

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

the achieving of which man played, and plays, no part. It is Good-news of a Salvation man can never merit, but only accept. We are saved by faith—by just trusting ; not by works.

By trusting Christ we are saved from the blindness of sin, and so become pure in heart to behold the Vision of God. By trusting Christ we are saved from the frustration of sin, and so are empowered to co-operate with God in the building of His Kingdom.

By trusting Christ we are saved from the death of sin, and so possess Eternal Life.

Moreover, the gratitude that is all we can offer, makes us feel that we are “ saved to serve ” : an incentive that has proved all down the Christian ages the supreme urge to Evangelise, to proclaim the Good-news of Salvation to others. In short, Salvation is that redemption of our nature, through Christ, which puts us into a right personal relationship with God and our fellows. By Salvation we enter Eternal Life—that is the life of the children of God. Thereby, as regards God, the chief end of life becomes the Vision of God and His eternal worship.

As regards man, our purpose in life is to bring the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, both by bringing men and women to God, and by striving to produce an environment in which they can grow to full Christian stature. So it is that St. Paul calls the ministers of the Gospel the Ambassadors of Christ’s Reconciliation (2 Cor. : v. 18 ff.) ; and I would end by venturing to re-echo the Apostle’s exhortation. God has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. As though God were entreating by us, we beseech you on behalf of Christ, re-affirm to yourselves the Good-news of your own reconciliation with God, and so become the ambassadors to others of Christ’s Reconciliation.

The Salvation of the Individual

THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP J. H. LINTON, D.D.

IT is only possible to discuss “ The Salvation of the Individual ” in this separate way because of the complementary paper being read on “ The Regeneration of Society.” For the whole teaching of the New Testament is that we are saved to serve : “ That we, being delivered . . . might serve.” Deliverance first ; then service. There can be no such thing as a solitary Christian. We belong to a fellowship, and part of the responsibility of that fellowship is the regeneration of society. Christians are “ the salt of the earth.” One function of salt is to preserve. Probably our Lord often watched the fish being sent from Capernaum to Jerusalem, packed in two hampers slung one on either side of a donkey. But first, the salt was thoroughly mixed with the fish. If the fish had been packed in one basket and the salt in the other, the salt would arrive in Jerusalem in perfect condition, but the fish——! And the salt wouldn’t have carried out its preserving function.

LABORATORY EXPERIMENTS

I asked permission not to read a paper but instead to give you a bunch of concrete instances of the way the Salvation of the individual

happens in the ordinary life of a parish. I have only been in parish work for seven years. I had never been a curate. So my experience of parish work is no greater than that of most of you in this conference. We have had no parochial Missions, etc. These conversions have been almost entirely through the normal work that goes on in every parish, such as Confirmation classes, talks to godparents, talks to young couples before marriage, appointments made after morning and evening service, etc. Much of it is the result of personal work done by lay members of the Church for whom training classes are held from time to time. I regard this co-operation between a rector and his lay people as vital.

A TEAM OF LAY PEOPLE

The value of training lay folk in personal evangelism is (1) *They learn how to diagnose.* A medical student has his text book, he works with a specialist, he has class work, and then he experiments on his own. The parallels are obvious. (2) *They learn to talk in the vernacular.* When we glibly use such terms as "being born again", "accepting Jesus Christ" etc., are we always sure that the man we are trying to win understands what we are saying? Do we understand it ourselves? Could we say it in the vernacular of the man in the street? (3) *You have your lay people working with you as a team.* The strength of a team is far greater than the strength of any individual. And when lay people are out with you on this work, their witness often counts for more than the equivalent witness of a clergyman. Also, the very youngest member of the team counts. Every fisherman knows that a very small fly can catch a very big salmon. In one place where I was holding a mission, one morning the team was meeting when in walked a young fellow. After a bit he asked if he could speak. He said he was the curate of a neighbouring parish. That morning a member of our team had asked him if he was winning men for Christ in his parish. He said he knew nothing about that. His job was visiting and taking services. But the member of the team did not stop till that curate had come into a real experience of Christ as his Saviour. The curate himself told us. Now my point is that the man who won the curate was the very youngest member of our team. He was only a fortnight old himself in his new life. It is not unfair to ask whether our own life, and our enthusiasm for winning men for God, sets a standard high enough to challenge these lay folk of ours. If we are convinced that Jesus Christ, and He alone, is the life of men, the only way to God, then the ordinary man just cannot understand our lack of enthusiasm about conversion! A man in my parish is a "Social Credit" enthusiast. He haunts my house day and night to talk Social Credit. Are we as enthusiastic as that for God? I heard of a woman in an Underground train late one night who got up and said, "Listen, you people! I have something very wonderful to tell you." The theatre crowd listened. It was only about some patent medicine! When she had finished a girl got up and said, "I have something far more wonderful than that to tell you." And she told them how that very night she had come into this new and glorious experience of Christ as her Saviour. That sort of enthusiasm grips.

And I do not believe there is all this indifference about God in these days. It certainly is not true in my own experience. Once when I gave a Broadcast Evangelistic talk I had forty letters a day from people, some as far away as Sweden, later from Canada. These led to many conversions. There may not be a very evident theological conviction of "Sin," but I am all the time meeting people with a very real conviction of definite specific "sins" which they can and do name.

BUSINESS WORRIES

One day I was rung up on the telephone. A man at the other end asked if he could come and see me. It was Friday, and I was pretty busy. I suggested Monday. He said "Oh!" Something in the way he said "Oh!" struck me. I said, "You mean you want to come at once?" He said he did. "Have you a car?" for he lived a good way off. So he came and spent the whole afternoon with me. When he had gone our maid asked "What was the matter with that man?" "Why?" "Well," she said, "he looks like a man going to commit suicide." Which was exactly what he was going to do. If I hadn't seen him that day I should never have seen him. His trouble was business worries and tampering with accounts. He could see no solution except suicide. But that day he found a better solution. He got peace with God; peace in his heart: peace in his mind. He faced up to his problems with renewed mind and to-day looks the whole world in the face.

MORAL PROBLEMS

One Sunday evening after service I was talking to some men in the vestry. One man said, "Sir, what you said in your sermon to-night was no use to me." "What did I say in my sermon that was no use to you?" "You told what God could do for a man who had touched bottom." "Well?" "That's no use to me. *I've gone through the bottom.*" He had, too! But there he found that no matter how far through the bottom a man has gone, down into the mire of sin, underneath are the everlasting arms. Those arms lifted him up that night and set him on a rock.

MARRIAGE PROBLEMS

These past seven years I have had twenty-five cases of broken or breaking marriage to deal with. They have come to me from all over England. They would have gone to their own vicar if they were sure he would try to help them. Why don't we let them know we will? Somehow the news had got into the Press of a "School for Marriage" I was having, and so these people came to me. Ten of these have got right, all on a basis of God. I say flat out to them that "forgive and forget" is not good enough. They need God. Three have gone through the divorce court. They had actually begun proceedings when I met them. For the rest I cannot yet say what the end will be. One couple had been married twenty-nine years. Another only two years. Each of these had already put their case into the hands of lawyers. In each case some days later I had a letter or a telegram to say they were "having another honeymoon." For now they were new people in Christ Jesus.

INTELLECTUAL PROBLEMS

Once we were having a special invitation meeting in another town, to try to reach people who were not in touch with the Churches. One lady I remember, was a very brainy person. At the end of the meeting I asked "Have you taken Christ into your life to-night?" She said, "No." "Why not?" She said, "How can I pray to a God in whose existence I don't believe?" "Is that all?" I asked. "No. I have other intellectual problems." I said I had found that when people's moral problems were settled, their intellectual problems usually settled themselves." I got her to go away with an experienced lady worker. Some time after midnight she confessed to a moral problem in her life, which she resolved to put right. Next day she came to see me, and, telling me her side of the story, said "And this morning for the first time I taught my children to pray."

You see, her intellectual problem was a real one. But she had a cataract which prevented her seeing the answer. When the scales fell from her eyes the answer came clear and she taught her children to pray.

I have given you illustrations from various areas of life, home life, business worries, personal problems, intellectual problems, moral problems. Always there has been real sin to be dealt with.

(In the space of this paper it is not possible to quote many of the instances given at the Conference. But those given here are representative.)

OUR ENGLISH RESERVE

Someone referred earlier in this Conference to our English reserve in speaking about these things of the soul. When I was taking meetings in Germany, they said "You English people are so different from us. You talk easily and naturally about God. But we Germans are so reserved!"

In Switzerland they said exactly the same. In Persia they said the same. And here am I, a Scot, and we are said to be the most reserved of all people! I believe it is just the devil, trying to shut our mouths and keep us from witnessing to the most glorious and thrilling experience of all life. And when people tell me I have a flair for breaking in on people, I know it is not true. For I am naturally a veritable clam, and I only open out and witness because of what Christ means to me.

And I find this invariably, that when you do open out and speak, people are glad and it helps them to speak too.

Anyhow it is our job, and we are called and sent for this very work. Once when I was Bishop in Persia I became aware that for some time past I had not been used of God to win anyone for Christ. I said, "Yes, but I am a Bishop, and a Bishop is a Pastor, a Shepherd, and a Shepherd's work is looking after sheep." That was a let-down. Then God showed me that part of a Shepherd's work is seeing that sheep are being born!

And again, it is not just because I am a Bishop. What I know of personal work in winning people for God is mostly what I have learnt from our Lord's own methods of personal work in the Gospels, plus forty-three years practising it. I did it first, after my own conversion, when I was engineering, and I have done it ever since.

SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Lastly, I want to say two or three things :

1. Use your Bible in this kind of personal work. Good stories are all right in their way. But it is vitally important that the seeker after God should have God's own word to rest on. That "liveth and abideth for ever."

2. Somewhere the man under conviction must bring his sins to the Cross. We are not forgiven *because* we have confessed our sins to God, but because of what Christ has done in His death. Confession is a condition of forgiveness (1 John i. 9.) It is "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, that cleanseth us from all sin."

3. But it is important to know what you are aiming at. If you aim at a target you are more likely to hit it ! Work for actual conversion. Talk about God in a language understood of the people. Believe in the Holy Spirit who will Himself convict and convert. These days are no more evil than any other days. During one day in my parish, five men and three women sat in my study and ended by taking Christ as their Saviour. On another occasion three men and two women. A few weeks ago thirteen in a fortnight. But if we ourselves hardly believe in conversion the doubt can get subtly conveyed to our hearers, then why should they believe ? The promise of Christ still stands : "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

The Regeneration of Society

THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF CHELMSFORD

(The Bishop did not read a paper but gave an address from carefully prepared notes of which the following is a brief summary.)

On the subject of Evangelicals at work in the Regeneration of Society, the Bishop found the title a little obscure. There is no prospect at all of a total Christian State. The historical examples of Geneva and the Commonwealth period in England were not altogether successful and gave little hope that it ever would be realised. In fact it is very doubtful whether the complete regeneration of society was ever contemplated. Many New Testament passages seem to suggest the very opposite. The Christian life is spoken of as a strait and narrow way. Our Lord went further to say 'when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith in the earth?' and subordinate passages from other parts confirm this thought. Thus we are thought of as 'strangers and pilgrims' having here no continuing city.

It must not however be forgotten that there are on the other hand, complementary passages in the New Testament which suggest that the Christian influence would penetrate the whole society. We remember the parables of the leaven and mustard seed ; the sayings to Christ's disciples that they are lights in the world ; the salt of the earth. How far can the Christian message impregnate legislation ? How far can it act as an antiseptic to the corruptions of general society ? The first question is perhaps the more important. If the Christian