

sending Churches that the standard of preaching is higher overseas than at home. Much needs to be learnt and practised before the sermon in any country can become the part of worship in which the Gospel comes to a burning focus from which its rays spread out to the whole of worship and the whole of life.

The relations between worship and the Gospel need to be made a matter of much more urgent concern than they have been in the past if the work of the Church is to go forward. As missionaries are withdrawn from more and more of the former mission field the future of the Churches thus left on their own will depend principally on two things, the Bible and their liturgy. Church history, ancient and modern, bears testimony that the individualistic use of the Bible will not alone save the Church from heresy and spiritual decay; it is corporate worship also, if its forms be true to the Gospel, which is preservative of the Church's authentically Christian character. The Christian fellowship is the organ of insight; truth is to be found where Christian love is expressed.

The immediate duties are self-examination and study at every level of the Church's life. Theological colleges must put liturgical study of a practical kind, nourishment in the Gospel and training in preaching, among their priorities. Worship and evangelism must no longer be merely allowed to happen or not to happen as the case may be. The best minds among the leaders in every national Church must be encouraged to think and to plan experiments. The whole approach must be more dynamic, more creative, quickened by a great expectancy for what God is going to reveal.

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## The Wholesome Words of our Lord Jesus Christ

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**T**HE translators of the Authorized Version were inspired in their choice of the adjective to govern St. Paul's comment to Timothy upon the teaching of our Saviour (1 Timothy vi. 3). In setting before the younger man the spirit of true service, the older apostle attributes the passions which split society and divide man from man—as well as the formulas which confuse material gain with godliness—to the failure of men to consent to the 'wholesome' words of our Lord.

The adjective sums up the Master's life and teaching in its unwavering purpose to make men whole; and it deserves to figure prominently in every attempt to formulate the goal towards which the human agencies of the Christian Church are working, and to define the means employed to attain it, at least in the profession of an ecumenical outlook. For a new light is shed on wholesome doctrine precisely at the point at which the Church begins to realize her obligations to

people outside her domestic circle. She is no longer dealing with consciences anaesthetized by the routine observance of religion, or inured by an habitual indifference to her familiar tenets.

## I

The spiritual hunger which the Church, on foreign service, is called upon to alleviate has not been rationalized. More is expected of her ministry than shibboleths or the convenient compromises to which her members at home have grown accustomed: her missionaries are often disconcerted by what appears to them to be a naive anticipation of the spiritual potency of their faith. It is no more than a natural instinct to take their gospel at its face value, and if the subjects of their ministry are not to suffer disillusionment, the Church has to bestir herself to make good her profession of service to the Lord of all life.

This challenge is repeatedly borne out by the records of foreign missionary enterprise, and the pioneers have had to engage in many unfamiliar duties that they may demonstrate their Master's care for men in every detail of existence. Armed with the Gospel of God's love and grace, the foreigner meets his first obstacle in a language he does not understand, expressed in an idiom strange to him: nevertheless, there is a universal language intelligible to all men. "Our young men think that they are much cleverer than we are," said an African elder, "because they can read books. But there is one book which all we old men of the bush can read and understand. It is the book of deeds". Human need and its satisfaction transcend the barriers of human speech: and it has been by meeting human need wherever they encountered it that missionaries have been able to transmit their message.

The most obvious evidence of an unwholesome life is to be seen in physical suffering and the prevalence of disease, where people are not accustomed to the care and treatment which Christian initiative and tradition have imparted to our own social services. There can have been few missionaries in earlier days who were not impelled by their calling to offer medical first aid where no professional help was available. From this emergency treatment was woven the network of hospitals, maternity centres, welfare clinics, dispensaries and leper settlements in the variegated pattern of missionary service. But the compulsion of missionary initiative went further: it awoke public opinion to a recognition of the duty resting upon states themselves to render this health service, and in the development of state medical departments the Christian motive has had its influence upon the conception of professional standards.

With the rapid growth of state systems, the question is frequently asked whether medical missions have not served their purpose and whether they cannot now relinquish their task to the State, especially as technical requirements are becoming more costly and exacting. The query has justification wherever the burden of routine treatment of disease is threatening to submerge the spiritual healing which is the signal resource of Christian hospitals; but where that is maintained—and patients are quick to appreciate it—such hospitals certainly have a

part still to play in the recovery of whole men and women.

Medical science has moved fast in its professional attitude to illness of all kinds ; the major emphasis is no longer upon the treatment of the sick, but upon the discovery of the root causes of sickness, and of the means of their elimination. Missionary experience also has moved along the same path. With resources of human skill always inadequate, in the number of doctors and nurses available to cope with the demands upon them, it has been essential to study all the ways in which the tide of purely physical suffering can be checked and reduced to manageable proportions. Unwholesome physical conditions of life are such active ministers of disease that housing, diet and nutrition, education and the wherewithal to afford greater amenities of life are all seen to be involved.

The fact that, unlike what are called the social services, religion is not one department of life but the mainspring of them all, compels the missionary to combat conditions which constantly encroach upon wholesome living. In lands where Christian tradition has inspired a wealth of social relief, for which the Christian Church is no longer directly responsible, these interests may be regarded with misgiving, lest the missionary should intrude too far into the domain of secular activity, to the hindrance of his spiritual calling.

The expression of this anxiety is wholesome, to keep in the foreground of missionary thought the active principle from which the true relief of suffering is derived : at the same time it betrays a lack of understanding of the situation overseas. In the home country such activities have been so largely divorced from their Christian origins that we are unaware how relevant they are to the interpretation of the Christian Gospel in lands which have not enjoyed so long or so large an inheritance of Christian teaching.

Moreover, we are unfamiliar with the conditions with which a missionary deals. To speak of housing conjures up visions of architect's plans, builder's specification and estimates, let alone the manifold requirements of building authorities or the provisions of a Town and Country Planning Act. The problem for most missionaries is simpler : building is in its infancy as a professional trade, each householder is generally his own architect, and the missionary's main concern is to see that a degree of immunity from prevalent pests is secured by drainage and sanitary precautions, by cutting the bush around the house, by covering wells or protecting the water supply, and by encouraging the builder to make provision for light, air and privacy in his new home.

These elementary considerations of hygiene, in themselves, could be taught in any school ; they only become wholesomely operative when they appear in a true perspective of general health, and that is a contribution which the Christian missionary can make. One man, recalling days spent with West African villagers in a swamp cutting the timber for a village school, wrote : " Usually about midday they would ask me to hold prayers, and they would all stop and gather round as we thanked God for the beauty of the trees and prayed that we might build the school well and that it might come to mean a great deal for their country and for their children."

Another missionary, set the task of training village teachers, was

given 80 pupils and a square mile of virgin forest. To help him, an agricultural officer and a carpenter were detailed to the staff. Their first occupation was to clear land and to discover a type of building which would stand up to tropical weather conditions, and at the same time prepare ground on which to grow the food that they would require. The preaching of the Gospel begins with the consciousness of human need, and if housing comes early on the list of needs which are apparent, food is a universal concern of the most primitive as well as the most civilized societies. This short article cannot summarize the flood of literature which, in recent years, has dealt with the ominous prospect of world shortages ; but in lands where millions live below a bare subsistence level, nutrition is an elementary requirement in the building of the Church of Christ which no missionary can ignore : and the solution is not to create a membership of rice Christians dependent upon supplies from other lands.

## II

This aspect of his calling has become increasingly evident as the results of widespread research receive publicity, and make known the inability even of those lands which are still predominantly agricultural to feed their own populations.

At the training centre for village teachers, to which reference has been made, the initial requirements of housing and food for the students were first attended to, and then the master had to prepare his syllabus. He followed a novel course for he told his students that, as a foreigner, he could not be expected to know what were the things which mattered most to the people to whom they were to be prepared to minister, and it was for them to tell him what they ought to study. They were nonplussed by this demand and so, for the first three months, he sent them out in small groups into the countryside to talk to the people and to discover the concerns which were uppermost in their minds and afforded the prevailing impulse in their daily lives. At the end of that time the students prepared their findings, and then, in discussion with the master, hammered out a syllabus which bore some relation to the life and thought of the constituency which they were going to serve. In that analysis food took a foremost place, and the use of the land for its production led at once to the creative forces which lie beyond human control, and so to the Creator.

This original transition of thought has provided Christian Missions with a means of introducing the Gospel in terms which are not only easily intelligible but are recognized as relevant by those whose livelihood is rooted in the land.

In most countries overseas the good earth has a spiritual affinity which it has nearly lost among people of greater sophistication ; consequently, the Church in Europe is faced with a dilemma, for the majority of her missionaries have not grown up in homes which are rooted in their native soil. However enthusiastic these missionaries may be to encourage good husbandry they lack the instinct which comes with years of practical experience ; and they are limited in their ability to envisage local problems or to apply their theory in the right way. Some missions, notably of the Roman Catholic and Scottish

communions, have been more alive than others to the opportunity afforded by this elemental service and, for many years, have incorporated agricultural training in preaching the Gospel of the whole life. Elsewhere, the emphasis is fortuitous, dependent upon individual conviction rather than deliberate policy.

At this stage, an attempt at general re-adjustment (even if men and women with the requisite experience were forthcoming), would be likely to dislocate the framework of the existing missionary deployment; for the Church's failure to meet educational demands has taught her the danger of extending her tenuous forces too widely along one particular front. Yet, in rural areas, missionaries are growing more conscious of the deficiencies of a presentation of the Gospel unrelated to the environment in which they are placed. They are eager to know what they can do to offset their ignorance. To meet their need, there is room for expansion of a joint enterprise by which the Church is united in endeavouring to close this gap in her ranks.

In one country it has taken shape in the creation of a centre, serving a very wide area, where a small group of Christian farmers with a doctor and a carpenter, convinced of the message they have to give, are combining courses for the clergy and school teachers of country districts with practical research into all that goes to make life better and fuller for the villager. That centre will also be a focus point for the enquiries from men and women in all quarters who need skilled help to bring their message into line with the life of those whom they are endeavouring to serve. And when it is reinforced by an extension service of travelling consultants, the missions involved will have gone a considerable way to co-ordinate their teaching of the message of the fuller life; and they will not be committed to the expenditure of man power which the staffing of a school system requires.

Education with a capital E, as an element of wholesome living, needs no enlargement in this article. As the history of missions consistently reveals, it has proved an essential to the missionary if he is to reach a common ground of understanding with those to whom he takes his message, and an instrument necessary for them if they are to carry their gospel into the main current of their country's life. It may be of humble origin for missionaries were not originally equipped with specialized training or diplomas; but education with a small initial is a title which may fairly be applied to the several employments that have gone to the making of men whole. Indeed, the objective penetration of learning into life's other activities is a feature of education for which recurrent Commissions have claimed closer attention, and which is a unifying force in the realization of the whole of life.

### III

The Christian concern for men and women in their total environment has to take account of the continuous change in outlook and background which every society experiences in its growth. "You forget," said the devil, "that I, too, am evolving!" That remark by L. P. Jacks in *Constructive Citizenship* has a peculiar relevance for countries facing the full force of modern political and economic development surging into their lands under the impulse of the West.

Life in townships and industrial centres provides a new and baffling problem for Christian initiative. New sanctions have to be recognized and respected, to take the place of old conventions of conduct, in crowded slums or labour lines where a largely migrant population drawn from diverse quarters knows little of the restraints of wholesome family life. Racial tensions are accentuated; privacy becomes a thing of the past; the streets offer a fascinating playground for the children and compete with parental control in their training, while many of the younger people have left their families and are exposed untended to the licence and vice which sap the moral welfare of a city population.

To combat the impact of these novel stresses is an assignment which Christian faith must welcome, as a test worthy of the spiritual resources which it professes and which the Church must employ along new lines to safeguard the God-given heritage of a wholesome life.

The newspaper and other publications assume a greater significance, and the call to help in establishing healthy standards in reading matter is one which must be answered. The need to implant fresh ideas in the minds of young people for the use of leisure, and for the mutual respect required of the sexes in new forms of association, will tax the ingenuity of an organizer, but are susceptible to the persuasive power of dedicated lives and genuine love. The weapons of Christian warfare are not changed, but those who handle them have to learn the parry and thrust with which to meet new forms of attack. The Christian forces overseas are already alive to these new demands. "The Church in the Town" is the title given to the report of a Conference which met last May in Accra on the Gold Coast. It was the outcome of a social survey by one of its African members, and was convened by the Christian Council of the Gold Coast. The foreword recognizes that many of the evils require action by secular authorities, but goes on to say: "if the Church does not play its part reform will lack the inspiration of Christian motive and the root of evil—human sin—will be untouched". It concludes with a quotation from Archbishop Temple: "We cannot obtain a hearing for our primary message if, with regard to the evils of which men are chiefly conscious, we have to say that for these it contains no remedy. We must first find where men are, and then, taking them by the hand, lead them to the true source of peace and power".

In those words one hears the echo of Peter's confession to Cornelius: "God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying as soon as I was sent for". Both these men of God recognized that the opportunity of witness begins at the point at which men are conscious of need. It is then that they are most ready to listen to the voice which says, "Fear not, only believe, and thou shalt be made whole".