

Translator's Note

These chapters are a small part of the fruit of Helmut Thielicke's visit to the United States in 1963, a selection from a full notebook of conversations and discussions of questions which arose both spontaneously and in response to sermons and lectures to many different kinds of audiences. The answers are not casual and unstructured, but they are also not academically framed. Though they are carefully reasoned and sometimes, it may seem to the American mind, exhaustive (since there are no simple answers to hard questions), they are warm, pastoral, existential, always concerned with the person who asks the question.

The questions are not synthetic. They present problems that trouble every thinking layman and minister and student. Pastors encounter them repeatedly in their ministry. The questions concerning the inspiration of the Bible, historical criticism, and the more recent aggravation of the problems of interpretation, detonated by Bultmann's program of demythologizing and hermeneutics, are discussed in a lucid and rewarding way, often with flashes of humor.

Helmut Thielicke has made and will continue to make a unique contribution to the American theological dialogue. His conversations with conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists are a case in point. Who else has been able to speak, and be listened to with respect and gratitude, to avant-garde scholars and to earnest fundamentalists? Is this not an ecumenical contribution, a contribution to intramural ecumenicity, so often blemished by a pride which

is content to allow a wall of partition to divide us?

The chapter on racial integration is a refreshing and challenging discussion of this problem in American life from the point of view of an "outsider" who is bound by his Christian convictions and yet unwilling to judge and pontificate in a situation in which he does not have to live and share. The discussion of the Nazi regime, an illuminating and deeply moving account of life under that totalitarian tyranny, enlivened by the author's own experience as a preacher and pastor in the midst of it, constitutes in my opinion a prime document for any full-orbed understanding of that terrible phenomenon of our time.

Again the translator wishes to express his appreciation of the author's willingness to confide in him the responsibility for making editorial decisions in the preparation of this English version of his work.

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