

How My Theology Has Changed in the Last Ten Years

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For several months I have wanted an excuse to collect some thoughts on my personal theological history. This paper offered such an excuse and I gladly grasp it. So here are the results of an attempt to analyze the theological changes which have taken place in my mind during the past decade, which period includes about all such thinking I have done. I confess that it has not entirely been a pleasant task. I was so struck in the initial draft of the paper with the naiveté, immaturity and confusion of my thought that I hesitate to commit it to final form for the perusal of another. My reluctance was overcome by the sense of the significance of the matter to me. Such a self-analysis and confession I feel to be a prerequisite to any satisfactory position I may find in the future. Again I have the feeling I am not alone in my jumble. The more I associate with young ministers like myself, to say nothing of many wiser and older, the clearer I see that my confusion is but a part of a far wider turmoil.

The most obvious thing about this paper will be that it should have been entitled: "How My Mind Has Grown in the Last Five Years." Quite naturally gradual changes have taken place during the past decade that I have been interested in theology. It has been generally a time of incubation and development. Yet more recently there has been a period of radical growth, the nature of which is not even yet clearly apparent to me for I do not look back upon this history from any well established vantage point. The changes may be vaguely described as those involve in the realization of a theological hodgepodge within me which had existed unknown all along. It appears that in the past four or five years I have passed from blissful unawareness of confused thinking into a not by any means so blissful knowledge of that confusion. This means that there are no sharp lines drawn in this paper. Nevertheless, while the positive elements in the shift of my thought are vague as yet, many of the fundamental negative matters have been cleared away, leaving ahead something like an open road. It is chiefly of this clearing away that I am to deal with here.

Any such discussion as this must necessarily be autobiographical throughout, but I think a very brief sketch accounting for the period with which we are concerned would be helpful at this point. Twelve years ago I was studying theology. After five years, I spent twenty-four months sharing my gleanings with the congregation of a small church. This was interrupted by the war in which I served as a chaplain during the next four years. The war plays a vital part in all that follows for it was here that theology for me came to the exploding point. During the last nine months I have been studying theology once again and reflecting on these past years.

As I look back on the history of my thought, it divides itself conveniently into three parts: the pre-war period in which I became confused; the war period during which I realized my confusion; and the post-war months when some progress has been made toward the reconstruction of a theological position. Such a division will serve as well as any for the framework of this discussion.

It fell my lot to learn theology in a day when Liberalism, reaction against Liberalism and the ever-present Conservatism were moving along side by side. I intimately met all three. Oddly and sadly enough I studied the reaction to Liberalism before I formally and fully met the Liberal Movement itself. Worse than this, I was at the beginning immersed in a conservatism only slightly different from what has been known as Fundamentalism from which it was most difficult to disentangle myself. All this goes a long way toward picturing and accounting for my admitted turmoil in the pre-war period.

At the very beginning of my theological awakenings, I was attempting to ride two horses -- Conservatism on the right and Liberalism on the left. My home was not very religious, I suppose one would say, but what religion was present was, in nature, definitely conservative. I recall attending, as a boy, Holiness Camp Meetings of the Methodist Church, and much of this reactionary theology found its way into my mind. On the other hand, while growing up, for the most part I attended churches which were out-and-out liberal. So, although I did not understand it all, I was early exposed to these conflicting and opposed streams.

Perhaps my school background sheds the most light on the whole story. I studied theology in four different schools and was introduced to as many different types of theological thinking, moving from one extreme to the other. The first school, Asbury College, Wilmore, Kentucky, where I spent only one year, was ultra conservative. The second, Biblical Seminary in New York, moderately conservative. Drew Theological Seminary, Madison, New Jersey, was next and represented a more liberal position. The fourth school I attended was Union Theological Seminary, New York City, which was liberal -- for me almost without qualifying adjectives.

It seems necessary to consider briefly how each of these schools affected me. As suggested in the preceding paragraph, my first formal contact with any theology was with one of a reactionary nature. It was Fundamentalism with a Wesleyan cast. There is no doubt in my mind but what this now-called Holiness Movement served well a particular need in a particular day. It may well be that they are keeping alive today something vital for the future streams of the Christian Faith. I absorbed from them a certain temper for which I am grateful. But on the other hand there is no

denying that these Holiness people are almost hopelessly out of touch with modern culture. They are ever too prone to forget that the Christian Faith is a living principle to be reclothed again and again as history unrolls. They have so solidified their forms of Christian thought and experience that I fear the forms are oftentimes mistaken for the thought and experiences themselves. At the time, I reacted mildly against some of their positions, but the theology I learned there was the only theology I knew. It left a deep mark.

At the next school I did not meet much in the way of any systematic training in theology. I did receive something invaluable which carried me through six years of preaching when my theology was on feeble legs and which will play no small role in any future system I may be able to construct. I refer to a thorough training in the content of the Bible placed in its historical setting. The theology I managed to gather was Calvinistic in tone over against what I had met previously and it was certainly somewhat more liberal.

Another note needs to be inserted here. During this time and for several years later while still in school, I was working as an assistant in a metropolitan church. The minister with whom I worked, Dr. Christian F. Reissner, was a peculiar combination between a radical liberal (especially in his methods) and a most naive conservative. In his personality I was again exposed to this dual stream. But more important, as I worked with "modern" people in this city church, I began to sense an ineffectiveness of a hard and fast Conservatism and the vague liberal tendencies within me received confirmation. Although at the time my understanding of the exact positions of Liberalism was undeniably limited.

In changing schools again I met head on, through Edwin Lewis, the Dialectical Theologians and their great reaction to the Liberal Movement. It was difficult for me to thoroughly appreciate the oppositional nature of Neo-Protestants for I had not really gone through Liberalism. Perhaps I missed most of the point of the whole movement. Barth and Brunner were a welcome advance to me, incredible as that may sound to some. They seemed to resolve the tension between my conservative foundation and my undefined liberal leanings. Here was a theology that was respectable to the modern mind (in some quarters) and still had a note of urgency and a point of decision. Modern Biblical scholarship was taken into consideration and yet The Book remained a Living Word. The individual situation was realistically viewed and, at the same time, the social side was not entirely dismissed, by Brunner, at least. Moreover, Christ was given a central and vital place and yet not garbed in penal theories of Salvation which were growing more meaningless to me. I could go on, but this will suffice to show the effect these Continental theologians had on my thinking. In brief, because I felt that this was a theology more in tune with the age than my ultra-conservative views, I proceeded to restate my ideas of God, Man, Sin, Christ, Salvation and the like more and more in the terminology of the Barthians. But, even while I was succumbing to the wiles of the Dialectical School, I was being introduced at Drew to a more thoroughgoing Liberalism than I had elsewhere known. This prepared me for the final chapter of my school career in the pre-war period.

At Union in 1938 I was set down into the midst of Liberalism under men such as Lyman and Van Dusen. Regardless of how certain minds in that institution were changing at that time, regardless of the fact that I also sat under men as Tillich and Neibuhr, I was here formally indoctrinated in Liberalism. I do not mean that liberal views were all new to me. I had met most of them before even though rather indirectly and unsystematically. It is rather that I now was laid hold upon by them. The idea of God immanent in man, history and the world coming into His own; the theological importance of social evils; the scientific method with its liberal and tolerant spirit; the notion that man was a better creature than we had thought and maybe he could bring in the Kingdom -- all these and more were views I largely accepted, and they found a place in my preaching. The odd part of this is that I did not surrender my conservative and Barthian views when I accepted more liberal ones. This is where my real confusion set in, although it was potentially present before. I attempted for the next four or five years to hold on to both poles. I do not like to admit that I saw no difficulty in holding of all these views at the same time. Perhaps I saw the contradiction and would not admit it to myself. Maybe I imagined I had some sort of a synthesis. I finally attempted to conceal from myself and others my jumbled thinking behind some catch statement as: I am conservative in my theology and liberal in my social outlook. Such methods have been employed by those far more worthy than I.

This was the theological equipment I took to the New England church which I was to serve for two years. It should have been a time of thinking through what five years of studying theology had given me. It was not. The work of rescuing a run-down parish and setting it on feet strong enough to carry it in to the future did not leave sufficient time for the kind of thinking I needed to do. There was study enough but it was of a practical view which did not directly touch my problem. What work I did do in theology and what other theological influences that reach men in the parish ministry was of a liberal turn. I think that if there was a shift in my thought it was more to the left. Yet all the while I took pride in considering myself more than moderate conservative. When the war came, I was trying to hold together, single-handed, Liberalism, Barthianism, and an almost Fundamentalist view.

In the early months of 1942, I entered the Army as a chaplain. Before I was done with this phase of my life, some decided alterations had occurred. That there were changes is not surprising. Four years of the stark business of war must leave its imprint. To such a position as mine, something was almost certain to happen. And it did. In short, the war did five things which radically affected my thinking. These I shall list and then discuss briefly.

1. The war brought me inescapably face to face with the turmoil of my mind and with impossibility of an "on-the-fence" position.
2. The war revealed to me the insufficiency of both an extreme conservative and a radical liberal view.
3. The war showed me the absolute necessity for a view of life which was realistic, honest, and unmistakably my own.
4. The war gave to me certain insights about men and methods which must serve as guideposts in my reconstruction of my thought in the post-war period.
5. The war so clarified my mind at some definite points as to give me a basis upon which to begin that construction.

In the experience of the battle, life takes on a serious hue that it hasn't seemed to possess before. It is as if all the crises of life which would normally be spread over a number of years were gathered before one in a moment. To use a word of A.E. Taylor, "temporality" presses with heavy hand. It is in such hours that a man knows the primary problem to be the inner one, the personal. When experiences cut to the quick of life, we wish to know God. Some life-view, which is uncompromisingly your own, becomes an imperative. In the role of a Chaplain I found this imperative not only in myself but in and for the men with whom I lived and served.

So the pressure of war brought, in the first place, a demand to examine my faith. The initial result of the examination was the awareness of my theological ambiguity, the jumble and indecisiveness of it all. It no longer could remain passively concealed and, being made manifest, such an indecisive position was intolerable. Then when I turned to the various schools of theology, I saw in them all major inadequacies. The idea of inevitable progress, the too optimistic conception of man, the seemingly one-sided interest in the social, for instance in Liberalism, no longer appeared to fit the facts. The ultra-conservatism of my early training was even less satisfactory, as I reviewed its insistence on certain beliefs, many peripheral or even plain preposterous in our age, as the price of salvation and its mouthing of certain words and phrases which had lost meaningful content. In Barthianism I found much which appealed to me in its reading of man's predicament. Yet this movement also had its difficulties for me, primarily at the important points of human encounter with and unknown and unknowable God and the impossibility of any "natural" religious experience.

I have not attempted to state fully my criticism of these movements but only point out some of the places where they became unacceptable in the light of what I was learning in this world catastrophe. What I mean is that I could not be a disciple of any particular school which I had known. I was learning the difference between knowing the system of some school of thought and having a body of belief which is your own -- gleaned as it must be from many sources, but your own because you had thought it through and made it your own. It seems so unsophisticated that I had not learned this until now. Yet it wasn't that I had not known that this was what all men ought to do, it is rather that the full significance and imperativeness of the matter had not fallen upon me until this hour.

So, if I was to have a vital theology, I must build it myself. The beginning of such, however, is not the analysis of another's theology; it is much more personal.

As I have intimated before, during these days I was more and more urgently impressed with the need, for the facing of life, of a world view in which you honestly believed. What someone else believes or what people before you have held isn't so important in life as you meet it in war. What is important is what you can believe yourself. This becomes more important when you presume to help others face life. One can't stand before men waiting to wade to the shores of an enemy-held island fortress and witness to a faith concerning which he is not fully convinced. So the war probed to the very foundations of my Christian experience and hope that I possessed. Was I certain that I really believed what I did not out and out disbelieve? This meant stripping my faith bare, freely doubting, examining all I felt was real, beginning at the bottom and rebuilding step by step with only the materials that I could honestly witness to. This was not an easy task I discovered. It is not complete today but it did result in a brief creed -- sort of an interim

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Contemporary Theology: Professor Albert Outler

theological skeleton upon which I could stand during the war and upon which I could mold what I had to say to the men for whom I was responsible. I might add that at the same time I resolved that after the war my first consideration would be time out for study and thought toward building a more adequate position.

My interim faith, naive as it is, occupied an important position in this process of change and deserves to be included in this paper although it must be in bare outline. There are four propositions:

1. I believe in God.
2. I believe that God is best seen in Jesus Christ.
3. I believe that man can know this God.
4. I believe that man, both the individual and society, can only come to the full realization of their being in this world and whatever other world there may be in this relationship with God.

One can see in these statements many influences and in their enlargement and explanations he could see many more. The problem of authority in relation to them was acute and I had no clear view on it. I simply rested my creed on the authority of experience. That of the early New Testament community, the general historical Christian community, and the personal experience of the individual, my own especially. On this simple confession of faith, I stood during the critical days of this period of life. It had come out of a self-examination in the light of my whole background and it was the beginning of the rethinking of my faith.

The war, to summarize, had uncovered my confusion, criticized the schools of theology which were involved in that confusion and had led to an intense investigation of personal beliefs which resulted in an interim creed in which I could function with sincerity. I turn now to the fourth influence of the war. This had to do chiefly with certain techniques and viewpoints. Although these impressions are perhaps not strictly theological, it is impossible that they could do other than directly mold my future thinking. The gathering together of the youth of our land into the armed forces offered those of us who make up the Christian Church an invaluable opportunity to learn some significant lessons. This great body of service men composed of individuals who had been turned through the machinery of the Church plus those countless members she had failed to reach, presented something on the order of a laboratory in which the Christian community could study the effectiveness of her methods, the adequacy of the forms of her faith and the degree to which she is meeting the primary needs of men today. One in my situation could not help having impressions along these lines which would alter his outlook. I think I can sum them up in four compound statements. The minimum of comments upon them perhaps will indicate how I am affected by each. I am preserving the form in which these observations were first made although today I would say them differently.

1. I was impressed with the need of further efforts toward the reinterpretation of Christianity for our age and the further application of the Christian Faith to the whole of life.
2. I was impressed with the need of a thorough revamping of the religious education program and a rethinking of much of our rethinking of missions.

The religious literacy in the armed services was deplorably low. The soldier was grossly ignorant of the Christian Faith. This is the more disturbing when we pause to realize that the past two or three decades has been the age of Christian educators. The problem of moral and religious training in the home, in the secular schools and in the Church itself must be seriously reviewed. In the Church School, I feel the stress must be laid on the content of the Bible, on intelligent teaching of church history, and on the molding of personal experience with God, with the over-all aim of helping the individual find, develop and possess his very own. Only an informed church can be a strong church. And only the Christian who is informed in mind and heart can adequately meet the stresses of life. At least, so I am convinced and in such directions shall my thinking continually be aimed.

The soldiers, I think, were both pleased and displeased with what they saw of missions. In the first place, most everything constructive which had been done for the Pacific natives obviously had been done by the Christian missionaries. In the second place, it often appeared that the mission workers allied themselves far too intimately with the white man's imperialistic motives and views of superiority. He too frequently smashed the native culture and had failed to replace it with anything that was constructive. The Christ we were offering was almost completely garbed in Western fashions. There was evidence of concern with future welfare of the natives in the Eternal Land to the neglect of his here and now existence. Sometimes I thought that the most lost people I have ever seen were the so-called "saved" people of the Western Isles. I shall be more interested hereafter in a mission program which embodies more of simple humility and genuine love, more active regard for the temporal development of the down-trodden, more concern to interpret and help other peoples to interpret a Universal Christ in the setting of their social structure without

surrendering His uniqueness to that structure. These are needs which are not only relevant to the mission field but to every place the Christian community functions. To have a theology related to culture and not lost in it, involved in the human situation realistically and yet ever standing above and pointing to a higher plane of existence is a longing that experience of recent years has left indelibly upon me.

3. I was impressed with the need for an all-out endeavor toward a unity in Protestantism and for a clear, strong, united Christian voice against the tragic social evils of our day.

The service men for the most part didn't know or understand the differences between Protestant denominations and where they did they weren't particularly concerned. I appreciate the value that denominationalism in the stream of Christianity has had. I think the freedom for belief before God should be protected at the cost of having these lines of cleavage with us always. But many of these lines have grown dim and meaningless. I am more persuaded than ever that this is the day for movement toward unity. I think further, and this is significant, that the laity of Protestantism is quite ready for such a move. The need for a drawing together is obvious. Such an example ought to be made to the political and economic spheres. A Protestant fellowship which transcends all boundaries will be nothing less than invaluable, in knitting the people of this divided world together. It is needed to face an increasingly aggressive Roman Catholic spirit. It is required to effectively war on the tragic social evils of our time. All of these demands for a whole-hearted ecumenical move and the attitudes observed in the soldiers have made me as never before an enthusiastic ecumenist.

The soldiers were especially critical of the church at the point of her apparent silence in the face of evils which obviously cut squarely across her admitted tenants. This whole catastrophe has made it the more imperative that the church have a stand on the social evils which cause war. That she have a stand and make known that stand with a clear united voice on all the great social evils, which prevent men from the realization of the best of their capabilities. Let Christianity as far as possible be the conscience of the orders of life. Not only will she be doing what her very nature requires but she will silence the honest criticisms of many sincere people. I have become suspicious of any theology which can ignore the social aspects of Christianity.

4. I was impressed with the need of the further elimination of superstitions attached to our faith and with the psychological necessity of clarifying our methods of calling men to a decision concerning the gospel.

I found the soldier mixed up in superstitions which he equated with Christianity. There were superstitious attitudes about the Bible, the sacraments, the Church, prayer, the clergy and many other specific doctrines. I quite understand how pressures of war will drive a man into grotesque ideas of which he may later well be ashamed. But these tendencies were deeper, I felt, than could be explained by the unusual circumstances. The Church must guard against wrong conceptions, must carefully clarify many points and fearlessly endeavor to eliminate any traces of magic still with us. With the fund of scientific knowledge, which is open to all today, men are going to have little respect for an institution which obviously embodies hangovers from primitive religion. Moreover, soldiers returning to the relative calm of normal life will have small praise for a church which countenances the superstitions that pressures may have driven them into. Such views also shall leave their stamp on my ideas.

The soldier was uncertain and confused about his stand in Christianity because I think he had never been so confronted with the decisive aspect of the Christian Faith in such a manner as to demand a decision. This is not an appeal to the time and place view of conversion of the past. But it is possible to so rest on education and growth and inevitable progress that the whole decisiveness of Christianity is lost and the individual never quite realizes where he stands in relation to it. It little matters how this decision is realized --confirmation, baptism or public witness. It can be found in all of these or none. But psychologically some method of requiring decision is needed. The very nature of Christianity demands it. The very character of existence requires it. So I suspect that my experiences have moved me toward that in Barth and Kierkegaard which stresses the critical aspect of the Christian Faith and to a further concern with methods of calling men to definite commitments to it.

Such are the impressions my war experience made upon me as far as criticism, techniques, methods and approaches are concerned. I debated whether these observations should be included in this paper at all. Yet there is not a one that hasn't far reaching implications for theology and each has had and will have a large effect upon my thinking. They may well be the most significant deposit the war left with me. Nothing in them is actually new. Every point has been written upon before. Yet they were new go me in force if not in content, and the paramount thing is they were given impressions. Other impressions could have come, others did come, but these are the major ones which slowly and compellingly grasped me. Of course my experiences were limited by time, place, and the persons with

whom I worked. Some of these things may not have impressed other observers. They did impress me and generally, I believe, my soldiers. These observations must always be reckoned with as I continue my thinking. For instance, I am today more ecumenically minded, more intelligently and vitally interested in the role of the Church in social issues; more concerned to speak to the understanding of the folk in the pews, to speak to them doctrinally and to direct my remarks to the whole of their plane of living. I am more intensely interested in making a clear cut distinction between mystery and magic; more aroused about the decisive element in the Christian Faith.

There remains yet a final impact of the war to consider. It is in a way, related intimately to the discussion immediately preceding. But there is a distinction. In these years specific views on thee definite theological doctrines slowly pervaded my thinking and took on the character of finality -- finality not in the sense that they were or are thought through but in the sense that I had taken a specific stand. I returned from the war convinced of the radical evil in human nature, of the transcendent character of the Divine Creator, of the necessity of a real personal relationship between man and God such as I feel to be set forth in the pages of the New Testament. Other thoughts came but these were the clear and fixed ideas about which I no longer had doubts even though the content of each is yet in a very nebulous state. They involve many presuppositions and certain other concepts must naturally follow from them. But these were not of immediate concern. The signal thing was just that three immovable points had been established about which, generally, there was no longer indecision and 5 which would serve as poles of reference as I investigated their implications and as I move out into new realms of religious thought.

Before the world conflict, I had thought man a sinner and called him such. But actually he wasn't a very great sinner for me. Enough of Liberalism's essential goodness of man and inevitable progress had filtered into me that I thought man's capacity for the good was strong enough to emerge victorious over any bad he might possess, given sufficient light and time. War removed these blindfolds. Without all the unnecessary details, I saw stacked before me unbelievable quantities and degrees of suffering and baseness. There was something of an irrational character in it and of such dimensions that it was impossible to blame it completely on one man, or one group of men or even on one or two nations There was something deeper in it all. No essential lines of distinctions could be drawn. It was to be seen in the friendly, as well as the enemy, ranks. When in honesty I turned my eyes inward, my suspicions were confirmed. For the first time I admitted an almost unlimited capacity for evil regardless of how it might be under control. In brief, I felt that no other interpretation of man but one which took account of a tragic and radical evil in human nature could fit the facts as my experience now read them. My mind moved closer to Paul and Augustine and those who follow in their strain. Although I can still see the possibilities of greatness and good in man, bland optimism is gone. At the very heart of my theology stands a serious view of the evil in man, so radical that no "natural means" that I am aware of is able to cope with it. If we are to have a relatively good man and social order, something more than human effort must bring them.

My second conviction followed from the first. I moved again. This time over into the fellowship of those who unmistakably hold that God and the world are not one. At one time, I had used terms as transcendent when thinking of God. But God is not really "other" to me. Or if he was, I didn't grasp the significance of it. Really the Divine was so much a natural part of me and of the whole process of nature that His meaning as a Creator before whom I was responsible was largely destroyed. He never quite stood over against me in a position which could be described by no less a title than Judge. But in war I thought His Judgeship a prime necessity. In view of the evil I saw, there was no moral meaning in the universe without moral judge. Again, a too immanent view of God tied His hands as Savior. For how could a process which was essentially infected with evil actually be saved by any power or being only immanent in that process. There was in these days the intense desire to have not only Someone in here but also Someone out there who, in one way or another, had the situation in hand. All this seems a childish way of arriving a theological convictions. But this is the way it came. Although I have not cast the possibility of God's immanence out, He is first and foremost a Transcendent Being. I now had another line of departure for my reasoning.

The third conviction I have hinted at twice already. It found a place in my "interim creed", and it had to do with the possibility of knowing God. During these days this became the most significant thing in the whole of life. If there be a Creator and hence a creature, then certainly nothing could be more supremely important than that the creature know the Creator. Combat experiences bought this into vivid focus. It should have been clear in everyday life. And again this, or something like it, is what the New Testament has always been talking about. It is queer how old truths sometimes burst in on one with a force that makes them utterly new. Further, I came to the place where I could see no solution to the human situation outside this relationship with the Divine. I could see no meaning to existence aside from it. The New Testament appears to make this relationship absolutely central. Here a group of men and women had come to know God. Their lives had meaning in a most out of the ordinary fashion. Moreover, they seem to consider it their basic mission to lead others into this fellowship with God. It occurred to me that if just this wasn't the foremost task of the Church, then I didn't have any idea what it was. When I considered many of the churches I knew, I thought

that there had been only psychological substitutions for this experience. I wondered if we had been fulfilling our primary function and hence meeting the essential need of man. Among my men, even those who had come out of Christian institutions, there were very few familiar with any Christian idea of Divine fellowship. Yet knowing God became, at times, their most primary interest. Thus it was that I grew to feel that the God and man relationship was another essential in my faith. This was without trying to define it in any exact manner. If a man knew God, I wasn't too particular how he arrived at that knowledge. To conclude, I am impressed with the possibility of a personal fellowship, the essentiality of such a relationship to life and the necessity of a thorough and intelligent re-examination of the content of this New Testament experience.

I had gone into the war without clear cut points of reference which were actually my own and I can't say that I returned with anything thought out. Yet my mind was settled at the point of the seriousness of the human situation, at the point of the transcendent nature of the Divine and at the point of the necessity and possibility of a divine-human fellowship.

This last discussion concludes the war period of this history and, therefore, brings the paper to its conclusion. Looking back over what has been said, it seems very like a network of disorder. Nonetheless, it is my story as I understand it. I have traced the period of my theological training in which I failed to form any definite position of my own. I spoke of how I was trying to hold together a conservative and liberal view along with a position which is primarily a reaction against liberalism. And then I examined, at length, the effects of my war experiences on my thought. I am reluctant to call those effects a change for I had no clear cut thought to alter in the beginning and I have not arrived at any well defined position since. Furthermore, the influences of the war were so varied and multiple that the total effect, in many respects, resembles random movement rather than a change in any definable direction. Nevertheless, some essential development, within the bound of a personal trust, occurred inside my theological world during the past five years. Let me draw together and sum up the factors involved in that development.

1. During this period, I saw as I had not seen before the absolute necessity of having a "faith", a body of beliefs, a theology of your own for the intelligent living of life and I became aware that I really did not possess such.
2. It next became apparent that I couldn't move wholly into the sphere of any one set school of theology with which I was familiar.
3. At the same time, I was seized with the imperativeness of beginning with an examination of the things I took for granted as a prerequisite of any personal theology. This led to my efforts to establish a temporary creed within which I could function for the time being.
4. Later I arrived at definite convictions involving three Christian doctrines: the seriousness of the human situation; the necessity of God being over against that situation, and the imparativeness of some intelligible man and God relationship.
5. Then certain viewpoints concerning the Christian Faith and the Church were impressed upon me which serve as channels for my further thinking.
6. It should be added that the war and its impact brought a resolution that time out to study and think through my position would have first priority after my release from service.

It remains to speak ever so briefly about the last nine months since I left the Army. During this time, I have been studying as I planned. It would be a fitting conclusion to this paper if I could say that in this period my views have clarified and then proceed to set them down in some systematic form. But I cannot do this. No large strides have been made and the steps are too insignificant to dwell upon. It seems wise, however, to mention briefly several current indications of the direction in which I am moving, such as: the sources from which I have received special illumination in the past few months and the major problem I am presently facing.

First of all, I have become clearly persuaded that a true recovery of theology for me must come through understanding of the development of Christian thought through the centuries with particular reference to the New Testament.

Secondly, there are several schools and theologians who have been partially enlightening to me in this period of study. The Neo-Thomists, especially A.E. Taylor, have given me greater appreciation of the importance and place of the Christian community. My problem of self-interest in relation to the Christian ethic, which was raised during the war,

Joseph W. Mathews, December 19, 1946
Contemporary Theology: Professor Albert Outler

has had some light from Bishop Butler and Sidgwick. Dostoievski, Berdaeyev, Kierkegaard, and Brunner have had much influence on my further thinking on man and the human situation. In the matter of "natural" religious experiences and the relation of Natural and Revealed Theology I have been deeply affected by both William Temple and A.E. Taylor. Karl Barth and again William Temple have aided me in my search for a better understanding of God. I have also been impressed anew with the way in which the Dialectical theologians and philosophers, aroused my interest and will make their contributions as I have further opportunity to become acquainted with their minds.

As I have frequently confessed, many questions remain unanswered for me. But it is important that one occupies a position far above all others. The fundamental problem I face today is that of authority. It became most sharply acute during my army career. I observed there that the great mass of churchgoers between the Catholics on one hand and the Fundamentalists on the other had little idea of what they believed and almost no idea of why they did believe what they did. This was disconcerting to the thinking ones and I had no clear answer for them. I also find it increasingly difficult to speak publicly of the critical matters with which the Christian Faith deals when I am not certain of the basis of my remarks. This then is by far the most crucial problem I face today. I feel that I can do little in the way of solving other difficulties until I find an answer to the question of authority.

As I have thought through these years of my life, I see many strains at work. There is much I owe to Liberalism. I am also in debt to my conservative background. And, in spite of the fact that I rebel against much I find in the Barthians, their influence upon me has been perhaps the most significant. In recent months, I have been particularly impressed by the thought of A.E. Taylor and William Temple. These same elements, with others which must merge with them, will shape my future.

I close this paper as I began it with no definite system of belief. Yet this present indefiniteness is of quite a different character than that I knew some five years ago. Positive milestones have been gained which need never be passed again. And although I cannot know what lies ahead doors are open which once were locked and I am persuaded that the way will be found. But that is the beginning of another chapter which must wait for another writing.