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THE MISSION OF JESUS

A Vital Religion

By

Rev. JOHN T. LAWTON. M.A.



Published by:

BOARD OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION,

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

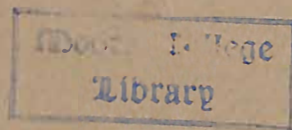
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I am the Light of the World: he
that followeth me shall not walk
in the darkness, but shall have the
Light of Life.—John 8: 12.

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Explanatory Note

This booklet contains the subjects of study, discussion and mediation of the P.S.F. Conference of 1932. It is the fruit of much thought and research. It is cast into its present form in the hope that it may be of service to other Conferences, Study Groups and Congregations. There is a unity of thought running through the whole programme, the daily outline of which is:

- (1) United Gathering. "In Preparation"—10 min.
- (2) Study Groups—1-1½ hrs.
- (3) Tutorial and Discussion. In Groups or Combined according to circumstances—1½ hrs.
- (4) Inspirational Meeting—
 - (a) Meditation—10 min.
 - (b) Address—30 min.
 - (c) Directed Intercession—10 min.

"In Preparation," "Meditation" and "Directed Intercession" periods should be in the charge of a carefully selected chairman who is in closest touch with the Bible Study and Tutorials.

The theme "The Light of the World" serves as an introduction. The Bible Studies centre round the mission of Jesus, and an attempt is made to study His mission in light of present difficulties. The Tutorials are concerned with the practical application of His Spirit and teaching to the modern world, while the inspiration period is to gather up the thought and purpose round which each day's programme is centred.

A short list of reference books is given. It is by no means complete, but each book is vital, arresting and stimulating. The suggestions to leaders are the fruit of experience. The prayers are selected from "A Book of Prayers," by J. S. Hoyland, except the concluding prayer which is by Dr. Orchard.

The whole is set forth in the hope that it may be of some small service in helping people to realise that Christianity is a vital religion of supreme practical import for society to-day.

Foreword

"THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

Man lives in an ever-changing world. The arresting feature of the past few years, however, is both the rapidity and the extent of the change. Applied science has revolutionised human relations, and has placed unparalleled power under his control. We face not only a new situation, but an unprecedented situation. We face it, unfortunately, with our capacity for adjustment but poorly developed. We are suffering from both mental and spiritual inertia. We have been educated not for progress, but for stabilisation. We have even conceived of religion in static rather than dynamic terms. We are defensive instead of being ethically creative.

Our social and economic contacts on the larger scale invariably produce friction. We have not solved the problem of associated living, and we are still leaving the solution largely to chance, or seeking it by way of compulsion.

The world has actually become one compact inter-dependent community, and yet throughout the economic sphere, nations are putting up the harassing and futile sign of one-way traffic. Our daily practice is the direct antithesis of the implications of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. Yet, despite our perversity, the light of truth has been shedding its rays through the realm of human affairs.

The world to-day is in the twilight. Whether it be the twilight of approaching night, or the twilight preceding the dawn of a new day will depend on our conception and practice of religion. Unless man can be saved from misusing his time and his talents, unless he can be won from the worship of the material god to whose services he has dedicated his energies, unless his righteousness exceeds the righteousness of power, morality, our civilisation is doomed. But if he embraces a vital religion and becomes ethically creative and socially constructive, then the world will be lifted to a new plane of human endeavour and achievement. He needs light and leading, inspiration and power. Where can these be found except in "The Light of the World"?

Some there are who say that the Christian Church is standing before the door of a great opportunity. Is the truth not rather that we are "swaying on the giddy heights of opportunity," and that with no certain foothold? We have neither the knowledge nor the courage to "christianise our impact." Our very complacency creates a situation of extreme urgency.

That we may understand afresh the mission of Jesus; examine courageously the actual world situation in light of His teaching; and draw renewed inspiration from the Truth Incarnate, these studies have been planned.

We stand here, O Father,
Heirs of all the ages of Thy creative effort,
Fruit of all the conflict, the hard-won progress, the sacrifice,
the agony of the past;
We stand erect—for one brief moment—on the crest of Thy history.

Unto us, O Father, without whom the past has no meaning,
Unto us, without whom the future has no existence,
Unto us, the men and women of Thy world to-day,
Reveal Thyself.

Study I.—Jesus the Interpreter

Introduction.—The human mind is forever seeking the “how” and “why” of things. Little by little we discover that facts are related to each other; nothing stands just in isolation. The mind therefore pursues its journey and perhaps discovers the Creative Unity which we call God. But human beings must think and know in human terms. Man must be able to verify his conclusions through experience. By a merciful necessity the Word became Flesh, the Truth became Incarnate. Jesus is the great Interpreter. In and through Him the Universe is a harmonious whole.

1. Jesus Interpreted God.—Of an inner necessity man must find or create a deity. There are stages in his development when he makes his god after his own image—a psychological projection. That, however, is not the whole story. If development be not arrested the God within must ultimately meet the God without, and by so doing form a larger and increasing unity. But what is God like? What is the nature of the Creative Unity which pervades and yet transcends all things? Ask Jesus and His followers.

Study.—John 1: 1-4; 1 John 1: 4; John 14: 8-11; 15: 1; 3: 16; Matt. 5: 43-45; 6: 9, etc., etc.

Read the whole of 1 John. Find other references wherein Jesus interprets God.

From a study of these and other passages may we not reasonably conclude that God is not only good, but, because of His nature, He is continually seeking to do good. But what does “good” mean? Think this out carefully in terms of human personality.

But can God achieve His purposes for human personality apart from the wholehearted and intelligent co-operation of man? Consider the organisation of life and the practical application that is made, or not made, of our conception of the nature of God. To what ex-

tent is our conception of religion one of refuge, escape, or salvage, rather than one of active co-operation in a social adventure. The exigencies of business and the claims of the Kingdom of God continually confront man. Which determines his line of action? Is there any truth in the assertion that our conception of the frailty of human nature and the use we make of it is but a subtle rationalisation in defence of our educational failure and our practised policy of power.

From a study of the Life of Jesus we may reasonably conclude that God is good; that He is actively pursuing His purpose of love, but needs human co-operation if the latent powers of personality are to be developed into a corporate expression of His truth. Life may be limited and the purposes of God delayed by the pursuit of smaller ends than the Kingdom of God.

2. Jesus Interpreted Man.—There is considerable difference of opinion concerning the nature of man. Some say that human nature is totally depraved, and, in practice, hold it to be incurably selfish, and organise accordingly. Others hold that man is altogether good. Man seems to know quite a lot about many things, but really not much about himself. The researches of psychology, however, have thrown much light on his essential nature. He is part and parcel of the creative process, suffering from the limitations attaching to the primitive, limitations reinforced by faulty education and an inadequate philosophy on the part of his educators. But just because he is part and parcel of the creative process there are within him latent capacities which need to be born into activity. Man is a vital being with untold possibilities. What is Jesus' estimate of him? Consider carefully the following situations: Jesus and Nicodemus—Jno. 3; Matthew—Matt. 9: 9-13; Zacchaeus—Luke 19: 1-10. Mary Magdalene—Mark 16: 9. The Woman Taken in Sin—Jno. 8: 3-11. The Woman of Samaria—Jno. 4: 1-30. The Palsied Man—Matt. 9: 1-8. Study all the incidents of Chapter 9. Study, too, the relations between Jesus and His disciples.

Jesus had no misgivings about the effect of sin on human nature, but He knew of that latent spark waiting to be fanned into flame by the breath of new life. He came to impart life and to deal effectively with sin, not only with the guilt of sin, but with sin itself. He regards those to whom He imparts new life as His friends and fellow-workers (Jno. 15: 15, 16); as salt of the earth and light to the world (Matt. 5: 13, 14). Consider also 2 Cor. 5: 17 and Eph. 4: 13.

The Gospel or good news is just this, that man is not incurably selfish and permanently primitive. He may become the ethical child of a Creative Father and have fellowship with Him in His recreative purposes. Consider the practical implications of this estimate of human nature.

3. Jesus Interpreted the World.—Man has jumped to hasty conclusions regarding the nature of the world in which he lives. But a little research has made the thinking section very humble. The atom has been smashed, and matter as matter is no longer eternal. Some scientists say that matter is "objectified thought," and therefore spiritual in its essential nature.

Jesus did some remarkable things with the material world. He calmed the sea. He increased food and drink. He walked on the water. He cured the sick. He called the dead back to life. He found closed rooms no barrier to free movement.

We call these recorded happenings miracles, and look upon them as contraventions of law and order. Some would even go so far as to question their historicity. But perhaps it is our knowledge of the world that is at fault. May it not be that Jesus worked in strict accordance with law and order, and just called into operation powers that are still waiting to be used. What does John 14: 12-14 mean? Remember that Jesus lived on this earth, and worked under the limitation of the flesh. In and through Him we have an interpretation of God, of man and of the world. Does His interpretation square with the facts? Do we know all the facts? Or do we conclude that the facts

we do know exclude the possibility of miracle. However that may be, the interpretation given by Jesus is of the utmost practical significance to the future of civilisation. Here we touch ultimate values and fundamental truths. Man must decide what practical use he will make of this interpretation. God does seem to be good; to be "an eternal present." There is no need so far as He is concerned to delay the "noble society." Man has the capacity for such a social expression. The world does seem to be of such a nature that it is an ally and not an enemy of such a society. Why then delay?

Lord of truth and purity,
We beseech Thee to build up in us Thine own
nature;
Found our souls upon the rock,
That we may be content with no transient happiness
Bought at the cost of compromise and unfaithfulness.
Teach us the bitterness of forsaking noble ideals;
Teach us the glory and warmth of the loneliness
and pain
That come from fearless following of the highest
that we know.
Give us Thine own vision of the eternal values,
Thine own resolute disregard of the second best,
Thine own unflinching loyalty to duty and honour.

Topics For Discussion

1. When, how and why did you begin to relate fact to fact? To what extent do you think it possible to arrive at a creative unity whereby the world of related facts may be interpreted?
2. To what extent do we worship and co-operate with the God revealed by Jesus, and to what extent do we think of Him in terms to suit ourselves?
3. Is a "favoured nation clause" consistent with the nature of God as revealed by Jesus? Make practical application of your answer.
4. Be good! What does this mean?
Living in sin! What does this mean?

5. Life is organised on the basis of the primitive nature of man and not on the basis of his Spiritual capacity. Discuss this. What is the practical outcome of the former, and is the latter possible?
6. Consider religion from the following standpoints: (a) Refuge, (b) Escape, (c) Salvage, (d) Social Adventure and Spiritual Culture.
7. What is your present view of the nature of man?
8. What is your view of miracles and of the ultimate nature of matter?
9. What is the "good news"?
10. Sum up the significance of Jesus the Interpreter for the modern world.

Study II.—Jesus the Liberator

Introduction.—We live in a world that is constantly changing, but change does not necessarily mean progress. There is a change that issues in deterioration, disintegration, death. But then there is also a death unto life, whereby the lower is transformed into the higher. Running through the world is a law of life, and a law of death. The law of life is the greatest discovery that man can make. Life, however, involves continual change and continual progress; movement from "what is" to "what is better"; to what expresses more life and richer personality. The lower dies, but in dying becomes the seed of new and higher life. Christ's way of life has its biological, psychological and spiritual aspects. He is the constant liberator from the lower to the higher and calls to continuous progress. Life in Christ is therefore dynamic not static.

Illustrative Passages.—Is. 61: 1-3; Luke 4: 16-21 (Weymouth); Jno. 8: 31, 32; 8: 36; Matt. 4: 1-12; Rom. 6, etc. Find other illustrative passages.

1. **Jesus Liberates From the Primitive.**—God calls man to continuous progress in Christ. He carries with him, however, the burden of the primitive. The persistence of the primitive, whether through ignorance or through carelessness, may unfortunately cause an arrest in development. In fact man, individually and socially, may easily remain in bondage to the primitive, and from this bondage he must be liberated, otherwise progress is impossible. Remember that change is not out some of the marks that distinguish the powerful primitive person from the developing Christian, and so differentiate between the law of death and the law of life.

2. **Jesus Liberates From Sin.**—What is sin? Try and grasp the difference between personal and private offences and SIN in the sense of individual and social attitudes, ways and customs that are contrary to the implications of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. It is interesting to note that Jesus does

more than deal with the guilt of sin; He deals with sin itself. This modern age of ours needs to be awakened to a knowledge of SIN, and to the only effective way of dealing with it. When this is but dimly recognised, we will face the necessity of a reformation more significant and far-reaching than the Reformation which ushered in our modern industrial and individualistic age.

Jesus deals with personal sin in order to create a noble society. But man in the mass becomes accustomed to ways of corporate action, the significance and direction of which he does not clearly envisage. Many of our accepted economic practices are endangering the peace of the world, are hindering the progress of civilisation, and, in the deepest sense, are SIN, the wages of which is death—social disintegration.

From such imperfect views and such futile ways of life man must be liberated—or perish. The situation is terrible in its urgency. If man embarks upon another experiment in suicide, it will certainly not be lacking in completeness. Unless Christ is given control, chaos is inevitable.

3. **Jesus Liberates From Psychic Bondage.**—God desires that man shall become free, free from the limitations of the primitive, free from the domination of sin, and free from the hampering effects of psychic bondage. We are quite familiar with the dire results that issue from derangements of the health of the body, but we do not so readily recognise that much more far-reaching results issue from derangements of the personality. The ills of the soul are more complex, subtle and common than the ills of the body. The majority suffer in some degree from psychic bondage. Christ needs fellow-workers in this particular sphere to do for the mind what the physician does for the body. The day has already dawned wherein psychology is to be used in the service of the soul. The hour of greater liberation is at hand; men and women can be set free for larger and more intricate tasks, **if they are but willing.** They must, however, be ready to leave the security of the past, and to adventure into the unexplored of the future. Psychic servitude is the

retreat of the spiritually neurotic from the responsibilities of progress.

Summary.—Jesus, then, is the liberator from death unto life. He challenges each successive age to free itself from the complacency of past achievement; to critically examine the present in the light of the ideal, and then to adventure for the transformation of what is, no matter how comparatively good, into something nobler and finer. Such is the Christian adventure. Herein lies the road to freedom, and for a life on such a road Jesus is the liberator, setting man free to move from life into life, thus making the past an inspiration and not a goal.

Master and Lord,
Set on our brows the seal of Thy ownership.
Make us Thy bondmen, humble yet proud,
That, in servitude to Thee,
We may go in the fearless liberty of the slaves
of God.

Give us that knowledge of Thy truth
Which maketh freedom to spring up and blossom
In lives dedicated to unrelenting toil for Thy
purposes.

Give us that complete self-mastery
Which can only come to wilks utterly mastered by
Thy will.

Topics For Discussion

1. Consider the liberation effected by Jesus from the point of view of: (a) an act, (b) a process.
2. What do you understand by the primitive nature of man? What accepted practices tend to perpetuate the primitive?
3. What is sin? Consider it from the social and economic point of view. Does man need more than pardon, and why?
4. What is psychic bondage? Give examples. What are its effects upon personality? How can one be freed from such bondage?
5. Is our religious training designed to fit us for progress or for stabilisation?
6. What use can be made of psychology in the service of the soul?
7. Review question 1 and try to understand what Jesus the Liberator is doing. Explain "The truth shall make you free."

Study III.—Jesus the Unifier

Introduction.—The modern age has been one of intense specialisation. Wonderful results have accrued, but in no small measure man has paid the price of such sectional progress by losing his sense of unity. We think and plan and act in sections. Life is divided into secular and sacred, material and spiritual. Consequently we find it difficult, if not impossible, to view any particular problem in the perspective of the whole. Principle has been largely replaced by expediency. This may be held by some to be an exaggeration, but an examination of the actual facts compels this unhappy conclusion to be drawn.

Not so long ago the quarrels between the rulers of nations were in reality family quarrels, held in check by the authority of the Church. That one-time unity of the human family is to-day broken into fragments. Sovereign and independent States are in existence, the one competing with the other, each using its intelligence and power to outdo the other. Mutual exploitation is the practice; mutual understanding and co-operation is the supreme need.

Is there any power or principle by which the competing sections of humanity may be drawn into a common aim pursued by plan and consent? An aim that will do justice to man's latent spiritual capacity and powers of personality. Is the Son of Man a practical statesman, a wise economist, a sound financier, a good psychologist, a safe guide?

Illustrative Passages.—John 10: 2, 17; 11, 15: 3-16; Rom. 12: 5; Gal. 3: 28; Eph. 2: 19-22 (Weymouth); 2 Cor. 5: 19; Col. 1: 16, 17, etc.

1. **Jesus and the Individual.**—The strife and discord so evident in human relations is but the inevitable projection into practical affairs of the state of war that pervades the inner life of the average citizen. Man is not at peace with himself. His nature is not unified,

not integrated, nor do we plan our education and practice with a view to integration.

The little human being is born wholly uncivilised and a-moral. Although he is primitive, yet he is endowed with a latent capacity for progress. The liberating spirit of a Saviour God is available for the work of transformation, a life-long vital process. But that all important factor is little understood and therefore not utilised very intelligently. Its use still savours of magic or superstition. Too frequently the spiritual is confused with the unnatural. Consequently even those who desire to be Christ-like are apt to follow the psychologically false method of repressing the primitive instead of sublimating it. The inevitable consequence is war within. The fires of the primitive burn, the emotion generated thereby gathers and bursts out in all kinds of distressing ways. Health, physical, mental and spiritual, is deranged. Jesus' method is not repression, but vital transformation; the sublimation of the energy of the lower into higher activity. He preserves both the unity of personality and the unity of function. He keeps a person whole and healthy while growing, and therefore His process of progressive integration is vital and valid.

Study carefully the personal aspects of "The Sermon on the Mount," and the "Fruits of the Spirit" recorded in Gal. 5: 22, 23. Read carefully 1 John.

The aim of Jesus is to make and keep a person whole. He establishes harmony within, and liberates in such a way that the individual in Christ is a new creation.

2. Jesus and Society.—Human beings simply must live in society. Life touches life. Man must organise his domestic, economic and social relations. Shall he do this on the basis of the primitive or on the deeper basis of his latent capacity for spiritual development? The future of civilisation for spiritual with the choice. Here as elsewhere: "As we sow, so shall we reap."

The plain and undeniable fact is that Western civilisation is governed by principles that are consistent with Aristotelian morality, but not with the ethics of Jesus. Our economic organisation accepts and practises competition as its method, profit as its motive, and property as its objective. On examination it turns out that our conception of law and property is pagan rather than Christian. The extent to which compromise has been carried is nothing short of appalling. So we arrive at the paradoxical and paralysing situation of our Churches being "largely composed of those who would be equally shocked to see Christianity doubted or put into practice."

Study carefully the social significance of "The Sermon on the Mount," not as an unattainable ideal, but as practical politics; in fact as plain common sense, and the only proposition that will work smoothly in the interests of personality.

Study carefully, too, "Paul's Philosophy of Life," as set out in Ephesians, chapters 1 and 2. Read it in Weymouth. His summary to the Colossians is, that in and through Christ the universe is a harmonious whole. What, then, are we to make of Christ? Is He a mystic visionary or is He a practical statesman who is seeking to share with man the secrets and wonders of the world in which he lives, and of the universe of which he forms a part?

Summary.—From the thoughtful study of these passages, once our minds are freed from their preconceptions, and especially from their prejudices, we look out upon the social adventure of Christ, and are not only thrilled by its daring, but gripped by its grandeur and held by its alluring possibilities. We, too, join in the adventure, for therein is life to be found. Not only does Jesus unify the individual life, but He makes unity of purpose possible between classes and nations. Such a unity—not uniformity—is the biological and redemptive goal of the Saviour God. Nature will be found to yield untold secrets to those who grow into increasing fellowship with the Spirit of the Creator, and whose social relations are organised

for mutual benefit and the release of personality. Study again John 15. The fruit of the vine with its laden branches has not yet reached maturity.

King of the whole earth,
Break down, we beseech Thee, by Thy great power,
All those barriers which do now keep mankind
asunder;
Overcome the hindrances of race, of custom, and
of prejudice;
Drive out all those adverse influences
Which now mar our union.

Foster throughout Thy world
Every movement of thought, of activity, of good-
will,
Which tends, for whatever motive and in whatever
sphere
To break down isolation and exclusiveness,
To unite men in common enterprise and service,
To build up co-operation and inter-dependence.

Topics For Discussion

1. Consider the effect upon our outlook on life of the age of specialisation through which western civilisation has passed.
2. Examine the programmes of modern sovereign and independent States in light of the Kingdom of God. Whither are we heading?
3. Consider Repression and Sublimation from the point of view of religion. To what extent can psychology be used in the service of the soul?
4. What do you understand by "My peace I give unto you"?
5. "That man-made compromise between the Church and the world which has been masquerading as Christianity." What justification is there for such a statement?
6. Is "The Sermon on the Mount" practicable? We have "embalmed" it, not "embodied" it. Discuss this statement.
7. Do you consider that war, discord and strife, are permanent elements in society?
8. Think out the practical significance of Jesus the Unifier.

Study IV.—Jesus the Ambassador

Introduction.—Jesus commands the respect of men. They wish to meet Him. But when orthodox Westernism introduces Him, He is presented in disguise. We can at one and the same time accept the Apostles Creed and skilfully neglect "The Sermon on the Mount." The truth seems to be that we have made an idol out of Jesus. Our religion has to that extent been devitalised. What is the essence of idolatry? Is it not making the great small? So small to be practically negligible. The pagan takes God, reduces Him within the limits of an image, worships it, and says: "That is God." Jesus and His mission can so be misunderstood; He Himself can be worshipped with such devoted prejudice that He is practically excluded from the realm of human relations and barred from the world He has created. We can put Him on a pedestal, reverence Him, worship Him, but practically neglect Him. If He cannot be proven to be a safe guide for the practical relations of men, we have no guarantee that He is a safe guide for the hereafter.

The Jesus of the Gospels is the founder of a new order (c.f., 1 Cor. 15 v. 45). The first Adam became a living animal, the second Adam a life-giving spirit. He has made possible new human relationships, a new society, because He lifts man himself on to a new plane of spiritual experience and achievement. He is the first born, the Ambassador of the new order.

Illustrative Passages.—Ps. 24; Ps. 15; Is. 2: 2-4; Jer. 31: 31-34; Mic. 4: 1-4; Matt. 4: 17; John 1: 4; 10: 10; 20: 21; Matt. 28: 18-20; Acts 1: 1-8; 2 Cor. 5: 19; Rev. 21: 22-27; 21: 1-8.

1. **The Adventure in Creation.**—God's nature is essentially creative. Jesus reveals Him as creative love. His creative enterprise so far as earth is concerned seems to be a device for developing the love

capacity into an actual expression. Normal human relationships proceed on this basis. Love is a biological necessity. The biological basis, however, is but the foundation for a developing personality and a developing society. The lower is but the material out of which the higher is developed, and yet the lower does not explain the higher. Rather it is the higher that explains the lower. A tree is not explained by its roots, branches and leaves, rather the roots, branches and leaves find their explanation in the unity of the tree. Creation does not explain Jesus, but Jesus does explain creation.—Col. 1: 15-17.

2. The Adventure in Redemption.—The redemptive enterprise is but the completion of the creative enterprise. They are both indissolubly connected. In fact it is now being recognised that Jesus is a biological necessity. He makes fulfilment and development possible. He came to impart life, both to the individual and to society. A picture of that life is presented in Matt. 5. It divides, according to Stanley Jones, into five major portions:

- (1) What they are in themselves—the Beatitudes (v. 2-12).
- (2) What they are to the world—self, light (v. 13-16).
- (3) What they are to the past—They fulfil rather than destroy (v. 17-20).
- (4) What they are in intimate relationships with others (v. 21-47).
- (5) What they shall be—perfect as the Father is perfect (v. 48).

“Jesus begins at what they are to be in themselves. He begins at the centre. He insisted that men could not live at the circumference unless they were alive at the centre. The modern attempt is to have quantity of life at the circumference regardless of quality of life at the centre. Jesus knew this would end in futility and cynicism and utter shallowness. When He would make all things new He would first of all lay His hand upon the human heart. He knew that

“you cannot make the golden age out of leaden instincts.” He spoke of what they were to be (v. 2-12) before He spoke of what they were to do and not do (rest of Sermon). He begins by saying: “Blessed are”—what you are in yourselves determines life for you. You are your own heaven and you are your own hell. We knew that “hell often breaks out within man by spontaneous combustion,” and that heaven is a state of mind before it can be a place. He came, therefore, not to get men into heaven but to get heaven into men, not to get men out of hell, but to get hell out of men.”

3. The Outlook.—The questions above all others that we must face and settle are, whether Jesus’ estimate of man is true, and whether Jesus’ way for the world is practicable. If so, then we must put His teaching to the test of experience. Chesterton first said that the teaching of Jesus would turn the world upside down, but, after reflection, added in his paradoxical way, that it would turn the world right side up.

That our civilisation needs to be turned right side up is held by many competent observers. An Indian student told a conference in Glasgow in 1921:

“What bewilders the ordinary observer is not the ordinary aberrations of the Christian nations, but their habitual conduct and organisation; not their failures, but their standards of success; not their failure to live up to right principles, but their insistence that wrong principles are right. Your religion is a noble if paradoxical creed, which affirms that all men are brothers, that humility and poverty are blessings, and riches a dangerous misfortune, that the way of service and self-sacrifice is the way of happiness. I do not blame you for not reproducing these theories in your practice. Evidently they are not meant for your daily life. What surprises me, however, is that you erect into a system the duty and happiness of practising precisely the opposite. The normal condition of your social order is an economic civil war, which you hardly take the trouble to conceal. Your industrial system involves the regimentation of masses of mankind by a few thousand rich men who are, individually, no

doubt, innocuous, but who quite frankly regard their subjects as somewhat rebellious and inconvenient instruments of production. Your creed is exalted, but your civilisation is a nightmare of envy, hate and uncharitableness. I would forego the former in order to escape the latter."

When asked what was the greatest blessing that the West could confer upon the East, Gandhi and Tagore both replied: "Let the West evangelise the East." But when they protested against our interpretation of "evangelise," and we asked them to make their meaning plain, they gave the arresting and penetrating answer that the greatest blessing which the West could confer upon the East, was that the West should christianise its impact.

Dr. Hodgkin thinks that what we have succeeded in doing thus far is to inoculate the world with a form of religion that is making it proof against real Christianity.

Summary.—Civilisation stands to-day at the cross-roads. Never before have such momentous issues been at stake. Nothing but the practice of a vital religion which is ethically creative, can save us from catastrophe. Of such a religion Jesus is the ambassador. Of such a religion the world stands in sore need.

Master and Lord,
Keep us day by day in Thy presence,
Fence round our hearts with Thy love and Thy
purity,
That no evil thing may conquer us.

Purge us from all selfish motive and ambition;
Teach us to love our fellow-men
With a love that shall be Thy love breaking into
the world through us.

Illumine our souls with a clear and glorious perception of spiritual reality,
With a knowledge of Thy divine beauty and truth,
That shall fill us with joy and peace.

Make us messengers of Thy grace,
Ambassadors of God amongst men.
Make us doorways through which Thou Thyself
mayest enter freely into Thy world.

Topics For Discussion

1. What is the essence of idolatry and to what extent can it be maintained that Western civilisation idolises Jesus?
2. What do you understand by Christ's way of life?
3. Discuss the indictment by the Indian student. Is it in accord with fact?
4. What do you make of the reply by Gandhi and Tagore: "Christianise your impact."
5. Can the assertion of Dr. Hodgkin be justified?
6. Is a reformation necessary, and what will be some of its outstanding characteristics.
7. As a result of these studies, to what extent have you enlarged or modified your conception of the mission of Jesus?

Tutorial I.—Order or Chaos

Aim.—To show that cause and effect hold in the mental and spiritual spheres, therefore in the social sphere just as in the physical. Order will result from intelligent co-operation with God. Chaos must inevitably result from getting out of step with God.

1. God the Creator is now generally accepted, though our extended knowledge of the facts of the universe enlarges our conception of God.

2. God is consistent in His creative activity. From this it follows that, no matter into what part of His activity we examine, He will speak the same ultimate language.

3. Has God made a universe He cannot control, especially the universe of human relations?

4. We have educated for stabilisation, exploitation and power, not for progress, mutual aid and service. The culture we desire is the culture of the past, the culture of privilege and power, a desire which it is impossible to satisfy and remain vital.

5. Order and chaos in relation to the mental and spiritual spheres. Projection.

6. The co-operative plan. Man's intelligent co-operation required.

7. Our economic tower—

(a) Its foundations.

(b) Its alignment.

(c) Its ingredients. Chaos inevitable.

8. Jesus as psychologist, economist, financier, statesman, ambassador.

9. The vital significance of the way of the Cross.

Conclusion.—We can have cosmos or chaos, wealth or illth, order or confusion, but as we sow, so shall we reap. The spiritual state of man determines individual and social conduct.

Tutorial II.—Modern Bondage and the Way to Freedom

Aim.—To lead to a recognition of the degree and nature of our bondage and to the discovery of the way to freedom.

1. Each period has its characteristic achievements and its characteristic defects and perils.

2. The achievements of the industrial age and its paradoxes.

3. The legacy of the era of individualism—

(a) Loss of corporate sense.

(b) Loss of the scale of ultimate values.

(c) Loss of the sense of beauty.

4. Modern bondage to material values.

5. What the modern world offers—

(a) Capitalism.

(b) Communism.

(c) Nationalism.

(d) Prosperity.

6. The Gospel of power—efficiency and success in money-making.

7. The way to freedom—

(a) The ethics of Jesus.

(b) Liberation unto life.

(c) A vital religion.

It is harder to-day to live the Cross than to die on the Cross.

8. Alternative revolutions.

Conclusion.—We are not heading for bondage, we are in bondage. A modern Moses must lead mankind out of the modern Egypt into the Promised Land. The Christ of the Mount says: "This is the way, walk ye in it."

Tutorial III.

- (a) **HITHERTO—THE DIVIDED HOUSE**
(b) **FOR THE FUTURE—IN THE SPIRIT OF THE WHOLE**

Aim.—To understand the ways of the past and to learn the necessities of the future—

(a) **Hitherto.**

1. Transition from medieval to modern.
2. The age of specialisation—its achievements.
3. Its legacy. Segregated life. Religion pushed into a corner and out of touch with the world. The new renaissance. The logical outcome of a divided society. Divided society inevitable because of the divided view of the individual. The integration of personality did not take place. The inevitable consequences of social organisation on that basis.

(b) **For the future.**

A new synthesis for the individual life, for the social life, the economic life, international life. Sectional policies are futile, socially sinful and suicidal. Man must think, plan and live in the spirit of the whole.

Conclusion.—Our development has been very lopsided and disproportionate. We have mastered nature, but not ourselves. Our moral progress has not kept pace with our material progress, so that we are now in danger of proving that we are not capable of utilising beneficently the very powers we have discovered; the nemesis of intelligence divorced from spiritual culture. Religion must apply a spiritual synthesis and become ethically creative; or it will become nothing more than the court chaplain to an acquisitive society, waiting to read the burial service of a civilisation which it had neither the energy nor the knowledge to save.

Tutorial IV.—Christian Imperialism and the Day of Opportunity

Aim.—To show that applied science and idealism are now making common cause.

1. Modern imperialism—its scope and characteristics.
2. Christian imperialism—its scope and characteristics.
3. Practical necessity makes common cause with the ideal.
4. Modern world movements,
 - (a) On the material plane.
 - (b) On the social plane.
 - (c) On the ethical plane.
5. Roads to the City of God.
6. The achievements of civilisation need for their preservation and progress the religion of Jesus.
7. Distinction between the "pious" and the "spiritual" in religion.
8. The day of opportunity.
9. Research bureau necessary in the ethical, spiritual and social spheres.

Conclusion.—Either the Church must summon to a great advance and lead the way to a higher plane of life, or forfeit its right to the respect of those who need guidance and inspiration.

Tutorial Prayer

God of all power and Ruler of all worlds,
Save us, we pray thee, from empty sentiment,
From the impulse to cover naked facts
With a false clothing of cheap and tawdry affectation.

Save us from vapid emotion and frothy enthusiasm,
From contentment with pleasant half-truths,
From the temptation to hide harsh reality
Beneath a soft coating of effeminate idealism.

Make us men fitted to encounter unflinchingly the
grim facts of life and death
In all their cruelty and in all their glory—
Men fitted to feel all the bitter meaning of these
facts,
Yet to perceive also the stern beauty behind them.

Clear from our minds all hypocrisy and pretence,
All pious shams, all hoary lies,
That we may deal directly with reality,
Fearing nothing, dissembling nothing, shirking
nothing.

Give us a resolution to know the truth at any cost,
And, having known it, to transform it into another
truth, another realm of reality,
In which Thy will shall reign; that so cruel facts
may be seen to be merciful facts,
And this harsh world become Thy Kingdom of
Heaven.

For Meditation and Inspiration

Day 1.—The Word Became Flesh.

Herein we discover the practical significance of the spiritual order. The truth has been interpreted to us in human terms. It is man's privilege and duty to incarnate that truth in a noble society.

Day 2.—The Truth Shall Make You Free.

Man is apt to be in bondage to his own fears and anxieties, to his prejudices, to the past, and to SIN. From these he must be liberated—or perish. Jesus is the liberator. The truth has now to be re-incarnated.

Day 3.—That They All May Be One.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Man does not altogether refuse to be reconciled to God, but he does find it difficult to be reconciled to his fellow man. This is because he has not allowed the transforming power of the Spirit of Jesus to harmonise his own life. In and through Jesus all things will yet become a harmonious whole.

Day 4.—Behold! I Am Recreating All Things.

Jesus is at work. His plans are not completed. He needs our fellowship and co-operation. His recreative purpose and activity is the fundamental fact of the universe. Are we in line with it or standing apart from it. The religion of Jesus is a vital enterprise.

Concluding Prayer

Great Father, we thank Thee that we have not to wait for Thine advent, for all history is Thy coming, and Thou art here. From the hour when Thy Spirit stirred the dark primeval deep till Jesus by the bench and on the mountain top cried, "Abba Father," our world has been growing more conscious of Thy presence. And yet we wait for something more. Strange hopes stir the hearts of men and passionate prayers break forth from their lips. Can it be that this further revelation waits upon our faith and rests with our endeavour?

We have grown unconscious of our need, become accustomed to things remaining as they are, ceased to desire things different, lost our vision and are ready to perish. Worst of all, we have found ourselves unwilling to pay the price of better things. We have desired Thy coming, but not through us; we have sought a salvation that would leave ourselves still unchanged; we have prayed that Thy will might be done, but we have shrunk from doing it first and alone.

Stand Thou before us, the Light of the World. Then surely we shall hinder Thee no more. In Thy mercy give us grace and endurance to plant Thy Kingdom in the world in which we live, by love of truth, by striving after justice, by following fearless wherever light may lead, and by giving ourselves, if needs be, even unto death. Amen.

Suggestions for Leaders

The Leader.—A leader is a learner whose real aim is not to impart information, but to develop the open mind, the progressive outlook, the inquiring spirit and the co-operative attitude. Circle Bible Study is a joint search for the truth, a fellowship of discovery. The leader is neither a mine of information nor a walking encyclopædia, but one who draws out the members of the circle, enlarging their horizons, and enriching their natures in the process.

The Study.—Painstaking and thorough preparation is essential. The members of a circle intuitively sense the unprepared leader, and are apt to lose both interest and confidence. An unprepared member, too, soon gets out of step with the circle. Take time to meditate on the subject. Practice the open, receptive, discriminating mind.

The Circle.—The circle members engage in a co-operative search for truth. They must prepare carefully beforehand if they are to get and to give something worth while. The spiritual possibilities of an earnest circle are beyond measurement.

Golden Rules—

Be keen, honest and thorough. Enthusiasm is infectious.

Help each other to be at ease. The circle is a fellowship.

Each must try to be open-minded and teachable. Growth is of more importance than dogmatism.

Draw out the shy members by judicious questions, while graciously diverting the flow of the too talkative.

Encourage the conversational atmosphere.

Remember the spiritual possibilities of the circle. Preparation is essential. Reflection is invaluable.

Books for Reading

"Business Without a Buyer"—

Foster and Catchings—6/-.

"Poverty Amidst Plenty"—Galloway—10d.

"Poverty in Plenty—the Ethics of Income"—

Hobson—4/6

"The Monopoly of Credit"—Douglas—6/-.

"Our Economic Morality and the Ethics of Jesus"—

Ward—14/6.

"Religion and the Rise of Capitalism"—Tawney—17/6.

"The Christ of the Mount"—Stanley Jones—6/6.

"Roads to the City of God"—Basil Mathews—1/9.

"The Clash of Colour"—Basil Mathews—4/6.

"The Clash of World Forces"—Basil Mathews—4/6.

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