases; but the New Testament has no privilege in this respect: it is merely that the issues are more crucial, the focus sharper. The doctrines of the virgin birth of our Lord and of the perpetual virginity of Mary are cases in point, and it is difficult (perhaps this is sheer Anglican blindness!) to see how any amount of ecclesiastical authority could nullify decisive New Testament evidence against those beliefs any more than it could declare a straight line to be simultaneously crooked. Of course, the New Testament scholar cannot prove the negative: for example, that the virgin birth did not occur. He might show that the New Testament evidence which has always been taken as its basis is flimsy evidence for the purpose and more satisfactorily explained by other means. At all events, he might be constrained to register an open question, and it would be the task of the dogmatic theologian to consider any implications of this uncertainty for the doctrine of the incarnation.

If I have hovered at considerable length round questions linked with the historicity of the gospels, it is because the quest of the historical Jesus can never be far from the surface of the mind of the modern New Testament student. The phenomenon which presents itself to him is a strange one. On the one side, he can follow with considerable clarity and a reasonable supply of evidence the history of Israel and the development of her religion into the first century A.D. There is no shortage of uncertainties especially about the provenance and dating of some of the literature, but the broad picture is clear. We know what had been happening to Jewry, what Palestine was like, what Jews did and believed about their religion. On the other side, the Church gradually emerges and the picture slowly fills out, with varied degrees of clarity and of course many uncertainties in the interpretation of often meagre evidence. But between the two is, from the point of view of strict evidence, an enigma, attested for us most fully only in documents of forty to seventy years later. And the saving gospel emerges into the world out of its Old

Testament cocoon from a sort of Holy Saturday obscurity. As far as contemporary evidence is concerned, the person of Jesus is hidden from our eyes. We may well feel as Christians that this is providential, for it is only interpreted facts that can be profitable to us for salvation, and the fact that we only have the normative interpretations of the New Testament writers at least saves us from false interpretations into which a closer acquaintance with 'bare facts' would no doubt draw many. Nevertheless, in approaching the obscurity, on purely scholarly grounds we have some resources even on a minimal view of the gospels' factualness and a maximal view of their 'interpretedness'. We are not obliged to discard the use of our commonsense, and the reality of Jesus' words and deeds must have been such as to render credible the interpretation so quickly placed upon him. As much of the gospels as will yield that result must be close to history. The unknowable, faceless Jesus of radical criticism is incredible as the cause of what we certainly know to have occurred as a result of what he was and did and taught.

There is much to be said for beginning a course of New Testament studies not with the gospels but with St Paul. In the first place, he is historically our first sure footing in history when the gospel begins to come into the light of the day. If Jesus may be held to be discernible only through filters—even if one believes them to be of the Holy Spirit—St Paul has the advantage for the student that he speaks for himself. He can be expounded from his own writings, seen as a man dealing with the theological and practical problems within a discernible setting.

In the second place, from an exposition of his writings we can arrive at St Paul's doctrine—his way of regarding God, his way of reacting to and explicating the act of God in Christ and in the Church. There is an advantage in beginning the study of the New Testament with one who is so clearly a theologian as St Paul: the advantage is that the student may be led the more easily to regard even the Evangelists in this way and so hear the more readily what they have to say.

St Paul is helpful not simply because he is a theologian but because he conducts his theology in a particular way. Again, two features of his method, easily identifiable in his work, give a lead for their discernment elsewhere, especially in the gospels where their presence may be often overlooked. I refer first to his use of Old Testament passages to throw light upon the significance of Christ, sometimes with considerable ingenuity and complication, and second to his non-logical way of thought, characterised by brilliant and sometimes quickly changing images whose significance is better seized by a poet's eye than by a

philosopher's mind. How much trouble has come to Christian theology from logically-minded theologians erecting St Paul's images into rational constructions! In both respects he was typically Jewish and in both respects his successors in the New Testament follow him. The student who has the study of the gospels ahead of him can already learn to expect a thoroughgoing and complex influence of the Old Testament within the gospel material. He can also learn to modify his natural literalism and be ready to find in imagery, again usually Old Testament in origin, the key to the evangelist's purpose.

Finally, St Paul will teach the student to get his proportions right. Like St Teresa of Avila who counsels us to meditate chiefly on the passion, the centre of St Paul's devotion and so of his theology is the Lord crucified and exalted. He pays next to no attention to Jesus' birth or to the words and deeds of his life: the bare statements that he was 'born of a woman' and 'descended from David according to the flesh', a few moral instructions and the narrative of the Last Supper—that is all that St Paul will tell us about our Lord earlier than his death. And the credal statement which St Paul quotes as traditional in I Corinthians 15 and which begins with the confession 'that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures' shows that this emphasis was not original to him. It is possible to reduce the force of this fact. One can say that the Pauline corpus is too small for us to build arguments on what he did not choose to include in these few writings. One can say that in those particular writings it was not relevant to his purpose to include gospel-type material which may very well have been in his head. We do not show surprise when a physicist fails to include his formulae in his love letters. One can say that the same lack of interest in the life of Jesus is apparent in the epistle to the Hebrews, in I Peter and I John, but that in the last case at any rate we have in the Fourth Gospel an example of gospel-writing if not from the same at least from a nearby hand. But whatever the mitigations, the fact will stand that the weight of St Paul's doctrinal elaboration of the significance of Jesus lies on his death and resurrection.

To digest this fact is to be well prepared to understand the doctrinal balance of the gospels. The student will be ready to find in St Mark not a biography of Jesus but a passion narrative prefaced by incidents from his life. He will find the words and deeds of Jesus and his prophecy about the end-time presented in the light of the passion; and the passion itself described so that its saving meaning shall be clear. Here is doctrine, not biography; theology, not example for moral life. In the case of St John, a not wholly dissimilar procedure will unlock the door; and when he

comes to St Matthew and St Luke, the student will at least be familiar with the norm from which in their own ways they diverge. He will be ready to swallow the fact that if St Luke did set out to write a life of Jesus, in a sense St Mark whom he used had already shut the door behind him and the task, if ever desirable, if ever possible, was no longer open to him.

It is sometimes a salutary exercise to ask a student to consider what would have happened to our faith if the Gospels had never been written and our scriptural canon were wholly St Paul. Clearly the impoverishment would be enormous and certain great strands in Christian tradition—all that is included under *imitatio Christi* for example—would be absent, but there is a sense in which Christian doctrine itself would have sufficient base. (Perhaps the fact that St Paul himself subscribes to the notion of the imitation of Christ (I Cor 11. 1) is the decisive indication that he knew more and cared more about the deeds and teaching of Jesus than his letters explicitly say!)

From St Paul we turn to the gospels. Thankfully it is no longer the case that the study of the gospels means the literary study of synoptic relationships plus a separate investigation of St John, which alone gets anywhere near to real theology. Certainly the student must learn what use a later evangelist makes of a predecessor; certainly he ought to know the case for as against the existence of a separate source common to St Matthew and St Luke. He ought also to know and recognise the different kinds of material in the gospels: their varied origins and histories, the influence to which they have been exposed in the life of the Church in the years before the writing of the gospels. But, particularly in the kind of course with which we are concerned, all these ought to be subordinate to and contributory to another task: the attempt to understand the mind of the evangelists each in turn. Our students are interested in learning theology; then let them begin with the first Christian theologians of all, those not far from the creative events of our Lord's death and resurrection who first strove to describe those events so as to convey their meaning. Here they will find the seeds of various approaches to God and his act in Christ and Church which have survived and reappeared throughout Christian history. Here they will find a fusion of fact and interpretation with which their minds must wrestle and come to terms; and a union of theology and devotion which will give them the path to an integration of Christian life not always either realised or even thought of by the Christian student.

It should now be fully clear why the study of St Paul is good not only in itself but also as a preparation for the study of the gospels: it teaches

the student to look in the right ways for the most profitable things. He will endeavour, as he learnt in the case of St Paul, to get inside the mind of his writer as he reveals himself in his work. And because he is dealing with Jewish writers whose thinking expresses itself by way of images, he will approach them as he would a poet, rather than a biographer or a theologian of the philosophical, logical kind. (I remember when I was an undergraduate hearing a paper by Fr Mark Brocklehurst, O.P., in which we were told to regard St Thomas Aquinas as a poet and the *Summa* as the poetic effusion of his soul: a fortiori the gospels.) He will be led to think not in terms of three synoptic gospels and one more, separate from them—which is where a purely literary analysis will lead him—but in terms of four separate gospels, each with its own teaching and its own outlook. And if he is inclined to make groupings at all, he may want to draw together not the first three gospels, but the second and fourth.

I have wavered between referring to the evangelists as theologians and as poets: each term might both make a point and also distort the truth. None of them, not even St John, is without his rough edges, his unassimilated ideas; and none of them certainly is a master of style and form. If we cannot ask of the evangelists photographic accuracy in matters of history, no more can we ask of them perfection in any other sphere. Their writings are among the earthen vessels in which God makes himself known to us. And if St Mark and St John deserve alongside St Paul the title of theologian, I should prefer to see St Matthew and St Luke as exemplars of great traditions of Christian life — the didactic churchman and the devout, compassionate lover of our Lord. As not every Christian's approach to God deserves to be called 'theological', in the sense of being fully articulated, but nevertheless every Christian does have an approach, simple as it may be, so it is fitting that among the evangelists themselves quite different types should be represented.

The study of the separate evangelists does not exhaust the study of the gospels. The evangelists bear witness to Jesus and we must understand that witness, but embedded in their writings, as part of the method by which they bear witness, is the teaching of Jesus himself. The probe must be made to discover and assess that teaching. Certain key phrases persistently occur: Son of Man; Messiah; above all perhaps Kingdom of God. What *did* they mean? And what do they mean for us in our terms? Does the evangelist mean the same as Jesus meant by them or are there signs of crucial shifts of meaning in transmission?

What did the parables of Jesus mean? How has his message been modified, perhaps transformed, by the meaning attributed to his death and resurrection? What about those who say that Easter has altered his teaching, as received by his followers, beyond recognition? What precisely is the task of demythologising? The student cannot shirk these questions: answers to them will be the raw material for constructing a satisfactory doctrine of the incarnation, and there is no short cut which safely avoids this route. (See J. Knox, *The Death of Christ* for a discussion along these lines).

It is not for theologians to create canons within the canon, but for the student of the New Testament such as we have in mind, the rest is both less vital and plainer sailing. He will of course take the Acts of the Apostles into his study of St Luke: he will learn much of St Luke's method and mind from it, and he will profit by pondering why this evangelist alone felt it necessary to write a second volume. But he will also turn to the Acts if he wants to know at least one man's view of the development of the early Church and if he wishes to exercise his mind on certain difficult historical problems. He will turn to the Apocalypse of St John if he desires insight into the minds of probably very many more first and second century Christians than appears from the surface of the New Testament. And from Hebrews he will learn the richness, variety and ingenuity with which the work of Christ could so soon be illuminated from the Old Testament. I hope students on this brief course will not be burdened, unless there is more time than appears likely, with the questions of the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles or II Peter!

The total effect and profit ought to be primarily an understanding of the minds of the main New Testament writers, a realisation of the chief difficulties, and a preparedness to use both the doctrine and the difficulties in the formation of a coherent theological outlook. A deep and imaginative understanding of the various writers is all the more essential in our day when the philosophical climate seems so unpromising as the provider of a ground for systematic theologising. Where systematic theology is difficult the New Testament must be heard the more clearly ; and to sharpen the distinction between the various voices which make up its chorus will be more profitable than to try and distil a generalised 'New Testament View'.

On the question of the need for a knowledge of Greek, clearly it is desirable, equally clearly it is impossible to require it in the framework of a general course. But there ought to be instruction in the kind of language New Testament Greek is, and in crucial word-connections,

e.g., that 'justify' and 'righteousness' represent words from the same Greek root.

I shall end with two matters which are not uniquely the province of New Testament studies though they concern that subject among others. In order to achieve the aim of 'lay theological literacy' within a crowded course, it might be desirable to work not only by instruction in the separate subjects which go to make up theology but by undertaking a series of projects on particular topics to which all the subjects would contribute. Thus, biblical studies and doctrine could combine to investigate the doctrine of creation; New Testament, doctrine, Church history and liturgy could join together on the eucharist or the ministry. It would be a matter of experience to discover how much instruction in separate subjects was necessary before such projects could be profitably undertaken.

The last point concerns the role of the staff of the department. You must forgive me if I here use a personal example. There are many draw-backs to the jack-of-all-trades and the old adage only states one of them, but the advantages of the Oxford system of chaplain-fellows, especially if they are members of the theology faculty, are considerable. It means that a man reading theology will not only be tutored by his college chaplain but will also have him for pastor and possibly for spiritual director. The priest who rigorously dissects the scriptures with him will also bestow upon him the eucharist and give him absolution. He will hear the same person on Tuesday morning unravelling the deepest problems of gospel criticism and perhaps feel himself in deep water with no sure footing, and on Sunday evening preaching constructive theology to edify his mind and heart. It is much to ask of any priest that he should perform all these functions with equal competence, but there is a great value for the student if they are at least partly combined in some of those who teach him. For, as we have said, the study of our subject presents its unique difficulties for those who undertake it intelligently and conscientiously, and they cannot be met in the lecture- and seminar-room alone. The maturer Christian, as the teacher will be, must be seen as a whole Christian who prays and lives and loves and worries as well as delivering his lectures on the Fathers. He will then be of much service to those whose piety and view of the faith must often die a painful death before a wiser phoenix can rise from the ashes.