

TAKE

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THIS

MESSAGE!



TAKE THIS MESSAGE!

*A Bible Study in the Present Meaning
of the Christian Mission*

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO

All missionaries of the Cross who were once or are still members of the Australian Student Christian Movement.

"You see their stern resolve, their devoted patience, their audacious prudence. And you have it muffled almost to a solemn whisper in the floating voices of those whose graves are baking in African suns or soaking in malarial swamps. They invoke you not to let their lives be wasted and their agony, blood, and sweat be thrown away by leaving the work they have so baptized. This work has cost too much to be dropped now. You can only save an investment by investing more. And no work so begun in death can end in anything but victory, unless Christ's conquest of the world by dying for it be a dream".

—Peter Taylor Forsyth.

I

MESSAGE AND MESSENGER

Christian Materialism

The Christian message makes an extraordinary claim. It tells men and women that if they want to find God they must come to the place where God finds them. It says that God sought us through one distressed and disobedient nation and in one True Man who lived as a member of that nation. This first study is difficult. The root of any weighty matter always seems forbidding and serious. Yet the first study in this book is the key to the rest. The Bible passages within it are in themselves closely written and uncompromising. Readers must dig into them persistently until they yield their ore.

1. The Source of the Mission: John 1: 1-18.

The Christian mission begins in God and is continued in Man. The Gospel according to St. John opens with a description of God's disclosure of Himself.

John 1: 1-5. The word is the means of communication between persons. The Word of God is God speaking. God was always a speaking, self-disclosing God. His speech is the orderly and reasoned process behind the activity He uses to bring matter into being. He is the only active, patient originator of everything that exists. From the beginning God, who is spiritual, makes and remakes material things. His thinking and His working are inseparable; He thinks, speaks, acts and pours His life through the shining frame of the universe (Genesis 1). God has always been alive and has always animated and illuminated everything He has made. He constantly sends out Himself into the universe where men were created according to His purpose. The writer of the Gospel pictures this living God as purposefully reaching outward like some quivering searchlight, into the world of matter, through the darkness which He controls and penetrates, to find and address us men, His children.

6-8. Part of God's purpose is the selection of men who will point to what He is doing. John the Baptist is the pattern missionary. He is the one who points away from himself to the living and moving light of God, drawing attention to the speaking voice within the ray of moving light. John the Baptist, who is dressed like Elijah, is summoned by the living God to lead other men, including the apostles themselves, to the culminating point of God's communication of Himself within His universe—the incredible human splendour and beauty of Jesus of Nazareth. Verses 7 and 8 are a perfect description of the missionary task of every Christian, who must continually

say, "I am nothing; He is all. I must spend myself in the service of the Man who masters me. I exist now for Him." The calling of the Christian to His work is the reverse of the cult of personal popularity. Any Christian who finds himself idolised should re-examine his vocation. The true missionary is great because he is completely self-effacing in the service of Another. (See John 3: 25-36. Other references are: Matthew 3: 1ff; Mark 1: 4ff; Luke 3: 1ff.)

9-13. God's activity in the world is sometimes known to us as speech, sometimes as light, sometimes as life. Jesus Christ is described in this gospel in all three ways. The writer says that, although the Jewish people perceived God at work in these forms, they could not identify the word, the light and the life as Jesus Christ. In reality, when Jesus was born in Israel what was happening was that One who had been coming already as God's Word into human life received a human body and a human name. Christ always was and is God's Word, God's approach to us, in the creation, in the summons of an obscure Near-Eastern nation, in the Man, Jesus. Verse 10 shows how we men are blind to the evidence of God's ordering activity. Our self-centred moral blindness makes it impossible for us to see God clearly. Verse 11 describes how God then selects a particular people to be bearers of the light to all men, and how Israel (his own home) persistently met his approach with an "official refusal". Yet within this selected people is a co-operative minority. They are the prophets and trusting watchers, from Abraham to Anna and Simeon (Luke 2: 22-38). They remain the nucleus of the missionary people of God, living for the word, in fellowship with the word, expecting the fulfilment of the promises that have been spoken. Finally, they are answered when the Word is made man. Thus (verses 12 and 13) belief in the name is given to this minority. The name is the bearer of the inner secret of a person according to Hebrew thought. This long line of waiting, watching, faithful people is given an entirely new kind of existence by God. Its members are not special by virtue of their inheritance, drive, or willpower, but simply because God met them face to face and they said "Yes" to God.

14-18. Here God's mission to man reaches its crucial point. God's speech, addressed to Israel in particular, now becomes God's action in the body of a Man (see Hebrews 1: 1ff). This incarnation of God is the warrant for Christian materialism. The word "dwelt" in verse 14 translates a Hebrew word also used to describe the way God walked in company with the pilgrim people in the desert on the flight out of Egyptian slavery described in the Book of Exodus. The pillars of cloud and fire are the "presence" of God (Exodus 13: 21-22). Thus the God who always speaks in new ways becomes, in Jesus, again a wanderer with the exiled human race, who seek a

Tested

promised land of peace, yet are unable to find the way. As soon as this happens it becomes possible to say "we have seen His glory". The tense used is definite, with a note of finality. "We" is the missionary pronoun used by the apostles (or literally "men sent out"). Their task is to tell the world that this thing has actually happened. The absolutely unique radiance of a remade humanity has been seen in the face of a man. Only here can you find Man as God means him to be. The glory of God was the name given by the Jews to the shining cloud that overshadowed the People of God in the Old Testament. Now its incredible majesty glows in the material body of a Man who is born to die (cf. Luke 9: 28-36, the account of the Transfiguration of Jesus before the apostles). Verse 15, a passing comment, underlines the missionary role of John the Baptist. Then the truth that Jesus is the fullness, the total fulfilment of God's self-disclosure to the world, is immediately driven home. Jesus is not merely the bearer of "grace" and "truth". He is the fullness of both. "Do not try to find these qualities outside Him," the writer says, "because even if you find them in some measure you will return to Him in the end and discover them in their perfection at their source". "Grace" translates the Old Testament word of the Prophet Hosea and of the Psalmists—lovingkindness. It means divine, unswerving, sacrificing, seeking, saving, dying, suffering love. "Truth" translates the Old Testament word for "faithfulness", meaning proof positive of the constancy and unchanging steady action of God. Jesus Christ is not the only human source of these gifts, but we have received them from him in never-ending and immeasurable generosity. What John the Baptist has said about Jesus (verse 15) is that the One who brings this fullness to us is both the leader of us men and the heavenly Person who has been seeking all men across the ages. Finally, verses 17 and 18 show how the new people of God, the company of the Christian mission, is to be contrasted with the Old Testament "People of the Law". In Jesus Christ (this is the first time John has used the word Christ, Messiah, King-Deliverer) the Law of Moses is perfectly exemplified for the first time. Moses was given instructions; Jesus lives them out to a finish. Although it is true that God's being is a mystery (Isaiah 64: 1), the mystery of God's thoughts and purposes has been unriddled for man in Jesus. When we know this we cannot contain ourselves; we must tell everyone, everywhere. The Word is Deed now. God has given man His hidden, longed-for life, and made it possible for man to look into the face of the Creator (II Corinthians 4: 1-6).

2. The Continuation of the Mission: II Corinthians 4: 1-6.

This magnificent passage calls for little direct comment when read as the statement of a man who had been gripped and equipped by the living, working God described in the Prologue

more than that

of the Gospel according to St. John. II Corinthians 4 describes the Christian's amazement and feeling of courage when he knows that he has become part of God's tactic for the implementation of the strategy of the mission. When we say yes to Jesus Christ's exercise of his right upon our lives as Paul did (Galatians 1: 11-24) nothing matters except that we should be missionaries. In this sense every Christian is compelled to be a full-time missionary. There is no such thing as Christian obedience which is not missionary. The mission may be carried through in many different ways, sometimes in word, sometimes by silent deed, sometimes by preaching abroad, sometimes by working in an office or down a mine; but every moment of the Christian's life is meant by God to be a continuation of what He has already done for man and for the world in Jesus.

*3. The Narrowness and Breadth of the Mission: Isaiah 60.

God calls his people in this Old Testament poem, showing them that they have been picked out as light-bearers and light-sharers. They are not permanent guardians of the Light of the World (God can look after the Light Himself), but an elevated city that shines brightly over the universal landscape, even in a blackout.

1-3. God speaks in the imperative. He personally addresses a tiny nation, at this period in deportation and stripped of sovereignty, but knowing that it is destined to be returned to its homeland. The exiles see that they are to be sent back from Babylonia to rebuild their temple on the bare rock at Jerusalem, where the dawn wreathes the hills in light as God is now shining afresh upon them. By a technique that startles the world God takes one obscure part of the human race in order to distribute it eventually to all nations from this starting point. His light shines in darkness (cf. John 1: 5). The result of the irradiation of Israel is the coming of kings and nations to the birthplace of the Deliverer (Matthew 2). The dawn of God rises first on the Jews, but eventually is to draw all men back into fellowship with their Maker.

4-7. A brilliant description of the busy traffic of the early morning hours. The non-Jew comes like a merchant to investigate the treasure of Israel. The poet speaks these words in a time of dejection. He voices a fantastic expectation, not justified by any historical conjecture. No wonder the faces of the Jews would glow with astonishment and their hearts beat with surprise. Here is a prediction that the wealth of the world will flow in tribute to the altar of their God—camels and young camels, gold and incense and human homage. The story of the coming of the wise men has this passage as prophetic background. The north Arabian shepherds bring their flocks

from the south, the Jewish refugees are all brought home to see the miracle happen.

8-9. In the west the Mediterranean is flecked with white sails, homing like doves to Palestine. They bring other dispersed exiles home with them.

10-14. The purpose of all this is described as the imposition of forced labour by the Jews on the nations now made subject to them. The fulfilment is quite different. Jesus of Nazareth gathers the nations, but not for slavery, for glad and free service. The description of the city of God in verse 11 is likewise transformed and given universal meaning by the New Testament description of the ageless city in the world to be (Revelation 21: 22-27). Certainly nations are true to their task when they protect and help the people of God and bring their special gifts for the furtherance of the mission, but they bow to Israel's God, not to Israel. The poem has God's meaning in it, but it was written by a man with human hopes and pride.

15-16. In one sense it is a fact that all this took place; but in the mind of the exiles who first heard it and the Jews who followed them the call to suffer was distinct from the call of God to reign and to be the centre of the kingdoms of the world. They looked back on the time of suffering as over, and now expected their reward. What they could not grasp was that the suffering servant nation described so powerfully in earlier chapters of the Book of Isaiah (42: 1-4; 49: 1-6; 50: 4-9; 52: 13-53: 12) was more a part of the divine mission in its suffering than in its prosperity. It took the coming of Jesus into the world to unite these two parts of the Book of Isaiah in a living feat of imaginative obedience. In Jesus God shows how he reigns in this world from the Cross (John 12: 20-36) and thus draws all men to the light that first shone in Israel.

17-22. The result of this pilgrimage to the city of light is to be the replacement of the transitory stuff of the first temple by the enduring fabric of the new temple now to be built for the nations of the earth. Already the Jews catch a glimpse of the peace of God that is given in this world but takes us eventually far beyond this world. The crowning miracle (verse 21) is to be that at last people will be righteous. They will grow and flourish in the new community made by God. This diminutive people will in time inherit the earth; nobody knows when, because the maturing of God's purpose is in God's hands, not ours. The Parables of Jesus about the ever-growing Kingdom of his Father are full of the theme of the growth and maturing of God's harvest. He who made the earth and puts in the seed will one day see that the harvest is ripe and bring in the grain. Between-times stands the mission, which is the unceasing expression of his presence and concern. To set the 60th Chapter of Isaiah in its context of Christian history and full divine purpose Revelation 21: 22 - 22: 5 should be read. The imagery is

*It is suggested that, if the Conference programme does not allow sufficient time for covering the whole of the study, this section might be omitted.

the same; the meaning is enriched and amplified in the light of Christ. The mission to the world, beginning in Israel when Abraham put his feet upon the narrow cattle tracks and looked westward towards a new future (Genesis 12: 1-3) ends only when all nations have been gathered by God for the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21: 1-4).

4. The Centre of the Story: I Corinthians 15: 1-11.

In case the heady poetry of Isaiah should tempt us to be grandiose we must return to the historical truth about Jesus Christ. Paul puts it clearly and well in writing to the Corinthians. There is no reason for the Christian mission, no Good News that cannot be held back, unless what those closest to Jesus said of Him is in fact true. First (verse 3) that he was really Christ—meaning the One whom God sent to be the King of men. Second (verse 3) that His death was not just another public execution but the occasion when men tried to kill God and inexplicably received pardon and new life from the God they tried to kill—the miracle of sacrifice and free forgiveness. Third (verse 3) that this was the culmination of the story of God's activity in and through his dealings with the Jewish people. Fourth, that Jesus was really a man among men and really died our death (verse 4). Fifth, that he fulfilled the teaching of the Old Testament that the sufferer who dies will live again by returning to life, and that God gave the clue to this truth by bringing the same Jesus back again to appear to His disciples (verses 5-8). Sixth, that this has gathered men like Paul into the fellowship of the Christian mission and given them the incentive and power to become "bearers about in their bodies of the dying of the Lord Jesus" (II Corinthians 4: 10).

We must understand that without the mission there would have been no rescue for man through the Cross; but without the Cross there can be no faithful continuation of the mission. The cross stands at the centre of a universe that has, for some horrible and only partly understood reason, become estranged from the God who made it. Man who dwells in the universe and the universe itself can be restored to the Creator, who made man and nature free, only by what happened to Jesus of Nazareth when He shed His blood there in love of nature and of man.

6. The Taking of the Message: Matthew 28: 19-20.

Jesus says "Go!" The first words of the 60th Chapter of Isaiah, "Arise, shine!", are in the same imperative mood. Wherever the imperative is found in the Bible in this way it has permanent implications in the present tense. The voice is speaking to us.

Recently many people have been perturbed because the historical critics have put forward many reasons for thinking

that Jesus could never have spoken the words of the Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28. They say it presupposes developed ideas about Baptism and the triple name of God and reflects the mind of the early church. Here we need not linger on the technicalities. It is possible to argue that Jesus did speak these words one day in Galilee; but, whether He did or not on that one occasion, His own life, teaching, mission and person breathe their spirit. In a way they have become more definitely His very own words simply because He is always speaking them to different people in different periods of history. David Livingstone described the promise at the end of verse 20 as "the word of a gentleman of the strictest honour". "To the end of the world" means "until the close of the present age" and points to the fact that every Christian presses forward with the utmost urgency to win the world, because the time will come when God who began the mission will Himself end it. Jesus is risen and is here working at the side of the Livingstones and William Careys who listen to the Great Commission. He is invisible, but He honours His promise. The Christian hope is that he will not always be invisible but will return when the mission has run its full course at "the close of this age".

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Was Israel the only chosen people?
2. Is the above study merely a far-fetched interpretation of history worked out to comfort and reassure Christians? Does it seem to be anything more than that?
3. If someone asked you, "Are you saved by the blood?" what would you say? Why?
4. Do you see the work you hope to do after graduation as a way of continuing the mission?
5. "As for the Second Coming,—I think we can very well do without it!" Do you agree? Do you think it makes any difference to the Christian mission whether we believe in the return of Christ to reign or not?

1 Cor 15: 3
Rev 10: 9
8: 11-14

Oct 11 Advans 9: 28

Beautiful Humanism
John H. H. H. H.

II MAN TO MAN

Christian Humanism : *Don't feel like*

1. The Cause of Man.

The message of the inaugural Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches says we must learn "to say 'yes' in faith to all who hope, fight and suffer for the cause of man". Here you have an expression of the radical humanism that is inseparable from the Christian mission. Man makes a mess of his life when he treats himself as the highest and noblest being that exists. His cause is best served when he is loved and befriended, as made by God and loved by God. Christian humanism is not worship of man; it is the love and service of our neighbours. We love and serve them because God has made us part of his mission. The cross is itself love and service, without reward apart from the joy of loving and serving. When we say "men are sinners" we can sound unctuous and supercilious. When we say "we are sinners" that sounds more like the truth. When we say "God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us" we have arrived at the inner logic of Christian humanism. Men are wonderful; unbelievably villainous and yet unbelievably heroic. God loves them in spite of everything. We are among them. God calls us to love them as He loves them and to serve them as He serves them.

Before we begin our Bible Study we should visualise men as they are: children wandering in the streets in Korea, abandoned by parents who know they have a better chance of survival if relief agencies care for them; mongols and cretins and the patients in mental hospitals; Buddhists and Hindus, Muslims and Parsees, all at their religious exercises; business men in air-conditioned sleekly decorated offices in New York and Buenos Aires; people dying of cancer and lovers in one another's arms. Go on visualising more of our fellow human beings. All these are the destined recipients of the mission.

2. The Programme of Christianity: Isaiah 61.

The poem immediately following the missionary ode about the sending out of the light was called by Henry Drummond the programme of Christianity, because it became the text for the sermon Jesus preached about himself in his home synagogue at Nazareth.

1-4. The voice speaking these lines is that of an unknown prophet. Some say he is speaking as though he were the personification of God's people Israel and describing the task

of Israel among men. The speaker feels himself filled with the breath of God. It is the sign of the coming of The Spirit on one singled out for a vital task. The giving of the Spirit signifies the power required for preaching. It marks out the prophet. Anointing, which follows, is the badge of prophet, priest and king. Consequently later Jewish thinkers saw in this passage a prediction of the destiny of Israel under the Messiah who was to come. The Messiah is to be sent to do His work for the House of Israel; a nation that has been through every kind of hardship and misery now surely is on the threshold of deliverance? Verses 3 ff. strike the note of liberation and consuming joy always associated with the bringing of Good News to men in the name of God. The work of the mission looks refreshingly practical—not at all the kind of thing one associates with modern "evangelistic campaigns". The Good News includes an assurance that God is on the side of social justice. He will not only get people out of prison and go down among the depressed masses; He will subsequently set them to building decent houses and law-abiding communities. If this language is construed as merely symbolic one can hardly blame good honest citizens who "don't go much on flowery language" for taking about as much notice of it as they would of the average sermon aimed at "spiritual uplift". The Good News includes the hard grind of personal relations, healing, teaching, integrity in the work of the bench or the office, concern about clean politics and getting down out of the academic and arty crafty clouds to tramp about in the mire of the real world where the average man lives. To this extent Jesus was a true humanist as well as a true materialist. These four opening verses of Isaiah 61 could be applied to the return of the Zionists out of the ghettos of Europe into the sun-drenched harvest fields and whitewashed townships of the new state of Israel. They could be applied by Christians to the emergence of the confessing brotherhoods of the German Churches from the long resistance to Hitler. The men who kept in touch with one another through the long dark years of imprisonment and struggle with the secret police were the men who organised the now famous German Working Men's Academies in their post-war form and have planned the vast Church Rallies attended by hundreds of thousands of witnessing Christians from East and West Zones. A "purely spiritual" gospel is a dehumanised Gospel. It cannot be the Gospel of God.

5-7. The expectation that God will make all the large world empires subsequently servants of Israel appears here as it did in Chapter 60. In the fulfilment the nations bring their distinctive treasures into the international fellowship of the Christian church where they are offered up gladly to God. It is part of the message that all this is brought about suddenly and in the midst of hard times. Strangely enough the discipline

of the exile is admirable preparation for the work of rebuilding the City of God. The men who persevere in witness to their brother men during the hard times become the architects of a renewed people, the master-missionaries and prophets of new ages in the church. God has shown this to us by the way he has used Martin Niemöller in the Germany of yesterday and to-day. He may not have received the easy kind of material prosperity the poet describes here, but the deliverance and the joy are there.

8-9. Nowadays it is customary to say that Christians should not expect to be physically protected and blessed by God just because they are Christians. But the conspicuous integrity and honour of the Christian man should be part of God's gift to those who live by God's faithfulness. Prisoners of war who refused to barter on the black market inside the camps, who, as a result, had less food than other prisoners, retained a wholeness and liberty of bearing that astonished even their gaolers (cf. the story told in Daniel 1: 1-16). The Christian is often not aware of it, but he is loved and honoured by other men because he and his friends are real men in a world full of false, hollow, stuffed men. They are not envious of him, but wistfully covetous of the power he has obviously been given from outside the range of ordinary human resources.

10. Critical commentators have thought this verse an intrusion into the poem. They say the new figure of speech and the change in the person of the speaker are out of place. The metaphor may be a sudden variation, but if this is an insertion it is quite apposite. The answer of the missionary people to God who sends his messengers into the earth to restore and heal is an expression of joy as bright and memorable as a wedding. The verse brings a burst of responsive music in a new key from the people who have been made part of God's purpose.

11. The music returns to the original key and mood, crowning the poem with the New Testament theme of the secret blossoming of God's seed. So Jesus later described His church.

3. The Programme Carried Out: Luke 4: 13-30.

The Gospel according to St. Luke is consistently missionary in its emphasis. It was probably written in Antioch, where the wider mission of the church began. Luke, who also seems to have written many parts of the Acts of the Apostles, selects the sayings and actions of Jesus that show his unconventional capacity for friendship with foreigners, diseased people, financial racketeers and the easy-going pleasure-loving types of the Roman towns. Jesus identifies himself with men and women; He is a friend of sinners, and they love Him.

13. The opening of the public preaching of Jesus Christ is preceded by a fully human time of testing and discipline. Every Christian's period of uncertainty between his calling and his

embarkation on his life's work is transformed by the knowledge that Jesus has already won the essential conquest in his massive struggle with the voice other than God's in the wilderness overlooking the Dead Sea. Temptation recurred in other moments of His ministry when the devil took his opportunity; but later encounters for Jesus (and for us) should be seen as abortive regroupings by the enemy in a war of attrition. The major battle that decided the issue has been fought and won. Knowledge of this truth is, however, the missionary's consolation, only because he is constantly aware of it as his source of strength.

14-15. The spirit of God now fills Jesus as it filled and impelled the speaker in Isaiah 61: 1. Luke already has the Isaiah passage in mind. The active, disturbing thrust of the Living God initiates for us whatever work God wants us to pursue. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is said to be in the doldrums at present. Perhaps the reason is that the philosophers have misled men into imagining Spirit as a kind of vaguely distributed inert gas. The corrective for our misconceptions does not lie in getting the right idea about the Spirit and His power. That would be easy enough (Ezekiel 37, Acts 2, John 20: 19-23). It is far more important that we should be driven by the Spirit. How can this happen to us? The answer is simple: all we have to do is to keep on asking (Luke 11: 5-13). Verse 15 says that Jesus in Galilee was "admirable by everybody". For many witnesses this is the beginning of the end; personal popularity is a danger signal for the preacher — but not for Jesus.

16-30. The progress of Jesus in Galilee had been a furore. Now He returns to Nazareth to take up the exacting work of genuine "home missions". Luke's "drama of the rejection" begins. When He preaches from "the programme of Christianity" in Isaiah 61 His own will not receive Him (John 1: 11). Only Luke among the Gospel writers refers to the use of the passage from Isaiah (Matthew 13: 54-58; Mark 6: 1-6). Jesus, as a visiting Rabbi already known in the district, is asked to read and comment. He pointedly takes a passage known to refer to the coming Messiah and virtually says He is Himself the living comment sent by God. The variation in the text as given here is probably due to the fact that the version used would be an Aramaic paraphrase of the Hebrew original. The first reaction of the congregation, as recorded by all three Gospel writers, is highly favourable, though a trifle astonished. A young missionary has come home on his first furlough. The people in the pew are agreeably impressed: "A very remarkable young man and a truly splendid preacher. He does credit to Nazareth. You wouldn't think He was old Joseph's boy!" Apparently they have not quite grasped that this young man is calmly suggesting he is the Messiah! Alarm begins when Jesus speaks tersely

about the insularity and spiritual condition of Nazareth by reference to the readiness of people outside Israel to accept his message. The Nazarenes are looking for results, signs. Jesus tells them virtually what He said later on another occasion (Luke 11: 29-32). The greatest sign of the effectiveness of the mission is trust through repentance, which means following gladly in faith and love. Now there is a major scandal. It is as though the local parish missionary rally has been told that before long God will need to send some Japanese evangelists to the Australian churches. In the Middle East the audience is at least thoroughgoing in expressing its feelings: "Hurl him over the cliff!" Our equivalent might be a restrained vote of thanks in which they say, "We may not all agree with everything our friend has said, but it has been very stimulating". Jesus is put out of Nazareth, out of Israel, out of every static non-missionary congregation; but it is their day of judgment and his day of power. He passes through the midst of those who reject Him and walks the highways of the world. Luke underlines this aspect of the teaching of Jesus; he writes the missionary gospel par excellence (see also the episode at Emmaus, Luke 24: 13-35, especially the will of the Risen Christ to "go on further" in verse 28). Jesus was not born to die in Nazareth; He was born to die in a public place for the whole world. The extraordinary preservation of Christian witnesses for their "appointed hour" repeats in miniature the incident on the cliff-top at Nazareth. The strange power of Bishop Berggrav before Quisling in Norway is a case in point (see Odd Godal: Eivind Berggrav—S.C.M. Press). You can understand this power of the captives in the light of the present passage. Here was a Man who walked so closely with God that He was insulated against the terrorism of the human race. We cannot overthrow God's progress. We think that if we crush and obliterate the bearer of the serenity and truth we resent we shall not be troubled by it any more. But we are dismayed, and as it were paralysed, as this Man who is more than man walks through the hands that try to lynch Him. His purpose is to go on further and to die at another place and another time, for them and for us all.

The story of what took place at Nazareth shows that as soon as the Christian mission assumes the offensive it gives offence. God's message to man is always searching and painful. It must hurt before it can heal. It cannot announce a resurrection without a Cross.

4. Strategy of Love: Luke 5.

1-11. The early days of Christ's preaching in Galilee among the fishermen have affected the imagination of all who have loved and followed Him since. Mission is hard work, done with men who are no strangers to long hours and small rewards. The

catacombs at Rome and the mosaics of Christian Byzantium gleam with images of fish and fishermen. The Christians were called the people of the Fish because they took the Greek word for a fish as a secret anagram for "Jesus Christ the Son of God our Saviour." All these memories are subtly combined by the Gospel writers for teaching purposes, thus becoming more than ever the effective Word of God to all generations (cf. John 21).

The fishermen worked all night and took nothing. It is like the religious "quest for truth" without God's answer in Christ. Jesus comes and speaks His word (verse 3). Signs follow. It is a frequent experience for the missionary. Robert Morrison in China, Carey in India, Judson in Burma, worked for years without a single convert. Nothing was suddenly followed for them by everything. They were indifferent to apparent results. Obedience, patience and the joy of doing the work were enough. Peter's reaction to the miraculous haul of fish given by the Lord of Nature is not at all a conventional fisherman's reaction (verse 8). It is the response of the born missionary: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory" (Psalm 115). Who among those who follow Jesus is not astonished at what He does (verse 9)? The last two verses then give the meaning of what has happened on that morning on the inland sea. The same miracle will occur again in many quite different forms until the end of the world. For us the mission begins when we draw up the old boat on the beach for the last time, dry the nets, leave home, family, friends, ambitions, former plans, steady income, everything — and trust and follow.

12-16. Healing is part of the mission. Every Christian medical practitioner is exercising a special ministry within the Church. The phrase "spiritual healing" used in this connexion can be misleading. The power to heal is the gift of the spirit. The healing itself is with Jesus always eminently human and practical; it is nearer to what we call "human medicine" than to any associations of weird "spiritual" power. The Leper brings nothing but complete trust. This is no mere neurosis. Jesus here deals with organic contagious disease. He does it immediately and practically by physical, human contact and objective instruction after treatment. Impossible? What can God do and what can God not do? The charge to tell no one (verse 14) is often associated with miracles in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Why? Because the story has been made up at a later date? Because Jesus' humility makes Him reticent and unwilling to be lionised as a mere magician? Because He does not want His claim to be Messiah based on His achievements but on love and trust in Himself as He is? In any case the Leper talked! The crowds arrived. It was rumoured that this preacher put on a spectacle. He could, after all, appeal to the emotions of the people, their self-absorbed religiosity and pre-

occupation with their "nerves" and their "operations". The reaction of Jesus is immediate. He preferred the desert. When men and women seek God for the wrong reasons, without sorrow for being the kind of people they really are, God is inevitably withdrawn.

17-26. A commission of inquiry is now set up at Jerusalem and asked to investigate (on the spot) the social, legal, moral, national and religious implications of the new movement. The eminent churchmen and jurists who comprise the commission are startled at the consequences of the declaration of the forgiveness of sins. They are outraged on two grounds: first, it is Jesus, man, who says "You are forgiven". The man's own faith is not mentioned; he is apparently healed by the trust and intercession of his faithful friends. The thought is offensive to the Protestant conscience: "Surely God couldn't short-circuit justification by faith?" But the life of the mission is the declaration of free forgiveness to all men. We are to forgive others seventy times seven, over and over again, as God has forgiven. His nature is always to hold out this promise. Second, the promise creates the faith in the man. His appropriation of Jesus' assurance frightens the commission of inquiry: "Yes, it happened, we saw it — extraordinary business!"

27-32. Now Jesus takes a further unexpected step. He approaches a member of the class of Jews which has collaborated with the occupying power. Levi is a tax-contractor. He undertakes to exact a lump sum and keeps anything over the fixed amount as commission. Jesus attends a party arranged in His honour by a fifth columnist; the invitation is extended because Jesus treats Levi as a man, not as a "rat". Matthew (Levi) receives such a shock that he immediately enlists in the mission. The banquet he arranges is picketed by the patriots. Jesus is accused of fraternising with traitors and riff-raff. He answers (verses 31-32) with splendid, even irony. There is no trace of sarcasm in this measured and penetrating reply.

33-39. In the controversy that follows the Pharisees try to frame Jesus by driving a wedge between His followers and those of John the Baptist; John, they say, was a prohibitionist, whereas Jesus is distinctly convivial. Jesus, in His masterly reply, tells them that there is a right time for abstinence and a right time for participation in the joys of this world. (Cf. the Old Testament "wisdom" of Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8). But He makes it clear that He has not come merely to be another reformer of Judaism. He radically re-creates it. There can be no justification for extracting the ascetic emphasis from the teaching of Jesus and adding it on to the old law. Jesus compares the new rejoicing He finds with men like Matthew to the fun of a last party among bachelors just before the wedding of one of their friends. After he has gone they will have to pull in their belts and settle down to leaner days; but their

present festivity is highly appropriate and highly enjoyable. They understand they have found a doctrine of new vintage, a suit of clothes far better than the patched left-overs of the dull old religion. The metaphor of fermentation is used to describe the quality of the new message (verse 37). Christian obedience in the presence of the True Man is fresh and upsetting wherever it is found. Caste goes, respectability feels unbalanced and embarrassed, social distinctions become less significant, money matters less, family background ceases to count, even ecclesiastical laws look prim and patchy. Francis of Assisi radiates the new spirit in his travels with his friars. Jesus does not give new life only; He makes new forms whereby the life may find expression. The achievements and setbacks of the "Mission de Paris", the postwar revival of European lay religion and the writings of the martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Iona Community, and the emergence of churchmen who are friends of both East and West, yet disliked and attacked in both East and West, reveal the Risen Christ at work to-day. Samuel Angus, in commenting on verse 39, used to say to students, "Well? Was Jesus right? And how did He know, anyway?" The new vintage may be fresh and delicious, inimitable and full of the promise of a highly special quality in its maturity; but the old brigade refuse to taste it. Jesus is not denying that old wine is really good. He simply says, "This same vineyard has now produced a new and finer crop. Taste, and see!"

5. What is Man?: Psalm 139.

This wonderful "crown of the Psalter" is about the impossibility of any man ever falling out of the hands of the living God. God may deal always with us as members of a community, but He does not love us and know us collectively, He knows and loves each (Luke 12: 4-7).

1-6. God knows us all, more intimately than we know ourselves. Only by the act of communion with God, the recognition of His presence and care, can the Christian mission germinate and be maintained in man.

7-12. The flight of man into the universe that God made; in all directions we move only to meet the creator at the end of the journey. "Sheol" is the deep black pit the Jews believed to lie under the material world.

13-18. The flight of man inward upon the mystery of his own existence, as in psychoanalysis. The "reins", that part of the body where the emotions "burn", the skeleton and all the intricate mazes of man's living body, belong to God the designer and artificer. Man's very thoughts are made possible by God.

19-22. A sudden wave of human hatred for the oppressors; words like these are not found on the lips of Jesus. We make our own cause one with God's, marring (as here) our purest speech and thought. This human voice rises often like a dark

fountain in the midst of God's communication of Himself to man in the Bible; we must always watch for it.

23. Suddenly, at the end, the psalmist recognises that he is a darkness to himself. The power of man is not in man. Christian humanism finds its high stature and miraculous power in being still and waiting for the Risen Lord to claim and lead His child.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Should Christians attack humanism or defend humanism? What kind of humanism? Read Psalm 8.
2. Is it true that one brotherly action is worth a ton of theology? Read Matthew 25: 31 ff. Does this passage pronounce on this issue?
3. "Rigorous literalism on the remarriage of divorced persons is thoroughly dehumanised and a case of bad evangelism!" This is what some people think. What do you think? Refer to Matt. 5: 32. *Mark 10: 11-12*
4. What are tenable Christian positions about (a) going into hotel bars; (b) sex relations without marriage; (c) lotteries and gambling; (d) professional heavyweight boxing?
5. Where is the Church failing to "get alongside the publicans and sinners of the modern world"? Why? What can be done about it?

III BEFORE CAESAR Christian Secularism

1. The Secular State: Acts 25: 23-26: 32.

Jesus Christ was crucified under Pontius Pilate. The Death of the world's King occurred in a public place. Jesus stood before the official representatives of the political order and made His testimony. Those who follow Him in the company of the mission inevitably must stand where He stood until the end of the world. The more public and universal the message becomes the more the accredited representatives of the state tend to take serious note of it. The governments of the world, whether they hold power "de facto" or "de jure", are, in Christian terms, mere leaseholders of authority, since all authority belongs ultimately to God (St. Paul expresses himself strongly on this point in Romans 13: 1-7). The task of the secular ruler is to use his power rightly and to see that men are treated justly and with respect for their liberty. Caesar has a responsible and exacting office. Christians should recognise that he is called to be a custodian of God's good order in the world. As citizens they have a duty to help him by courteous and attentive awareness of his problems and by acceptance of their Christian calling to think in political terms.

Readiness to think of the political context in which the Christian message is always to be taken to the world has been part of the burden of the Church from the beginning. Retreat from the realities of politics is retreat from the obedience described in the Bible. The attitude of the Constitutions of India, Pakistan, Spain and China towards all the religious cults within the territory of those states must be the concern of every Christian. Freedom to propagate, maintain and change one's religion is, to the Christian, a universal human right. The state that rightly fulfils its work in the world will protect man's religious liberty because that is what God intends it to do. States that use the police or the army to protect and extend "official religions" become corrupt in their satisfaction with themselves and with the status quo they set themselves out to exalt and defend. Paul's speech and behaviour before Festus and Agrippa aptly underline the attitude and opportunities of the Christian missionary before the secular power.

The Setting of the Court: 25: 23-26: 1. Festus, the Roman Procurator, is in a dilemma. Paul, who is a Roman citizen, has appealed over his head to the higher court at Rome. Festus is new in the district, and submits the case to the ruling Herodian puppet king, Agrippa II, for his opinion. Agrippa comes in

with characteristic display; he is the typical Near-Eastern collaborator-monarch, a taster of religious opinions who, in any case, feels it to be good policy to follow the official Roman line of amused interest in "superstitions". However, he is Jewish, and later this appears. Festus (24-27) makes a competent and objective explanation of the special hearing now in progress and resumes his seat hoping for some sort of new evidence that he can submit with the other rather inconclusive documents in the case so far.

Agrippa (26: 1) makes an exemplary beginning. He adopts the right attitude of official neutrality; but observe how the narrative gradually brings him, as one human being, within sound of the message Paul faithfully delivers.

Paul's Speech: 26: 2-23. The tone of what Paul says is polite but not fulsome. He is like most of the arrested men of the "church struggle" in the Roman Empire in acting as though the civil ruler would have no authority unless he had received it from God as a trust (John 19: 11). Paul suggests that even a man as powerful as Agrippa must sooner or later cease being a mere "picker and chooser" and make a decision for or against Jesus Christ. But Agrippa, though he is intrigued by what Paul has to say, and by his ingeniously phrased appeal, cannot be led to acknowledge his need for repentance, faith and the transformation of his life by the Living God. Agrippa is typical "Caesar". He is interested in religion and theology, but only in so far as they "make a contribution to the welfare of the state and encourage respect for the monarchy".

The outcome: 26: 24-32. Festus, a Roman, is a little alarmed when two Jewish subjects of the emperor start "talking religion" and getting him out of his depth. He takes a bluff line—"Come, come!" Paul tries unsuccessfully to press home the point of his preaching before the court breaks up. It is obvious that Agrippa, as a Jew, has been profoundly moved. Agrippa is of the opinion that Paul would have been set free if his preaching of the Christian truth had been "a personal and private matter". In Agrippa's view Paul made a mistake when he decided to press the case for religious liberty in the highest court of the Empire. What Agrippa failed to see was that full Christian obedience makes public witness in relation to the state itself inevitable (Matthew 10: 18).

2. Jonah Confounded: The Book of Jonah.

Jonah is a missionary sent to preach in a powerful godless state. He is afraid of his call and runs in the other direction to escape.

1: 1-17. Jonah, in trying to get away from God, finds himself adrift in the same boat with his fellow human beings and discovers that the human race "sinks or swims together". His heathen, but very decent friends pray according to the light

they have and set to work to try and save the ship. Jonah, by contrast, is asleep; he is neither a good member of God's people nor a good member of the human race. The secular world wakes him up and asks him at least to be good enough to say his prayers for it! This is always a fair claim the world may make on the Church (1 Timothy 2: 1-7). Jonah is a weak-kneed witness. He is not even willing to admit he is a Jew. The writer of the Book of Jonah suggests that a church that is asleep on the job is visited with the kind of storm it deserves—and that the world suffers with it. The celebrated Stuttgart Declaration, in which the German evangelical churches admitted their imperfect witness and their sense of guilt in view of the rise of Nazism is a modern illustration of what the writer of the Book of Jonah is undoubtedly getting at. The decent heathen sailormen have a bad conscience about throwing Jonah overboard, whereas for him death offers a way of escape from God. But God has other plans!

Chapter 2. The great fish is like the darkness into which the missionary descends when he becomes fully aware of the second-rate timidity of his answer to the God who chose him; (Jeremiah 51: 34, 51: 44 describes the exile of the Jews in Babylon as a dark judgment of this kind. Through the exile the Jews learn again that they are to be God's servant people for the sake of the nations). Jonah learns to sing in spite of the horror and God gives him his second chance.

3: 1-5. Jonah now goes eastward as originally intended. It is highly unlikely that any ancient city was as broad as "three days' journey". Even modern Los Angeles is not so wide. Probably what the writer means is that Vanity Fair may be a vast place, but we are expected to go right into the middle of it. When we do so we discover that it is full of secularists who are ready to listen to us because we were willing to take a personal interest in them. Jonah now works thoroughly and seriously. He virtually says, "The time is short! This country has five years to run before the Communists take over!" Jonah is as much taken aback as anyone when the secularists become men of faith and vision. He rightly preached judgment, but he had not himself the love of men that could lead him to pray for the preservation of the human city by faith rather than its destruction by folly.

3: 6-10. The king himself believes. Jonah feels much like the early Christian martyrs who predicted the end of the world and instead saw the Roman Emperor and his court turn significantly to Jesus Christ. The prophet becomes disgruntled. He mopes and broods over the slump in his reputation. The secularists seem to "have the laugh on him" wherever he goes. He again expresses his rather self-conscious and offended wish for death. God speaks to him as the father speaks to the elder brother in the parable of the Spendthrift Son (Luke 15: 25-32). Most

Christians sometimes become like Jonah and the elder brother. We want the Church to be exclusively our Church and its message our message. The thought that God may give it freely to rulers on the other side of the iron curtain and that a Church there is as much God's Church as a Church here is a truth we are willing to mention but hardly to believe. How many of us pray regularly for the Hungarian and Chinese Churches in their responsible tasks before their governments? Jonah still secretly hopes the worst may happen. He sits down outside the danger area to watch.

4: 6-11. To be sure of the best view Jonah is forced to sit on the sunny side. A plant (possibly a castor oil plant) gives him shade for a time; it is eaten by a sort of cactoblastus, exposing him to sunstroke. Jonah again gives in and wants to die; he is a very bad missionary; but God uses the incident to show the value of the state in His purpose. "You are disgruntled about the plant that sheltered you", God says. "You didn't make it, but you didn't want it to be destroyed. I did make and preserve the huge secular city of Nineveh. Surely it is right that I should be merciful to it, because it provides thousands of my dear children with good and useful things, an orderly and cheerful life and proper means of caring for their animals". The last words of the Book of Jonah, "And also much cattle", are a sort of provisional charter for the RSPCA. They remind us of the sentiments of Dr. Dolittle, who said, "I like the animals much better than 'the best people'."

Jonah comes to the Christian Church to-day with fresh force as a word from God. It makes out a fine case for an open-eyed, but in some sense "worldly" Christianity—a down-to-earth Christian secularism that will evoke an immediate response from the tough sailors bound for Tarshish and the big king in the Palace at Nineveh.

*3. The Judgment in Progress: Matthew 25: 31-46.

Secularised religion lives by "good works". The Christian religion does not live by good works but by the Good Work God is doing constantly in and through those who put their trust in Him. The story of the Great Assize in Matthew 25 shows that Justification by Faith provides nobody with an automatic guarantee of eternal life. Unless our awareness of the reality of the other world leads us spontaneously beyond preaching into identification with the people we meet through service, we can be assured that we are already being singled out in advance for classification with the goats. Even the ministry of Word and Sacraments can be mere volubility and play-acting unless accompanied by an ever-present longing to climb out of the cassock and spend a day with a youth group

*It is suggested that, if the Conference programme does not allow sufficient time for covering the whole of the study, this section might be omitted.

painting an old woman's house, or a night with a boy who is in trouble with the police.

The shocking element in the picture Jesus paints is the announcement that the judgment of the nations and the Church is going on now; we do not have to wait for this Kingdom of God to come before. That World may come into this world. By the presence of Jesus Christ among us in the misery of the refugee, the stupor of the mentally ill, the aching hunger pangs of the Indian peasant, the agony of the cancer patient, the King of the world is already here unseen. Our love of them is the measure of our love for Him.

Thus, although no effort on our part can come up to standard in the presence of Jesus, who is the standard, His love is proved in us by the glad and instantaneous help we give to atheists, alcoholics, unmarried mothers, ex-prisoners and all who suffer. He does not judge us by the fervour of our address to Him, "Lord!" (verse 44), though we may acknowledge Him as Lord with our words and the affection of our hearts. The standard of our judgment is external and secular because the evidence of the presence of the Kingdom of God in the world is in our deeds (II Corinthians 5: 6-10). Head religion and heart religion are necessary — but hand religion is the proof of their presence.

4. Vocation on the Frontiers.

If we have established the correct perspective in assessing the Christian's secular task the frontiers between the Church (or Christian task-force) and the world appear to be innumerable and distressingly ill-manned. A doctor, talking to a neurotic woman in his consulting room, is manning a frontier. So is a recent graduate in Forestry as he sits in his office somewhere on the edge of the pines and talks for the first time to a hard-boiled foreman. A secretary poring over income tax forms in a Government office in Canberra is on a frontier. There are many other vital meeting points between the mission and the secular world; over shop counters, at twin lathes on the same bench, where pigs are being loaded on to trucks or where a bulldozer is brought on to a property to clear scrub, where a family tunes in to "The Nation's Forum of the Air", where two employees (one a Christian) discuss what Chaplin's last film really meant, where an Australian electrical engineer helps to put up Radar on an airport in Sumatra, where a Christian business man gets into conversation with reporters after a press conference at an Assembly of the World Council of Churches. These are the points where the Coming of Christ is already being acted out; they are the tactical key encounters by which the state of the struggle is measured from moment to moment in anticipation of V-Day when the Master Strategist will call for the laying down of the armour of the Christian warfare in every part of the field (Ephesians 6: 10-20).

If everything we do in this life is part of the Christian mission we should see our Confirmation or Reception into full communicant membership of the Church as a commissioning to a form of service in the world that only we can fully carry through. Every moment of the Christian's life, awake or asleep, at home or abroad, is part of a ceaseless and truceless penetration of the whole earth and the whole life of mankind.

5. A Stranger at Home or Abroad.

There is danger that any one of us may take his summons to be identified with the secular world in the wrong way. The Christian missionary may be conformed to the world without being transformed by the renewal of his mind (Romans 12: 1-2). In that case he ceases to be part of the Mission. The loss of missionary sharpness is magnificently described in Ezekiel 16, where it applies to the uniqueness and special selection of Israel among the nations. The strangeness and winsome beauty of God's people is bound up with the purity and reserve of their life. They do not go into the streets like the gaudy amateur prostitute described in Ezekiel's polished words. They go as a virgin to whose grace and unstudied courage men turn with longing and respect.

The presence of such a people in the world should lead the world to see that Christians are strangers, in one sense, wherever they go. The allegiance of a true missionary, in China or the Gold Coast, can never be first to the President of the United States or the Queen of England. If missionaries earnestly desire to have some allegiance on earth it will probably become increasingly true of them that they will be led to swear earthly allegiance to the recognised legal authorities in the countries where they serve. Even this is for them provisional. An Australian Christian, in Australia or in Japan, is primarily a "citizen of heaven" (Philippians 3: 20). Very often when he is encouraged to be downright secular in his behaviour by taking a drink or consenting to drape a national flag on a Holy Table he will unexpectedly become difficult in spite of the fact that he is known to be a "good fellow" and loyal. On other occasions, when he is expected to be "spiritual" in his outlook he may shock both Church and State by openly advocating the recognition of Red China or giving it as his opinion that The Call* is "a philosophical Irish stew" (Synge on Colossians, Torch Commentary, page 62). The Christian mission will have cannon to right and left of it, spiritualists above it and materialists below it until the end of time. It would be fatal for the bearer of the Word deliberately to court such a situation; but if he has learnt to expect it God can teach him to face it.

* The Call was issued in Australia on Remembrance Day, 1951, by ecclesiastical and judicial leaders. It urged respect for the law, and moral endeavour.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Some Christians in China and Hungary believe they should pray for the maintenance of the Communist Government in their countries. Are they right or wrong?
2. The British Coronation Service suggests that a constitutional monarchy in the United Kingdom is a part of the divine order in the world. Is it? Can other forms of government be ordained by God?
3. Paul says, "The law is holy and just and good." (Rom. 7: 12.) Would you regard the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20) as being the only basis of human law that can be acceptable to God?
4. Can you think of any circumstances under which it is the duty of a Christian citizen (a) not to bear arms in the service of the state, (b) to refuse to pay taxes, (c) to work for overthrow of the constituted authority of the state?
5. "Censorship, state security services, and rigid party political programmes are a denial of human freedom." "The Communist Party, indecent publications, anti-religious propaganda, uncontrollable children, are a menace to the democratic state." Are there Christian principles on which we can base a decision in favour of control or freedom?
6. A Greek Churchman recently said, "Confirmation is the ordaining of lay men and women." Do you think that most people when they are received into full membership of a church are convinced that they are thereby ordained to be missionaries in their secular occupation?

IV

CHOSEN PEOPLE

Christian Community

*1. Called For Mission: Romans 10.

In its work in this world the Church of Jesus Christ is not called into a place of safety but called to go out and rescue men and women who are in places of danger. The members of a Church that regards its function as preaching the Word celebrating the sacraments and having conversations on the spiritual life or hearing confessions may or may not be members of a true Church according to the Bible. If they carry out these functions within their own walls only, they are probably getting into the condition of Israel—going about to establish their own righteousness. If, however, every function of their Church tends to force them willy-nilly outside those walls, they have the true sign of the presence of the God of Israel at work in their midst. The Church is called to mission. That is its "raison d'être". No mission, no Church.

1-4. Paul is discussing the mystery of what has happened to his own people, the Jews, now that the missionary initiative has been seized by the Christian Church. His opening remark in this chapter is, on the face of it, outrageous. He prays that the people who have for centuries regarded themselves as being "saved" may, in spite of that, be saved! They have established synagogues and schools throughout the Roman Empire to teach people their precious Law. They are holding up their respectability and moral effort in the face of God and other men and saying that this superior morality is the Good News. When Jesus Christ comes and lives out this morality in the deed of the Cross he fulfils the Law and tells men to put their trust in Him. The Jews refuse to do so. They persist in proclaiming their own tradition and are left in the backwaters of history until their eyes are opened and they recognise what God has done in Jesus. Although the Jews were still, when Paul wrote, a missionary people, he perceives, with vivid historical insight, that the missionary phase of their story is now over. A world that knows Jesus as He is will never any longer rest content with the Law He has fulfilled in His Cross.

5-13. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30: 12-14, a famous passage about the inwardness of the Law when it is loved and obeyed. He leads cunningly up to the point that to have the fullness of the Law truly written within your life you need more than the Law itself. He suggests that if you have nothing better than morality to recommend to people you will soon feel it more respectable and advisable not to make a fool of yourself by getting out into the street and preaching. You may think

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you are saved by the Law, but you will not be particularly interested in trying to save other people by the Law. He then speaks, out of his experience, of the message that is worth speaking—the actual gripping story of Jesus and his Resurrection. He goes so far as to say (verse 9) that you cannot be saved unless you tell people about the one who is the rescuer. He drives home what he is saying by quoting scraps half recollected from the Old Testament. Everyone who is reached by the story of what God has done in Jesus, Jew or Greek, is gathered into the newly-established company of God, the new Church whose beginning is in the word originally spoken at baptism by the new Christian: "Jesus Christ is Lord". The rest of the life of this newly-baptised person within the Church is a repetition to all men everywhere of that same word: "Jesus is Lord".

14-17. Now some missionary passages from Isaiah are quoted to show how the widespread preaching of Christians to Jews during Paul's own period of service as a missionary had brought the story of Cross and Resurrection to Israel.

18-21. Quoting a fragment of a Psalm and fitting it to his purpose Paul says that the strategy and reception of this early Christian mission to the Jews have worked out as one might have expected. God makes a missionary "people" within a people that is no longer missionary. Some members of the old "people" respond and become missionary themselves. Others become irritated and secretly jealous of the energy of the new movement. All kinds of unpopular racial types and social classes are drawn into the new group; they are sought and found by the missionaries. The members of the old group disobey God and contradict his missionaries.

What Paul describes in the closing chapters of Romans happened when the Friars went out preaching within the Christian Church of the Middle Ages; it happened when missionaries went overseas at the time of the Evangelical Revival in Europe; it may be happening in a new way, not yet fully evident, to-day.

2. Unity, But Unity for Mission: John 17.

Before Jesus goes to the Garden of Gethsemane and the Cross He stands between His disciples and God and prays for them in their mission. He speaks of His coming "glory" (verse 1) in connexion with the Cross, which is the end of His work on earth and the beginning of the work of His disciples. Between the Cross, which stands as though at the centre of the world, and the circumference, is an area that Jesus did not visit when He lived in Palestine. He knows that this area must be claimed by those He leaves behind so that He may be known in every part of the world when He returns.

The activity of the disciples is the same as the activity of the Master. He was sent by God and made God's nature perfectly plain among men (verse 6). Now they are to make

Get ordinary people to face scientific facts. ! Support: Michael Scott etc.

perfectly plain what they heard and saw in Him (Cf. I John: 1-4). We are all upheld by the knowledge that Jesus is Himself personally interested in the work we are doing and that He is asking the Father to strengthen us in it (verse 9). We can be sure that people who tell us to "have nothing to do with the world" are praying for us in a way He never prays for us (verse 15). The verb used for "send" and "sent" in verse 18 is very close to the word "apostle", meaning literally "one who is sent out". Whatever else an Apostolic Ministry in the Church may be it must be marked by a sense of incessant missionary responsibility and drive. The sanctification (or dedication) of Himself by Jesus (verse 19) is His readiness freely to bear the Cross and this becomes the authentic sign of His disciples in the work they now do in His service.

Verses 20 and 21 constitute a unity. The words "that they all may be one" are the motto of the World's Student Christian Federation. We often quote them in such a way as to suggest that Jesus wills for us unity in itself and almost as an end in itself. Their context proves that the prayer of the Master is for those who are won by the mission, that they may themselves become missionary. The unity they are to possess is a unity in missionary activity because the unity between Father and Son is missionary, a unity of missionary intention and action. Correct understanding of these two verses is vital for the continuation of the effective work of the World's Student Christian Federation. The ecumenical movement begins and ends in the kind of renewed missionary obedience indicated in this part of the prayer of Jesus. If Christian unity work degenerates into mere discussion of the churches' ministries and divisions, or a quest for organic union for its own sake, or an attempt to find a streamlined organisation for combined Christian publicity and philanthropy, it will die. This prayer keeps it alive. Unity is for mission and true mission will lead us to the right kind of unity.

3. A Divided People: The Book of Ruth.

The Book of Ruth, usually regarded as a gentle love story, is probably a contentious writing about the intrusion of racial and national prejudices into the Jewish community. Many students believe it belongs to the period of Ezra, the nation's leader after the return from the Babylonian exile. Ezra called upon Jews who had remained in Jerusalem and married foreign wives to divorce their wives for the sake of racial and religious "purity". If the Book of Ruth is read with this background in mind it becomes a Word of God for us and stirs Christians to examine the state of their own household and ask which national, racial, ecclesiastical and political barriers within the world-wide Christian family are of God and which of men.

Chapter 1: The writer ingeniously begins (verse 1) by putting his narrative in the distant past. As to whether the

Help the conscious offspring of marriage to adapt themselves to adapt themselves

moral fits in the present—the reader may draw his own conclusions. The position is briefly described. An attractive widow, daughter-in-law of a respected Jewish citizen, becomes a displaced person within the borders of Israel (1-6). Like some Japanese wife of a Christian attached to BCOF who has died she accompanies her mother-in-law across the tribal wall that constitutes what seems a psychologically impenetrable resistance to a happy future (7-15). Verse 16 is one of the great verses of the Bible. It expresses the true missionary's sense of being called to a new and hazardous destiny among a totally unfamiliar people. Love of the God who has spoken to Ruth through the wreckage of her home calls her out of her former "fold" into the universal "flock" of God. To answer this call means to be willing to leave one's birthplace for ever and make another country one's spiritual home, as Carey, Mary Slessor, Morrison and Judson did in their lifetime. The logic behind such missionary determination is beyond nationalism, racialism and human criticism (verse 18). Verses 18-22 offer a painful reflection on the character and outlook of Naomi. Her name meant "pleasant"; now she is bitter. She is like the refugee who damns God and religion out of hand, or the missionary's unwilling wife who "never liked the natives", or the parson's lady who voices a distaste for the members of a congregation she never chose to serve. Naomi is the narrow and disillusioned Jewish woman of the period after the exile; she shows up badly in contrast with her Moabite daughter-in-law, who is worthy to be a member of the "true Israel".

Chapter 2: Resettlement work begins for Ruth. She is looking for work first; the consideration of anything more than that is incidental. Boaz appears. He is a magnificently upright and gracious person. His efforts for Ruth's rehabilitation are an instance of the love that goes beyond the law laid down by Ezra's narrow policy towards the "foreign women". Verses 8-16 reflect the delicacy and courtesy of speech between man and woman within the family of God. These exchanges between Ruth and Boaz are a foretaste of the unity described by Paul (Galatians 3: 23-29).

Now (verses 19-23) this attractive young refugee widow at the end of her tether receives more than she had ever dared expect in her new country.

Chapter 3: The story at this point seems to say, "Yes, we know that some of the girls who married our men in Jerusalem during the later years of the Exile were sometimes calculating types aided and abetted by not over-scrupulous tacticians like Naomi. But even the lawmakers must recognise that some of these foreign girls are above reproach and happily married to some of our most distinguished citizens. It is wrong to discriminate against them merely because they are not members of our group by birth. We owe them a responsibility and God expects us to honour it". Translated into an Australian equiva-

Our religious community is becoming more open to inter-marriage, to cultural exchange, to unity, etc. Colour is being outplayed

lent this could be put as follows: "By all means screen refugees and Asians. Apply the usual tests of fitness to work, health, political affiliation and language aptitude—but be careful not to make yourselves ridiculous by crushing all humanity out of the community in the process". Verse 13 shows how Boaz respects the Law providing for the next of kin to have a widow if he wishes to claim her. Though Boaz is much drawn to Ruth he puts the community's requirement before his own inclination. The circumstances under which this "mixed marriage" is concluded are somewhat irregular, but chivalrous throughout. They fulfil the law of God, they do not destroy it. They are calculated to upset both Church and State as they are then constituted, but they offer an illustration of the truth that "new occasions teach new duties". Is it not possible that the Church must be the place where the races of mankind first learn to inter-marry and have children to the glory of God?

Chapter 4: The law in Palestine at the time of the writing of the Book of Ruth provided that a claimant for land that was put up for sale by a relative should marry a widow who "went with it" like Ruth as a sign of good faith. The "next of kin" in this case wants the land, but he does not want to marry Ruth because the property would pass to her son (if she had one) and not remain in his hands permanently. He is more interested in property and prestige than in persons. The probable background of this 4th chapter is the complaint of the conservatives that Jewish land is being owned and farmed by the non-Jewish descendants of the "foreign wives". By his comment that the passing over of properties was done in the market place by the non-documentary procedure of handing over a shoe the author is perhaps suggesting that the transfer of property during the exile was carried on as publicly and decently as possible under the prevailing lawless conditions of that time. Mixed marriages and all that goes with them may strike the nationalist as an abomination, but they are certainly no abomination to God.

God is speaking to us through the Book of Ruth about every outsider who could cross the Church's threshold—Matthew the Publican, Paul the Pharisee, the African eunuch (Acts 8: 26-40), the ragged little boy whose nose runs in Sunday School, the girl who now sings in the choir but is known to have had an affair with a married man, the notorious modernist who cannot believe in the Resurrection and belongs to the Pacifist Society, but painted the inside of the School Hall in his spare time. Jesus met people who were the equivalents of all these and loved them. He went to meals with sharpers and street girls and left Israel to seek new faces and places in Tyre and Sidon (Mark 7: 24-30). We are to be like Boaz and like our Lord; "we have to make of the Church in every place a voice for those who have no voice and a home where every man will be at home". A Church acting like this for the weak and the

refugees, for the victims of religious persecution and racial discrimination relieves the bitterness and barrenness of man's exile (verse 16). Indeed the murmurs of the onlookers (verse 11) voice a daring thought. Rachel and Leah were the darlings of the ultra-conservative Jew; it is like saying, "Make this Japanese wife of one of our servicemen the greatest of British mothers"! The short genealogy which ends the book points out the known ancestry of King David and says, "See what happens when the people of God belong in the world and are not afraid to break down the barriers between man and man".

4. The Sacrament of the Mission: I Corinthians 11: 23-26.

It is melancholy to think that Christian community is most deeply disrupted at the point where the Church takes bread and wine to "herald the Lord's death" (Knox's literal translation of verse 26). St. Paul's account of the institution of Holy Communion is given to a church at Corinth where people had been greedy and drunk at the time of the Lord's Supper. He gives his solemn reminder in this context. Our context is different. Our services of Communion may be orderly, but although we may all love Jesus Christ deeply and long to serve Him well, we find it impossible to be fellow-partakers of what He has given in this central service. No Christian, having once seen this fact clearly, can be content with it. The reason for the "divine dissatisfaction" we feel should lie in our recognition that every time we do this in the real presence of the Risen Christ we are being equipped for missionary activity, which is the life of the Church. The central actions in the service of Holy Communion show us God's mission to us (end of verse 26). Our actions on God's behalf afterwards should herald what God has done. We know, if we are honest with ourselves about friends who find themselves in "different communions" (appalling contradiction in terms!) that what God did he did for them also. Yet we are separated from them at the central point where our mission is ever-renewed. If we can learn to think of the Holy Communion as the sacrament of the Mission, where we are to be brought together to claim the world for the King who has been crucified and who is coming to make plain His victory, we then see Christian divisions with real sorrow and with fresh hope. God can overcome them by leading us again to pray and plan together, seeking the new unity that He wills to give us in our worship and our work.

5. Speech, Sharing, Service: Acts 20.

Someone has observed that there are three qualities always present in the Christian Church when it is truly missionary. They are described in three New Testament words: KERUGMA, which means "telling" or "proclaiming"; KOINONIA, which means "sharing", having all things in common; DIAKONIA, which means "serving".

Anyone who reads sympathetically the moving and intimate twenty-first chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles will see how these three are one in the life of the early Church. They are one wherever God's Spirit leads His people to-day.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "A Church may have a regular ministry, a proper discipline and true sacraments, but if it is not missionary, it is not the Church." (D. T. Niles). Apply this to your own Church and your own membership of it.
2. Would you consider it possible that Mahatma Gandhi was among God's chosen people?
3. Two people meet in the S.C.M. and become engaged. One is a member of an episcopal Church, the other a member of a non-episcopal Church; their respective denominations arrange services of Holy Communion at a Conference. What should they do about it?
4. What was your reaction when you read "Is it not possible that the Church must be the place where the races of mankind first learn to marry and have children to the glory of God?"

V

THE MIND OF CHRIST

Christian Intelligence

1. The Mission to the University: Acts 17: 16-34.

16-21. Paul, Christian missionary, finds himself temporarily at Athens. He sees the ancient, but now rather decadent intellectual centre of the Graeco-Roman world as a field of missionary activity while he is in it. As a man living close to Jesus Christ he feels provoked by the enslavement of the minds of the sightseers and dilettanti who haunt the place. Like many students in modern universities they have externalised their ambition, greed and appetite by "setting up idols". Our material obsessions give us away, whether they take the form of altars or preoccupation with job openings and higher salary levels.

Paul makes a twofold use of his available time. He carries on personal work among the Jews in the synagogue and the non-Jewish "pious persons" or "inquirers" on the fringe of the Jewish group. He also extends his work in Athens to include the forum cliques, the visiting postgraduate types who haunt the quadrangles. Among them are followers of the then fashionable Stoic and Epicurean philosophies. They take this "entertaining Jewish eccentric" off to the Hyde Park Corner of the city. The writer's comment (verse 21) amounts to a witty description of some college high tables one might have seen once!

22-31: Paul's missionary approach is not unskillful. With what looks like a touch of irony he calls his hearers "extremely religious" (verse 22), indicating the gesture the agnostic makes, just in case, to a God who might exist. Paul turns their inscription against them. He says they are agnostics in the sense that the true God is not known to them as yet, not in the sense that they do not know whether another powerful God exists or not. He puts before them a set of facts that will cast fresh light on their "student vocation".

Firstly Paul speaks of the One God who has created all that is. He gives his opinion on the erection of altars for the purpose of getting into satisfactory relationship with "the gods" (24-5) thereby tilting at the conventional attitude towards "religion" and its "appropriate use on ceremonial occasions" so widespread in the modern western university. Then he goes on to speak of man's place in the creation (26) and God's purpose that man should try to know Him through the "scientific" examination of the universe. He remarks that God is not absent from His creation but close to the "researcher" in His work, though He cannot be seen. Paul points out virtually that you cannot expect to find the Heavenly Father through reactions in test tubes or sets of measurements and observations. A father is found when one begins to address Him quietly as "Father" and when we begin to understand that He is calling us His children (29). He makes an apposite quotation from the Stoic poet Aratus (28). The argument is clinched by bringing these agnostics in a state of suspended decision to face up to the Cross and Resurrection as new and determinative events in the world's history. It is argued that these acts of God prepare the world for its end and goal. The Athenians do not know it, but all human lives are coming closer to the day when they must confront their Maker and measure themselves against the standard of the true man, Jesus. This is a final reckoning nobody can hope to evade.

32-34. The reactions to Paul's address could probably have been predicted before the "mission to the university" began. The superior people laughed and called it all "childish, credulous stuff". The curiosity of others was sufficiently aroused to induce them to attend future public meetings and study circles. A few came to the end of years of fruitless speculation or humble waiting by giving their lives into the keeping of the Man Paul had been talking about. When we try to present the Christian truth in the university we must understand that we have no right to ask for more than this. If we do our work faithfully and as well as we can do it in the sight of God we can leave the visible and invisible results to Him. But to be effective means to understand the mind and present decay of the university, to speak to the university's deepest need, and to be sure we are showing people Jesus Christ Himself, not some substitute "new thing".

*2. Cultural Despair and the Answer: Isaiah 40.

This great poem seems to have been written to celebrate the return of the Jews from the Exile under the auspices of the tolerant Persian ruler, Cyrus. It is the utterance of an Israel emerging from despair during a period of breaking world empires and the advance of bewildering new knowledge—much like our own in these ways.

1-2. The opening words could be addressed to the leaders and members of the Christian student community in the East Zone of Germany, whose struggle against the all-inclusive and intolerant Marxist regime within the universities is described in "The Witness of the Imprisoned", the special number of the Federation News Sheet published by the World's Student Christian Federation in May-June, 1953. The fight for the right to commend Jesus Christ as the answer to man's quest for wholeness makes faithful Christians simultaneously defenders of intellectual integrity, of liberty of utterance, and of the independence of the mind. The true calling of the SCM and the totalitarian claim are irreconcilables. If we must at some time suffer for our faith we know we suffer also for the future of the true and open university.

3-5. The writer hears the voice of a heavenly messenger telling the hard-pressed minority in an apparently impossible position that God will now use their witness by taking them directly back, the hard way, across the desert, to become the inspiration and hope of other peoples not yet born (cf. Matthew 5: 14).

6-8. The natural response of such a small group is despair. What can one say in a world like this that can make the slightest difference to the future? The voice says that the world is in the strong hands of the God who made it; the atomic stockpile itself is a tiny compression of a drop of His own incomprehensible created energy. But this God has spoken and acted. What he has done in Man makes all the difference. Hence every student who knows Jesus Christ becomes a member of a "little flock", strengthened in all its work and freed from anxiety by the certainty that God is faithful (9-11).

12-17. Much of this reads like a reflection on the limitations of science. Behind the astronomer's world and the infinitely tiny world moving under the microscope is the unmeasured mystery. Our journal articles and established findings are exploration into chinks of the huge universe God made and sustains. The teachability and simplicity of a man like Einstein is the product of an essentially childlike attitude; science is a method—it becomes bad science when it tries to set itself up as the right basis for all "justice, knowledge and understanding", because these find their right basis only in the Creator (verse 14). Healthy despair about the capacities of the human intelligence is appropriate to the Christian student;

*It is suggested that, if the Conference programme does not allow sufficient time for covering the whole of the study, this section might be omitted.

it can make him begin again to explore the world, without being blinded by the glamour of existing "theories".

18-20. A picture, by way of contrast, of man in his unteachable state. The "idol" in the ancient world was the personification of what each wanted most: power, sex, victory in war, wealth, fertility, prosperity. These are gods still served in many universities: lucrative research posts, big incomes, Packards for oneself and furs for one's wife, rows of published works, big desks in private offices, trips abroad, all the antitheses of the desire of the real missionary! You cannot compare the God of Israel with any of these (verse 18).

21-24. These words ought to be heard by universities that tend to become chiefly training centres for uncritical and compliant "technicians" who are prepared to have their thinking on the serious questions of life and death done for them by Lenin and Stalin or by Senator McCarthy.

25-31. The close of the poem is a rebuke in the present to Christians who are appalled at the seeming hopelessness of work "in the technical faculties". We can achieve more than we expect when we see that our task does not depend on us, but on what He can do through us. There is no despair with God, no weariness; He can teach us to speak His truth in every part of the university in ways that are winning and relevant but at the same time we are to be uncompromising in the demand that all students strive to take the whole of knowledge as their impossible goal and the hatred of mental slavery as their badge.

3. Knowledge and Wisdom: Proverbs 8.

The most important question every student can ask himself as a student is what he is most constantly pursuing. What do we "love with the whole mind" (Deuteronomy 6: 5)?

In the 8th Chapter of Proverbs, an ode to Wisdom, devotion to Wisdom is compared with overwhelming love of a beautiful woman (verses 1-4). Hers is a chaste, but insistent voice, calling men to the pleasures of diligent and patient waiting (verse 5). "Prudence" means a proper ordering of the whole life, balance between the life of the body and the life of thought, right use of time, choice of reading, method of writing, discipline of meditation and prayer. In New Testament terms the words of Romans 12: 3 describe what is meant. The orderly planning of the student life is a necessary path to Wisdom.

The life that is directed towards truth will not reach its objective unless it is concerned about goodness. The conclusions reached by students are almost invariably affected by the kind of people they are (6-9). Twisted thinking is frequently the product of selfish motives (8), but the person who makes the truth as much a rule of thoughtful behaviour as it is an object of inquiry is more likely to find it than another man who separates knowledge and conduct. For instance (verses 10-11) pursuit of Wisdom is unlikely to make people rich, but it is in

itself more rewarding than the big cheques handed out to key executives who are sometimes trying to serve God and Mammon (Matthew 6: 24). The celebrated diplomats, captains of industry, commissars and party bosses are subject to a temptation that destroys the clear and single life of the mind (verse 13).

Wisdom speaks of herself as being more than the pure knowledge of philosophy; to know her is to covet some part in the work of the "aristocracy of service". There are men and women whose intelligence and disinterested love of men make them exceptional administrators, research scientists, university teachers or missionaries. They have the kind of wealth no other source can give (14-21).

We do not make Wisdom; God gives it. It is His unfolding of the secrets of His own activity and life. To receive it we must sooner or later enter into the quiet of communion with Him. Prayer, for the Christian, is at the deep heart of all his study and thought. Quaker and Catholic join hands in teaching other Christians that when the active mind is still and fixed on God in the act of prayer, intelligence and will-power are liberated. Prayer should link all our other physical and mental disciplines in a steady and serenely balanced unity. It can be real in those moments of the day when we are alone with ourselves (though we may then be surrounded by other people in a crowd, or driving a car, or sitting in a bus). Sometimes we know it when lying in bed at night, or reading in the library, or in the preparation of work that lies ahead, or at the hour of morning or evening when we close the door and say our prayers (Matthew 6: 5-6). In such moments we share the mind of Christ and He lives again through us as we give Him our thought, speech and actions. The greatest gift of Wisdom is the Love that made the Christian Mission in the Life and Death and Resurrection of Jesus. Such selflessness is a light for our lives, a clear and shining joy coming as the reward of every mind, however uncomplicated, where there exists a sincere longing to be one with God.

We must tell the university (32-36) that the way to this Wisdom is its right path. Knowledge without contemplation and the gift of God's illumination is leading the university, the nations and the organised life of human society towards destruction and death (verse 36).

4. Scrutiny of History.

The Christian sees in the life of Jesus truth that shows Him real God and real man. If he is a student within a university, school or college, he has no right to say there that no doctrines must be taught which conflict with the Christian Creeds. Other doctrines put forward by other people may be honestly held. They should be understood and criticised. At the same time the Christian should encourage his teachers and fellow students to give to Jesus of Nazareth the careful scrutiny they lavish on

everything else they read and strive to understand. To look at Jesus receptively and afresh we must all take more seriously the study of human history. The traditional central point of all learning is man, the learner. Man can be understood only if we know the story of mankind. Part of that complex record of events lies in the unusual claim and fate of the Jewish people described by many writers and from many different chronological vantage points in the Bible. The Christian claim for Jesus Christ arises out of the Biblical record. Any person who says he is a student and refuses to approach the Biblical histories and the claims of Jesus with interest and genuine curiosity is not a student. This applies to the superior philosopher as much as to the "pure research man" in the natural or applied sciences. But the person who stands most condemned is the member of the SCM who holds daily in his hand "the most precious thing this world affords" and does not know who Ezekiel was or what he said or the significance of the word Pentecost.

5. The End of the Mission: Colossians 2: 1-19.

Paul writes to the Church at Colossae in Asia Minor, a Church he had never been able to visit. It took a pride in its pseudo-theology and had to be recalled to the one Word it was commissioned to proclaim — Jesus Christ (2). Paul recalls the Colossians from their fancy speculations and current crazes to Jesus. He says that all treasures of "wisdom" and "knowledge" (two fashionable words at Colossae) are hidden in Christ (verse 3). He is stressing a point he has already made (1: 15), that Jesus is the "ikon" or picture through which all the concentrated light of God shines in human form as the sun might pour its rays through a burning glass (only more so). He appeals to the Colossians to start their speculations with their eyes fixed on Him. Beware of the lecturer whose personality gets you obsessed in the end with his pet theory (verse 4)! It is a pleasure to see students who have introduced a kind of military precision and clarity into their acquisition of knowledge, the balanced judgment coming from the influence of the True Man.

The Christian student has his missionary responsibility within his calling as a student. He soon sees that there is no truth that can conflict with the radical honesty and sincerity of Jesus. Therefore in every fresh discovery, however superficially alarming it may seem to be at the time, he finds reason for gratitude (verse 7). On the other hand he is inclined to be wary of the claims of all grand and comprehensive philosophies and systems of thought. His eye must be watchful for "hollow shams" (verse 8), for dogmatic makeshifts for real thought, for the modern forms of magic and subjectivism lurking in unsuspected places such as Dialectical Materialism, Psycho-analysis, Theosophy, Existentialism or Logical Positivism. He should be keenly interested in all such matters, but he should be as ready to criticize errors as to applaud insights.

Paul was appropriately watchful of claims that astrology, spirits, a morally re-armed Judaism and several secret societies "had the answers". Perhaps we should keep a weather eye open for the Four Absolutes, the Ego and the Id and The Dialectic! We shall find in none of these any relationship with God that Jesus cannot give. In Him we are aligned with the Creator of the world in the studies we undertake (verse 10). Other "systems of thought" are like documents used by our enemies to baffle us; He has come as a conqueror over these non-gods and nailed their false pretensions to the Cross. He bears (11-15).

Paul describes, however, two threats to the life lived in Christ; religiosity and self-righteousness on the one hand, intellectual self-satisfaction on the other. The second of these is possibly more widespread among us than the first—"have you read Niebuhr's latest—awfully good, I thought"; "really, I don't think our minister has read a decent book for about twenty-five years"; "not a very good address—pre-ecumenical". (Verses 16-19.)

If we are to grow with a growth that is from God, always moving forward towards the hope of the Day when Jesus Christ will return, none of the purely "student" words in the Christian vocabulary—knowledge, wisdom, even humility—is the key word. The key is Love, and Love lives in us and becomes our power when we "hold fast to the Head" (verse 19).

The end of the mission is not ours but God's. We are to light small lamps in preparation for the great dawn of God that will break over the universe at the end of time, the Day of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the beginning of the mission to man, He is its present power, and in Him it is to be fulfilled.

Matthew 25: 1-13.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What forms of idolatry are you aware of in your University? How can their inadequacy be exposed?
2. What do we mean when we say that Jesus (the Person) is the Truth (normally an abstract term)?
3. "The failure to confront the students with the necessity of having some clearly defined philosophy of life, or even to provide them with an intelligent understanding of the alternatives between which they have to choose in forming one for themselves, is an abnegation of the very purpose for which a university exists." Discuss.
4. Do you, in fact, through your present practice of study of the Bible, find at least a measure of liberation from uncertainty and confusion? Talk together about your difficulties and about any practices that have helped you.
5. What do you consider is the main point of the Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids? (Matt. 25: 1-13.) Why, do you think, was this passage chosen as the culmination of this study?

FOR FURTHER READING

The Reports of the Conferences of the International Missionary Council held at Jerusalem (1928), Tambaram (1938), Whitby (1947), Willingen (1952) are invaluable.

Max Warren: "The Calling of God."
"The Truth of Vision."
"The Christian Mission."

David Paton: "Christian Missions and the Judgment of God."

Lesslie Newbigin: "South India Diary".

Files and current numbers of the "International Review of Missions."

The Eagle Omnibus Books (Missionary Biographies).

"Servants of the Universal Church" (S.C.M. Press)—Short Biographies.

Kraemer: "The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World" is a difficult but most rewarding treatment of the nature of the missionary task.

Michonneau: "Revolution in a City Parish" and Danielou: "The Salvation of the Nations" are two notable Roman Catholic books.

P. T. Forsyth: "Missions in State and Church" is a collection of brilliant occasional reflections which may reveal their period (turn of the century) but are certainly not "dated".

The "Torch Commentaries" (S.C.M. Press), now appearing, are generally useful for Bible Study passages.

PRICE: TWO SHILLINGS