

# **The Relevance of Dr Samuel Angus for the Christian Church in the Twenty-First Century**

by

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It gives me great pleasure to be present in this esteemed College tonight, and to deliver this address which is entitled "The Relevance of Dr Samuel Angus for the Christian Church in the Twenty-First Century".

I feel quite a strong connection to this College. Although I was never a resident student here, I nevertheless feel a strong connection to this College. First, Dr Samuel Angus, although a Presbyterian, was essentially a Christian Unitarian in his theology. Secondly, he lived for many years at Turramurra, just a couple of streets from where my family and I have lived for over 2 decades. (His house remains to this day, more-or-less as it was when Angus and his wife lived there more than 70 years ago.) Thirdly, Rabbi Rudolph Brasch, who was the senior minister of Temple Emanuel at Woollahra for some 30 years, and whose seminal book *The Star of David* (Angus & Robertson, 1955) was the first book to be published in Australia on Judaism, was not only a guest professor at this College teaching future Presbyterian ministers Biblical Hebrew but also an acting minister of the Sydney Unitarian Church for a time. Fourthly, the Rev. Ernest H Vines, a former student and "disciple" of Angus and sometime Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly of NSW, who taught New Testament Language and Literature here for many years, was a regular guest preacher at the Sydney Unitarian Church in his later years. Although I never met Vines, I got to know his daughter Kathi and her son Ben.

The Rev. Dr Samuel Angus (1881-1943), an Ulster Scott, was Professor of Exegetical Theology of the New Testament and Historical Theology in the Presbyterian Theological Hall within St Andrew's College, University of Sydney, from 1915 to 1943. He was a councillor of this College from 1926, and sometime curator of the Nicholson Museum of Antiquities, and he was prominent in the foundation of the board of studies in divinity in

1936. Angus was the author of a number of important publications, including *The Environment of Early Christianity* (1914), *The Mystery Religions and Christianity* (1925), *The Religious Quests of the Graeco-Roman World* (1929), *Jesus in the Lives of Men* (1933), *Truth and Tradition* (1934), *The Auld Sinner* [published under the pseudonym of Cowan Harper] (1938), *Essential Christianity* (1939), *Man and the New Order* (1942), *Alms for Oblivion* (1943) and *Forgiveness and Life* [edited by Ernest H Vines] (1962).

Dr Angus' other academic appointments and positions include the following: Acting Professor of New Testament Interpretation and Elliot Lecturer, Webster Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1920; Earle Lecturer, Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California, 1925; and Visiting Professor of Religious Education, Teachers' College, Columbia, New York, 1929-31. His academic qualifications included a Bachelor of Arts degree (with Honours), two Master of Arts degrees, a PhD (from Princeton), and three honorary doctorates.

Although a brilliant classical scholar and linguist, Dr Angus was, and remains even more so to this day, a controversial figure in New South Wales Presbyterianism, and in his lifetime he gained a reputation for non-orthodoxy, if not downright heresy – a reputation in which he sometimes enthusiastically collaborated but which ultimately cost him dearly as his health suffered terribly as a result of various actions brought against him by more conservative members of his church. To many people to this day, including myself, he remains a hero and a giant of a man.

Angus's orthodoxy was questioned first in the Presbytery of Sydney and later at the 1932 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales. The battle really began in earnest in 1933 when growing concern over Angus's teaching at this College led the conservatives to attempt to have him removed from his professorship.

Angus's chief opponent throughout the years was one Robert John Henry McGowan who for many years was the minister of the Ashfield Presbyterian Church. McGowan was a staunch evangelical who held fast to a very narrow and strict interpretation of the doctrinal standards of Presbyterianism. Be that as it may, Angus's supporters would continue to affirm, as would Angus himself, that Angus's teaching was nevertheless in accord with all that was true and valuable in Presbyterianism. The "Angus affair" (also known as the "Angus case") dragged on for 12 years, in church courts, presbytery, the

NSW and Australian general assemblies and the latter's judicial commission, with the heresy issue being pursued - at times vigorously - even though no formal legal charge of heresy was ever laid. The Church itself never brought heresy charges, primarily because the conservatives lacked the numbers to take decisive action against him. (Such was not the case for Dr Peter Cameron, a former Principal of this College, who was convicted of heresy by the Presbyterian Church of Australia on most flimsy grounds in March 1993.)

Although the Angus case was never finally resolved, it effectively ended in 1942 when the Church's procurator Bryan Fuller QC successfully moved in the Australian Assembly that "all communications dealing in any way with the case of Dr Angus be discharged from the business paper, without prejudice to the rights of any of the parties; and that any of the parties concerned may obtain the restoration of any of the matters to the business paper by motion passed pursuant to notice."

Having suffered a severe stroke and been afflicted with various other serious illnesses during these many trying years, Dr Samuel Angus died of metastasised cancer in the Scottish Hospital, in Paddington, Sydney, on 17 November 1943.

Angus' version of Christianity, which he variously referred to as "essential Christianity" and "unitive Christianity", was explicitly grounded in two well-known verses from the Bible, namely:

... And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic 6:8)

... Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps (1 Pet 2:21)

In my address to you this evening I intend to focus on the following three areas which were all primary concerns of Dr Angus:

1. The ever-present and ongoing need to find and meet the Jesus of history, as opposed to the Christ of faith, and to present and promote the religion *of* Jesus as true, authentic Christianity.

2. The need to re-interpret the ancient and time-honoured Christian Creeds and Articles, Professions and Confessions of Faith in light of advances in knowledge and the needs of today's world.
3. The need to promote, foster, maintain and apply rigorous standards of critical, academic scholarship (including but not limited to a knowledge of the classics) as respects academia generally and also as regards the teaching, interpretation, construction and application of the Christian Scriptures.

Before discussing what I think are Dr Angus' lasting contributions to Christianity, and his relevance for the Christian Church of today, I think it only fair that I say a little about what I believe. In so doing, it will become clear to those who have read any of the writings of Dr Angus that I am deeply indebted to him and have been greatly influenced by him. For those who are not familiar with the views of Professor Angus then my exposition of *my* faith will hopefully serve as a useful, if very fallible and even unworthy, summary of the key ideas promulgated by Angus.

I was brought up a Baptist and baptized by full immersion at the age of 18 at Pymble (now Gordon) Baptist Church, serving for a time as a Sunday School teacher, youth leader and a deacon in that church. During my undergraduate years at the University of Sydney, where I studied Arts/Law, I attended my local Anglican Church and was confirmed at St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney. Much to my surprise and eventual consternation, I found the Sydney Anglicans much more theologically conservative than the Baptists, and they have become even more so these past 4 decades. I was for a time a member of an Anglican parish council and, for a number of years, my wife and I were members of the Ku-ring-gai Interchurch Committee. My secondary education had been at what was then a Presbyterian (and now a Uniting) church school – Knox Grammar School. Even in the days when I saw myself as a Bible-believing evangelical Christian, I was *never* a fundamentalist, but I always had a great love for the person of Jesus Christ. I still do.

My transformation into a religious liberal, and a progressive Christian, was a gradual one, and I have been greatly influenced by the writings of people such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mordecai Kaplan, Paul Tillich, Samuel Angus, Ernest H Vines, Leslie Weatherhead, Harry Emerson Fosdick, James A Pike, Elaine Pagels, John Shelby

Spong, Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, Bart Ehrman, Don Cupitt and Lloyd Geering. I am attracted to the school of theology known as “process theology” which asserts that the reality of God is not fixed and that God is still developing. Even the great theologian Thomas Aquinas wrote that God was unknown and unknowable, notwithstanding that, for all Christians, Jesus is “as much of God” as we appear capable of apprehending.

Insofar as Unitarianism is concerned, it has afforded me a spiritual home, devoid of superstition and all notions of supernaturalism and traditional theism, in which I feel most comfortable. I embrace Sir Julian Huxley’s exposition and understanding of divinity, namely, the divine is that which is worthy of adoration, that which compels awe, reverence and a profound sense of wonder. In the words of the first *Humanist Manifesto*, “Religion consists of those actions, purposes, and experiences which are humanly significant. Nothing human is alien to the religious.”

Today, I see myself as being a progressive non-exclusivist Christian whose faith (which draws from a number of different religious and philosophical traditions, especially Buddhism) is in the living person of Jesus and not in any set of doctrines or dogma about that person. To that extent, and in many other ways as well, I am very much an “Angus man”, and unashamedly so.

For the most part, I believe that what purports to be traditional, conventional Christianity is a corruption, indeed a perversion, of the teachings of Jesus and an altogether unhappy mixture of elements of Judaism and Greco-Roman mystery religion. True Christianity, in my view, is the religion *of* Jesus, the religion that he taught, and the religion by which he lived his life. I am greatly indebted to Professor Angus for that understanding.

Now, let me make one thing very clear right at the outset. I reject all notions of so-called supernaturalism, believing that there is only one order or level of reality, that of ordinary things in time and space. In that regard, I agree wholeheartedly with what Dr N T Wright, the Anglican Bishop of Durham, England, has written on the notion of the so-called “supernatural”. Dr Wright is one of many current religionists who seek to avoid altogether notions of supernaturalism because he is acutely aware of their inherent problems. In his book *Who Was Jesus?* Dr Wright states:

The great divide between the “natural” and the “supernatural”, certainly in the way we use those words today, comes basically from the eighteenth century, bringing with it the whole debate about “miracles”.

Wright goes on to say:

But what if the God who made the world has remained active within the world? What if the word “God” itself might refer, not to this distant, remote, occasionally-intervening Being, but to a God who breathed with the breath of the world? ... This is a very different picture from the eighteenth-century one; it is much more Biblical. It puts the question of “God” acting within the world into quite a different dimension.

In other words, *if* the God of the bishop’s understanding does in fact exist, and if that God is active in our world, then anything done by that God would not be supernatural at all. Although I agree with the thrust and intent of what the learned bishop is trying to say, with the greatest respect to Dr Wright, this is Christian presuppositionalism at its very worst. Wright commits the informal fallacy of *petitio principii*, or begging the question. Further, what he has written is no more than a “conditional statement” (“*If* the God of the Bible does in fact exist ...”) which is not an argument at all, as it doesn’t specify the premises that are needed to support the bishop’s conclusion. Nevertheless, the great divide between the so-called natural and the supernatural is of fairly recent provenance and should, as Wright says, be rejected. To talk of there being any possibility of “higher” and “lower” orders or levels of reality is both empirically ridiculous and logically unspeakable. This understanding and philosophy of life I gained from the writings and teachings of the late John Anderson, who was Challis Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney from 1927 until 1958, and I will always be grateful for the insight that I have gained. My albeit limited understanding of science has given me the assurance that this universe of ours came into existence either uncaused or self-caused. Hence, I reject any sense of there having been some sort of suprapersonal creator of the universe.

Did Dr Angus believe in the supernatural? He stated that the “supernatural must be at least equal to the spiritual, which to me is the highest category”. With all due respect, that is an oblique and altogether unsatisfactory response from Dr Angus. Not only does it beg the question as to what is meant by the word “spiritual”, it deliberately avoids the main issue altogether. The truth is that Dr Angus promulgated an almost totally de-supernaturalised form of Christianity. I have no problem with that, but in retrospect it seems that Dr Angus was being deliberately coy lest he play right into the hands of his

detractors.

To this day, although I reject the supposed deity (but not the divinity) of Jesus, as did Dr Angus, I still regard Jesus as the supreme Way-shower, the Great Example, but *not* the Great Exception. Jesus is my Saviour and Lord, but not in any narrow evangelical sense, as he shows me the way out of selfishness, which lies at the heart of all sin, and by means of his vicarious spirituality and overcoming the bondage and limitations of sin he delivers me out of what would otherwise be a perpetual state of bondage to ego-self, self-centredness and self-absorption. For me, that is a vision of Jesus with which I can identify with both intellectual honesty and at great emotional depth – redemption, or regeneration, in the form of being made both free from myself and from the world, so that I can both find, and lose, myself in a greater and wider reality that is timeless and infinite, ultimate and ineffable. Identification with, and imitation of, the man Jesus, who conquered and out-loved the worst that life could hurl at him, can lead one to a spiritual regeneration, aided and assisted, vicariously if you wish, by a spirituality that he willingly shares with us – he, who was able to say, with complete honesty and humility, “I and my Father are one” (Jn 10:30).

Such an experience can only occur to the extent to which we open ourselves and are otherwise responsive to the outpoured life of Jesus present both in the race consciousness and, mystically, in the depths of our own spiritual lives as part of the presence, indeed the omnipresence, of God-life within us and within all things.

Being what is referred to as a panentheist (God is the ground of all being, God is in all things, and all things are in God, but all things are not God), I reject all traditional notions of theism, believing that “For in him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). After all, did not Jesus say, “the Father is in me, and I in him” (Jn 10:38), and “I am in my Father: and you in me, and I in you” (Jn 14:20), before going on to pray to the Father, “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (Jn 17:21)? And this ... “For the Spirit of the Lord fills the whole universe and holds all things together” (Wis 1:7). Do think that the Bible presents just one form of theism – what is known as traditional theism? If you do, you are wrong. We get some beautiful pantheistic images of God in many of the Psalms (as well as some truly horrible images of God as well), and we find evidence of panentheism - which, in my view, is the

most mature and intelligible concept of God – in the verses that I've just quoted as well as in many others.

Now, back to this business of Jesus and God. Eminent Christian theologian William Barclay, in *Who is Jesus*, writes:

It is to be noted carefully that Jesus never equated himself with God. Many times in John's Gospel Jesus speaks of being sent: 'As thou didst send me into the world, so have I sent them into the world' (John 17:18). Jesus speaks like this about forty times. ... Jesus does not equate himself with God and is not to be equated with God.

Jesus' purported utterance, "I and my Father are one" (Jn 10:30), must be seen in that context. Jesus spoke of the Father, who sent him, as God, and as the only God: see eg Jn 17:3 ("This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent"). This language Jesus used in solemn prayer to "his Father and our Father." Jesus came to know the Father (or, in the language of Eastern religion, the Self) as One because of the fullness of his humanity - the true measure of his divinity - by constantly exercising all of his moral and spiritual faculties in the service of others. Please get this straight – Jesus never claimed anything for himself that he didn't also claim for us.

As for Jesus' reported utterance, "No one comes to the Father except by me" (Jn 14:6), William Barclay writes in *Who is Jesus* that "Jesus did not say: 'No one comes to *God* except by me.' If Jesus had said that, we would have had to say that no one in the Old Testament knew anything about God." My view is the same as that of that great Methodist preacher and Christian author of yesteryear Dr Leslie Weatherhead, which is also that of the Jesus Seminar – I don't believe that Jesus ever said the purported utterance in the first place. If he did, he was referring to his way of life, his teaching, nothing more than that. Strangely, there appear to be a sizable number of Christians who, when reading this verse, interpret it mean that Jesus is God and that no one can get to heaven except if they worship Jesus and accept him as their Saviour and Lord. The popular perception that this verse claims that Jesus requires our worship in order for us to receive salvation is not the intended meaning of this verse. However, in order for us to recognize this fact it is necessary to study its context. If we were to back up a little and read from the beginning of John Chapter 14, we find that just before Jesus spoke these words, he said, "In my Father's house are many mansions (dwelling places); if it

were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a mansion (a dwelling place) for you" (Jn 14:2).

The above statement is quite clear. This is what Jesus is saying here. He said that in God's mansion there are "many" rooms. Jesus purports to guide to only one of them. The countless other rooms were apparently reserved for other tribes and nations if they would obey their respective messengers. However, Jesus was telling his followers that they need not worry themselves about the other rooms. Anyone from among his people who wished to enter into the room which was reserved for them could only do so if they followed Jesus and obeyed his command. So Jesus confirmed that he was going to prepare "a" mansion and not "all" the mansions in "my Father's house". Further, the verse clearly states that Jesus was the "way" to a mansion. He did not say that he is the "destination" which would be the case if he were God. This is indeed confirmed in Jn 10:9 where Jesus tells us that he is the "door" to the "pasture." In other words, he is the "prophet" who guides his people to "heaven" (see also Jn 12:44).

Jesus also said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold" (Jn 10:16), the latter referring, or course, to Christianity. Jesus was a man of the East who belongs as much to Asia as to the West. If Jesus has sheep that are not within the Christian fold it reasonably follows that those sheep comprise Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Humanists, and many other groups and persons including, I believe, many persons who see themselves as atheists or otherwise belonging to no faith community at all. The great Christian evangelist Dr Billy Graham believes so too. He has publicly said that all people who love Christ, or who know Christ, "whether they're conscious of it or not", are members of the Body of Christ, even if they don't even know the name of Jesus. Billy Graham knows his Bible. You see, he knows the story of the "Anonymous Christ" in the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew's Gospel which I will discuss shortly.

In short, Jesus proclaimed, firstly, that there are many mansions and that he saw his purpose as preparing "a" mansion and not "all" the mansions in his Father's house, and secondly, that there many folds and not just the Christian fold. In short, Christians do not have any monopoly on the Holy Spirit (which, by the way, is always feminine in the Bible). In Romans 8:14 we read, "All those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God." Yes, Angus, too, would agree with Dr Graham that all who "turn to the only light that they have" (Graham's exact words) are saved.

Fundamentalist and far too many evangelical Christians seem to have forgotten this all-important spiritual truth enunciated by their Saviour and Lord:

Not every one that says to me [Jesus], 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father, who is in heaven." (Mt 7:21)

Jesus' followers were originally known as "people of the way". Jesus, in his humanity, offers us a vision and a challenge. The call to follow is not a call to worship Jesus. He never sought nor wanted that. No, the Way of Jesus is a call to follow Jesus' path, to live as he lived, and to serve others as he did. It calls for a life of selfless self-giving to others. You don't need to be, or call yourself, a Christian to live selflessly for others as Jesus did.

As I see it, and as Dr Samuel Angus saw it, Christianity is the true religion *of* Jesus – the religion that Jesus taught, and by which Jesus himself lived and died. Jesus called it the "gospel of God", and told us that the Kingdom of God was within us (see Lk 17:21).

I repeat what I said earlier. Many people who would not identify as Christians are real followers of the way of Jesus. There is a wonderful hymn, written by Marguerite Pollard, which contains this wonderful verse:

And there are some who love him well,  
yet know not it is he they love;  
he tends the holy fire within  
and draws them to the heights above.

I believe that the fullness of God's life can be found and experienced in the full humanity of Jesus, and that mystically we experience that oneness with the Father through our encounter with Jesus who, as an integral part of God's omnipresence, is one with us in and through the power of consciousness, prayer and meditation. As already mentioned, I believe in the divinity (as opposed to the deity) of Jesus Christ. I also believe in the innate divinity - the sacred worth and value - of all human beings, indeed all things.

For me, the most important spiritual principle of all is this - there is but *one* Life manifesting itself in all things as all things. As I see it, the word "God" refers to the Spirit of Life which manifests Itself in the form of a triplicity of Life, Truth and Love. Life - the very *livingness* of all life. Truth - the essential *oneness* of all life. Love - the *self-givingness* of life to itself so as to perpetuate itself. I also use the word "God" to refer not only to the ground of being but also to our innate potential perfectibility, as well as to

what I regard as being the sacred, the holy, the ineffable. I find that sense of the sacred or holy primarily but not exclusively in the enchantment of everyday life ... in the *ordinary* as opposed to the *extraordinary*, and in the so-called *natural* world as opposed to some supposed *supernatural* world.

I now wish to turn to what I see as being the three main areas where Dr Angus is relevant to the Christian Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

**1. *The ever-present and ongoing need to find and meet the Jesus of history, as opposed to the Christ of faith, and to present and promote the religion of Jesus as true, authentic Christianity***

For Samuel Angus “the centrality of Jesus” was paramount. Even Angus’ most ardent opponents and detractors acknowledged - some begrudgingly - that his book *Jesus in the Lives of Men* was a beautiful and most sincere piece of Christian writing. Angus loved Jesus, dearly – of that there is no doubt. However, Angus contrasted the “religion of Jesus” with the “religion about Jesus”. The humanity of Jesus was God’s personality. The personality of the Living Jesus of Galilee was, as mentioned, central to Angus’s religion; Jesus was “our only Lord”, primarily because of his preeminent moral leadership. In *Jesus in the Lives of Men* (1933) Angus had this to say:

Jesus is not accredited to us today by his miracles, or by a virgin birth, or by a resurrection from an underworld, or by a reanimation of his body from the grave, or by fulfillment of prophecies; he is accredited by his long train of conquests over the loyalties of men, and chiefly by the immediate, intimate and inevitable appeal made by him to everything that is best and God-like in each of us, and by his ability to “make men fall in love with him”, and “to win the world to his fair sanctities”.

In an article by Dr Angus on “Faith in God through Jesus” published in the *Australian Intercollegian* of 2 April 1923 Angus expressed his view that no statement of Christian faith could properly insist on demanding more than Jesus himself asked people to believe, nor should any such statement claim finality or infallibility. For Angus, a Christian was one who was inwardly and whose life was molded after that of Jesus, who was Lord because he has shown us ourselves in the light of God and also because he has shown us the Father. Christianity was the religion of the Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, and Christian character was entirely independent of any particular orthodoxy. Christianity should be determined rather by its fruits than by its dogmas.

So what is Christianity? Harry Emerson Fosdick, the distinguished American Baptist minister, author and academic, wrote that a Christian is one who answers Jesus' two-worded appeal, "Follow me." Samuel Angus got to the very heart of things when he described a Christian as a person who is inwardly and whose life is moulded after that of Jesus. In other words, to believe in Jesus is to confess that in him we find the true essence of the Divine, which is love. Similarly, Brennan Manning, in *The Relentless Love of Jesus*, wrote, "To be a Christian means to stake one's life on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ."

Many Buddhists I know, even many atheists and other secularists, live lives that are so much more nobly and deeply and closely moulded after that of Jesus than those fundamentalist and evangelical Christians who claim, ever so proudly, to have been washed in the saving Blood of the Lamb and who have forsaken the true human Jesus of the Gospels (who *never* used any language of blood sacrifice, propitiation or expiation) and who have substituted for him a Christ of dogmatism, metaphysics and pagan philosophy.

Samuel Angus wrote in *Jesus in the Lives of Men*:

Jesus made the great discovery of oneness with the Father which he lived out in its expansive fullness in his own experience; he invites each of us to rediscover that discovery and to live in its thrilling and life-transforming power.

Christianity is, first and foremost, a spiritual relationship with Jesus. Leslie Weatherhead wrote a wonderful book entitled *The Transforming Friendship*. What a wonderful description of the Christian life ... and of Christianity itself. In *Truth and Tradition* Angus wrote:

... I maintain that Christianity is not a system of dogmas and doctrines but that it is a way of life; it is the obedience of disciplined wills.

Elsewhere, Dr Angus referred to Christianity as the "resurrection faith", being "a spiritual experience which we have in and with Jesus".

The reason I am a Unitarian Christian, and a religious liberal in more general terms, is because of Dr Angus. Yes, you can blame him for that, or Satan, if that be your sad mindset. I simply do not believe that Jesus was, or even claimed to be, God in any exclusive or unique sense. Divine, yes, but not God in any exclusive or unique sense. I

believe in the *Divinity* of Jesus, but not the supposed *Deity* of Jesus. There is an important theological difference between the two. We are *all* divine, at least in essence and potentiality. Even Jesus himself affirmed, "Is is not written in your law, I said ye are gods" (Jn 10:34; cf Ps 82:6). What a wonderful heresy to affirm and believe in!

However, I believe that Jesus is much more than a teacher, moral exemplar and way-shower. Yes, for me, as for Dr Angus, Jesus is much more than that. Although I seek and find the Divine in various places and sources and persons, I fundamentally encounter it through and in the person of Jesus, whose Divine personality abides in each of us as our potential perfection. In that sense, for *me* at least, Jesus is "Lord", because he reveals in a very special and preeminent way both the nature and essence of the Divine Life which is love and the nature of my manifold imperfections and shortcomings.

What about "Saviour"? Well, certainly not in the sense of Jesus dying for my sins, because on my prayerful reading of the Bible I do not believe that Jesus thought that his death was in any way necessary to secure my forgiveness or that of any other human being for that matter. How did Jesus see his mission? To die for our sins, as a ransom for many? No! That was *not* the message of *Jesus*. True, Mark 10:45 says, "The Son of Man came ... to give his life a ransom for many", but, as Professor Angus pointed out many times, Higher Criticism makes it clear that those words come from Mark or the editor, and Luke, who was clearly familiar with the Gospel of Mark, and who reproduces much of Mark, does not reproduce that verse. For the writer of the Gospel, the death of Jesus was a huge miscarriage of justice and an occasion to repent. Further, the "ransom for many" words occur in a portion of Mark 10:41-45 which is known as a duplicate of another portion (viz Mk 9:33-35) in which the ransom idea is wholly absent. In short, we are dealing with an interpolation. As for Matthew 26:28 ("For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"), the words "for the remission of sins" are, as many critical commentators such as Dr Vincent Taylor have pointed out, a comment added by the evangelist.

If you really want to know about the forgiveness of sins read The Lord's Prayer, and the Parable of the Prodigal Son, among other portions of Scripture. However, I do accept that Jesus' life and death provides a means of atonement in one important sense. If one is lost in a very dark and heavily wooded forest (in this case, a forest of largely self-imposed selfishness, self-absorption, self-obsession, loveless behaviour and a state of

profound separation from others and from one's true Self), and someone, in this case Jesus, can provide a means of escape and show you the way out of the forest - this state of spiritual darkness - and bring you back into the light of day, then that person may rightly be referred to as one's saviour, metaphorically or otherwise.

Now, in the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew's Gospel we meet what has been called the "Anonymous Christ", and we read that the person of Jesus can be experienced even today as a living presence, for he comes to us, and visits us, in our home and in our community. Yes, Jesus' spirit, the Spirit of God that was in Jesus of Nazareth, can live in us. How? Well, the person and personality of Jesus may come to us, appropriated by faith, through an idea, imaginative reflection, a word we hear, as well as through a person who is suffering or joyful. We encounter this personality of Jesus in our interactions with others. Everyone we meet, everyone we serve, is in the image of Jesus. Roman Catholics understand this so much better than Protestants. Yes, the Anonymous Christ, as it is known, comes to us in so many ways, and we fail to recognize that Jesus' incarnation, the very manifestation and Self-expression of the Living Christ, continues all the time, in us and in other people.

We read about the Anonymous Christ in Matthew 25:34-40:

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

Jesus' followers were originally known as "people of the way". Jesus, in his vision of the Anonymous Christ, offers us a vision and a challenge. The call to follow is not a call to worship Jesus. He never sought nor wanted that. No, the Way of Jesus is a call to follow Jesus' path, to live as he lived, and to serve others as he did.

At the heart of what I am saying, and what I believe, is this ... what is meant by the word “Christianity”? For most people who claim to be Christians, Christianity purports to be the religion *of* Jesus but is in actuality a religion *about* Jesus Christ – that is, a system of thought, belief, doctrine and dogma developed and expounded by, preeminently, the Apostle Paul. It was through Dr Angus and others such as Dr Leslie Weatherhead of the City Temple, London, that I came to understand that Christianity is the true religion *of* Jesus – the religion that Jesus taught, and by which Jesus himself lived and died. Jesus called it the “gospel of God”, and told us that the Kingdom of God is *within* us (see Lk 17:21). Yes, within us. The Greek word used is *entos*, and Jesus used that word on only one other occasion (see Mt 23:36). In both cases the clear, intended meaning is “within” as opposed to “in the midst of” or “among” – phrases used in certain versions of the Bible.

## ***2. The need to re-interpret the ancient and time-honoured Christian Creeds and Articles, Professions and Confessions of Faith in light of advances in knowledge and the needs of today's world***

I was reared a Baptist. I am now a Unitarian. Yet both of those Churches have certain matters in common. Both believe in a strong separation of church and state – sadly some Southern Baptists in the United States in recent years appear to have forgotten this all-important Baptist tenet – and both are non-creedal churches.

Religious creeds and the like are dangerous when they are made a condition of fellowship or a test of who is and is not a true Christian. They are dangerous when they become an obstacle to spiritual growth. I have a real aversion to creeds, and so did Dr Angus. True, he would constantly, and not insincerely, assert that he believed in every line of the Creeds and the Westminster Confession. However, Angus believed that creeds “must be revised from time to time, because men raise questions and try to answer them”. In *Truth and Tradition* Angus wrote:

But creed and philosophy of religion are secondary to apprehension of spiritual realities and to religion itself. ... My creed and philosophy do not separate me from my fellows: these are but symbols of the faith in things invisible shared by my fellows and me. ... We are not subject to dogmas. Rather dogmas are subject to us from whose experiences and fallible ratiocination and religious polemics they took rise. ...

Further, statements of doctrine needed to be approached “through moral and religious values rather than along the paths of unprovable metaphysics”. Angus went further, saying:

Any statement of Christian doctrine must arise from Christian experience, and be referable to Christian experience for verification. I oppose any statement of Christian truth being approached from an unknowable metaphysic.

As for Christian guidance and Divine revelation, Angus wrote in *Essential Christianity*:

In the last resort, Divine guidance can come only through a man’s conscience and reason in the presence of God, and no external authority can alter that, one way or the other.

As a Unitarian, I am in complete agreement with Angus on that matter. Three principles underpin Unitarianism – freedom, reason and tolerance. Has it ever occurred to you that reason may itself be a means and form of Divine revelation. I accept that there is much that is transrational, but anything that offends against human reason is suspect and must not be accepted on face value, or even upon faith.

The Rev. John Edwards, a contemporary, dear friend and great supporter of Dr Angus, and a sometime Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly of New South Wales, wrote in his book *Faith and Doctrine*:

A distinction is to be recognized between *faith* and *doctrine* ... Faith is greater than doctrine as the spirit of man is greater than his body or the raiment he wears. The two are, of course, closely related, but they are not identical. The terms are sometimes interchangeable, and often confused, because doctrine is the *product* of faith, rather than the *object* of it. The faith of the Church is the living reaction of its members to the revelation of God in Christ, their grasp of a divine ideal, their apprehension of the purposes of God for us ... in this ever-changing world of thought and action. The doctrine of the Church is at best an inadequate verbal formulation of that continuous contact and co-operation with the living God. And because faith thus lives and grows, the doctrine, though once the best attainable, must from time to time be modified or set aside, that the ever living faith may find a better expression of itself. Doctrines are temporary forms which may gradually die because the living soul of faith has moved on to other mansions in the Father’s house; and the Church is always free to state what its faith is, and whether or not its dogmas, or doctrines, officially accepted, are still adequate to represent its faith.

Creeds and other articles, confessions and professions of faith never overcome the inherent limitations of time and space whereas that which is of ultimate significance - the Divine – is both beyond time and space and yet ever active in time and space. I am

proud to belong to and pastor a church which welcomes, as members and congregants, all who come in good faith with a sincere desire to develop and explore their own spirituality without the dogma and doctrine of mainstream, traditional Christianity. We do not turn away any person who comes to our church with good intentions. We erect no barriers around our altars (although we have no altar, as such, in our churches). That is why section 20(d) of the *Unitarian Church Act 1927* (NSW) provides as follows:

The congregation shall not at any time make any rule whereby the acceptance of any creed, article or profession of faith shall be established as a condition of membership of the congregation, and any such rule if made shall have no force or effect ... No particular doctrines or opinion are or shall be required to be taught or observed or forbidden to be taught or observed in such congregation ... .

I am sure that Dr Angus would approve of that.

In *Truth and Tradition* Angus had this to say about Christianity and Presbyterianism in particular:

Are the alleged doctrines of Presbyterianism static? Is it simply a question of deciding whether a statement is orthodoxy or heresy? Or is truth the supreme quest for both orthodox and heretics. Are we to fear the new because it is new, or revere the old for its sheer age? ... Are we bound for ever to the forms and beliefs of our predecessors? Nay, more, are we bound forever even to the contents of those beliefs? Must we accept and uphold all the beliefs that have been admitted by the Presbyterian Church during the past, and are the past practices of our Church, including the axe and scaffold, to be maintained to-day?

**3. *The need to promote, foster, maintain and apply rigorous standards of critical, academic scholarship (including but not limited to a knowledge of the classics) as respects academia generally and also as regards the teaching, interpretation, construction and application of the Christian Scriptures***

I believe that there is great wisdom in the Bible, but I reject all notions of biblical infallibility and inerrancy.

Fundamentalism, whether Christian, Islamic or otherwise, is a menace, indeed an evil. It is the totally unwarranted and unjustified imposition upon Sacred Scripture of an artificial and irrational construct - an ideology - that results in claims being made for and about Scripture that are not expressed or even implied in Scripture.

The Christian Scriptures nowhere claim or assume infallibility or inerrancy. The texts usually relied on by Christian fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals such as 2 Tim 3:16 (“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”) and 2 Peter 1:21 (“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”) at most support a view that the books of the Hebrew Bible, and maybe some of Paul’s epistles, were inspired by God - Paul himself was equivocal about the matter in at least one of his epistles (see, eg, 1 Cor 7:10, 12, 40) - and maybe the prophets and apostles were inspired, but none assert that their inspiration made them or their writings infallible, and to make such an assertion is unwarranted. The Bible contains errors and contradictions that are fatal to the theory of its inerrancy, and no amount of purported harmonisation of Scripture can overcome that. Not only is the whole idea of the supposed infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture contrary to reason and common sense, it is downright unbiblical as well. Paul himself distinctly declared the partial, provisional and temporary nature of that which he taught, for after declaring that that he was inspired and led by the Spirit to know and to speak Christian truth (see 1 Cor 2:10-16), he went on to say, in the very same epistle, that all knowledge, insofar as we are able to state it, is partial, relative and incomplete and will be done away with, and that we only know and prophesy in part (see 1 Cor 13:8-12).

Do you know that we do have the original manuscripts for a single book of the Bible. All we have are copies of copies of copies – many times over – and translations of translations of translations, and in several different languages. None of these copies would be admissible in any Australian court of law under the *Evidence Act 1995* (Cth/NSW) or any similar statute to establish either the veracity of their contents or the authenticity of the supposed originals. As for the New Testament Gospels, it is clear that they were all written anonymously by persons none of whom claims to have been an eyewitness to the events described. Names attached to the titles of the Gospels were added later by editors and scribes, and numerous editorial interpolations can be found.

So, sentiment such as “The Bible says ..”, and “Jesus loves me! This I know,/ for the Bible tells me so”, leaves me cold. I well remember my Baptist pastor of yesteryear saying, in a sermon, “God has spoken his final word in Jesus Christ.” Really? Muslims assert that God has spoken his final word in Muhammad, that Muhammad was the last

person in history with whom God communicated directly. He came later than Jesus, you know. How presumptuous of the lot of them! As the great Catholic Archbishop Fulton Sheen used to say, God never stops speaking, and He continually speaks only one word ... that Eternal Word by means of which God communicates Himself from and throughout all eternity, in all things as all things, that cosmic Word which continues to nourish and sustain the world, which fundamentalist and conservative Christians have carnalised and literalised to refer only to one person - Jesus. By the way, that same Baptist pastor said, "If Christianity is right, all other religions are wrong." Once again, note the use of a "conditional statement", which is not an argument at all as it doesn't specify the premises that are needed to support the purported conclusion.

I have engaged in some prominent debates with Sydney Anglican bishops and the like, here at this University and elsewhere, on such topics as the existence of God and whether Jesus physically rose from the dead. My opponents would invariably use presuppositional apologetics. (A presupposition is an assumption that is taken for granted.) That is, they would take for granted God's existence, because their presuppositions would not allow them to proceed otherwise. They would also take for granted the truth and reliability of the Christian Scriptures and assume from the beginning the supernatural revelation of the Bible as the ultimate arbiter of truth and error. Their arguments rested entirely on a belief in the Bible as the source of truth because the Bible is supposedly inspired by God, in whom, so we are told, we can believe because the Bible affirms it, and the Bible is the source of truth. This sort of reasoning is entirely circular and tautological, and is little more than fideism, which asserts that belief in the existence of God cannot be established by reason at all, but must be accepted or rejected wholly upon faith.

By the way, which Bible do you use? Christians can't even agree on what the Bible is. I always use a Catholic version of the Bible. Why? Because Jesus used the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, which contains the so-called Apocryphal, more correctly entitled Deuterocanonical, Books), with more than two thirds of the Old Testament passages quoted in the New Testament being taken from that version of the Bible. The audacity of the Protestant "Reformers" who chucked out those books of the Bible – books that had been embraced by Jesus and his apostles. Don't believe the

Protestant nonsense that those additional seven books were supposedly added by Rome in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century CE. That is simply *not* the case.

Now, once you free yourself from the notion that just because the Bible says something, it must be true, and true for all time, a whole new world opens for you. Here is some good advice from the Buddha that I have lived by. It has served me well throughout the years, and it makes perfectly good sense:

Believe nothing because a so-called wise man said it.  
Believe nothing because a belief is generally held.  
Believe nothing because it is written in ancient books.  
Believe nothing because it is said to be of divine origin.  
Believe nothing because someone else believes it.  
Believe only what you yourself judge to be true.

There are some truly horrible passages in the Bible, certainly on a par with the worst of The Holy Qur'an which was supposedly dictated to Muhammad by God Himself. Here are some gems from the Old Testament – the Hebrew Bible:

May the Lord bless everyone who beats your children against the rocks! (Ps 137:9)

You know I hate anyone who hates you, Lord, and refuses to obey. They are my enemies too, and I truly hate them. (Ps 139:21-22)

Withhold not correction from the child: for if you beat him with the rod, he shall not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from hell. (Prov 23:13-14)

A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back. (Prov 26:3)

Dr Angus rightly attacked the traditional anthropomorphic Christian God as being nothing more than an imaginative or psychological projection of the human mentality – in Freudian terms, a superego super-consciousness. If the Bible is a revelation at all, it is a progressive revelation for the most part, although there are lapses of thought and decency right through to the final book of Revelation. All ideas of a tribal God, a vengeful God, must go. As the American Baptist preacher Dr Fosdick once said:

Better believe in no God than to believe in a cruel God, a tribal God, a sectarian God. Belief in God is one of the most dangerous beliefs a man can cherish.

Dr Angus applied the scholarly methods of construction then called Higher Criticism to the Bible. Today, we have the Jesus Seminar, whose members rightly treat the Gospels

as historical artifacts, representing not only some of Jesus' actual words and deeds but also the inventions and elaborations of the gospel writers, and the faith of the early Church. It does not surprise me at all to hear that less than 20 per cent of the sayings attributed to Jesus were likely to have been uttered by him. It would not have surprised Dr Angus either.

How many of you have heard of Bart Ehrman? He trained at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. You can't get more "orthodox" than that. Originally he was an evangelical Christian who believed in an infallible and inerrant Bible. He later studied at Princeton Theological Seminary, where Angus himself had once studied divinity. Strange things happen at Princeton, and other places when you start to think outside the square of Moody. Ehrman, who is James A Gray Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has written many influential and scholarly books including *Lost Christianities: Christian Scriptures and the Battles over Authentication* (The Teaching Company, 2002), *God's Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question – Why We Suffer* (HarperCollins, 2008), and *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don't Know About Them)* (HarperCollins, 2009).

What Ehrman points out is not at all new, but he is a brilliant writer who, like Angus, applies a scholarly, historical approach to the New Testament Gospels, critically analysing contradictions in them. He shows how the gospel writers have diverging views about who Jesus was and how salvation works. He shows how Paul and the authors of the Gospels all furnished quite different portrayals of Jesus but fundamentally different religions *about* Jesus. For example, in John's Gospel Jesus is quoted as purportedly having claimed an equality with God, and to be the only way to the Father, and so forth. Now, if the historical Jesus actually and repeatedly spoke like that, why did the writers of the Synoptic Gospels make no mention of it? In those gospels the title most used by Jesus - indeed over 60 times - to describe himself was "Son of Man", which does not imply that Jesus was claiming to be God. Fundamentalist and evangelical Christians tend to conflate all accounts and sayings of Jesus into one big account rather than see them for what they are – separate, different accounts of and about Jesus by different writers.

Ehrman also demonstrates that several key Christian doctrines and ideas, such as the doctrines of the Deity of Jesus, Heaven and Hell, and the Trinity, and the idea of the Suffering Servant/Messiah (cf Is 53), were the inventions of still later theologians. I don't have time to go into his thesis but I urge you to read the book and others like it. Open your minds to what we used to call Higher Criticism.

Another book that I recommend you read is *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Sigler Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 1996) by Walter Bauer, a German Biblical scholar of yesteryear. The book was first written in 1934 but not translated into English until 1971. Like Angus, Bauer was a world authority on early Christianity, in all of its various regions. Using an evidence-based approach, he found that the earliest evidence in most places was of a form of Christianity that was later labelled heresy, and that what was later adjudged to be heresy was at the time the majority point of view. Enough of this nonsense that the early Christian Church was of one mind. It was hopelessly divided. Read *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (OUP, 2002) by Philip Jenkins (Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University), and you will see that the early church was very disunited, filled with various sects, splinter groups, and supposed heresies, right up to and even after the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon.

Do you know that the Jews do not believe in Original Sin? The notion of so-called original sin, upon which John Calvin built his appalling doctrine of the total depravity of human beings, comes from Greek thought. It's a pagan idea. Then there's the whole idea for some saviour or redeemer to come from outside the world, into the world, to save people from the effects of sins committed by people in the past, for which those presently existing are continually held accountable, by taking on the penalty for those sins. This comes from the Greco-Roman mystery religions and mystery schools. So is the Myth of the Dying and Rising God. The whole idea of "personal salvation" in Christianity comes from the Greco-Roman mystery school idea of "personal transformation". You won't find the notion of personal salvation in Judaism, which is "not a religion of personal salvation but of social justice" as Rabbi Rudi Brasch has correctly written in his book *The Star of David* (Angus & Robertson, 1955). For Jews, the Kingdom of God is not some supernatural event that will supposedly come to pass when this

world comes to an end but a kingdom of this world in which there is justice, equality and freedom for all.

The idea of a God-man dying for our sins is a neo-Platonic invention of St Paul who was certainly very familiar with the ideas and teachings of the mystery schools. True, the Jews had a concept of blood sacrifice, but blood sacrifice for the Jews was prescribed for a narrow range of sins and was not the main means of obtaining forgiveness, and the sacrifice of a *human being* to redeem or atone for the sins of other human beings was, and is, repugnant to Jews and Judaism. The Jewish Messiah is, or will be, an ordinary human being, not a God-man, or someone who is both fully human and fully divine, and the Messiah will not be born supernaturally of a virgin, and so on. The idea of “eating the flesh” and “drinking the blood” of a saviour/redeemer - indeed the entire sacramental system - is not a Jewish idea but a pagan one. Conventional Christianity - an unhappy mixture of Judaism and Greco-Roman mystery religion which was largely the creation of Paul rather than Jesus - has made a rather sycophantic religion *out of* Jesus rather than espouse the simple naturalistic religion *of* Jesus.

Angus was right on this, and Bishop John Shelby Spong says the same thing today. In order to connect with the Jesus who lived and breathed, we have to dig back through the “Grecianization” of the Gospels to find its Hebrew roots. We have to cut through the overlay of Greek philosophy that informed the writers of the Gospels. Professor Angus was able to do this because he was such a brilliant classical scholar. Those lesser mortals who attack him to this day for his liberal theology do not, for the most part, speak from either a position of authority or intellectual integrity.

One thing you *must* stop doing is this ... when you read and interpret the Hebrew Bible - the Old Testament - use accepted methods and forms of Hebrew Exegesis. Speak to any rabbi, whether Orthodox, Reform or otherwise, about that matter. They are amazed, indeed rightly appalled, at the manner in which Christians, especially evangelical Christians, contort and misinterpret their Sacred Scripture.

As already mentioned Angus was a great classical scholar and linguist. He was trained in the classics and the liberal arts and sciences, and in an era when rigorous academic standards were both expected and imposed. Angus served on the council of Knox Grammar School from 1926 to 1943. There is a school house named after him at Knox.

Professor Bruce Mansfield, in his book *Knox: A History of Knox Grammar School 1924-1974*, refers to Angus's "cultivated attachment to the classical literary traditions on which the School was founded".

Having been a senior university academic for many years in this State, I have witnessed, with increasing concern, the increasing dumbing down of course material, the lowering of academic standards and concomitant progressive grade inflation. Students are clients now, you know. Even Harvard University has publicly admitted that those things have been going on at that prestigious university for some time. Whether one agrees with Angus or not, he stood for great scholarship and high academic standards. Such was also the case with Professor John Anderson. They were intellectual giants, both of them.

Let me conclude with this. If Professor Angus and his ilk are right, Christianity loses its claim to exclusivity and uniqueness, and that is why Angus' detractors work so very hard to prove him wrong. Ultimately, their attempts at discrediting what is now called the History of Religions movement, which had its heyday from roughly the late 1800s to the 1940s, are strangely reminiscent of the retorts of the early Church Fathers such as Justin Martyr who asserted that Satan had somehow anticipated Jesus Christ and had inspired the older pagan traditions as a way to sidetrack people. Christian fundamentalists pulled the same trick in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, asserting that Satan had invented dinosaur bones in order to dissuade Christians from believing in the Genesis account of creation.

Jesus of Nazareth, "a man approved of God" (Acts 2:22), preached what is described in the New Testament as the "gospel of God". He said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mk 1:15; cf Mt 4:17, 10:7, Lk 4:43) Note, not the "gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ", but the "gospel of God". In Mark 1:14 we read that Jesus came into Galilee "preaching the gospel of God". This is the answer to those Christian evangelists who assert that there was no Christian gospel until after Jesus had died. Ironically, the gospel that they proclaim is not the gospel of God that Jesus proclaimed.

It is my respectful submission to you this evening that we need to get back to this more simple, and original, form of Christianity. Jesus, although not God, is nevertheless the most important figure in human history, the archetypal prototype of what humanity is

intended to become, whose coming into this world awakens us to the inherent possibilities of our own nature and to an awareness of our essential divinity that we might have life, and have it more abundantly (see Jn 10:10), and who suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps (see 1 Pt 2:21).

Was Angus a heretic? Well, the word “heretic” comes from a Greek word meaning “one who chooses”. Angus *chose* to follow Jesus with intellectual honesty, humility and deep affection, dispensing with what he saw as superstitious and outmoded accretions to the Christian faith. I’m proud to be a heretic, too. Jesus was one as well. As already mentioned, I’m also proud to be an “Angus man”.

I would like to finish with these lines from *Jesus in the Lives of Men*:

Let us honour Jesus, not by excluding each other from Christian fellowship or by hurling charges of heresy, or by denying the validity of others’ experience; but with saint Ignatius “let us strive zealously to be imitators of the Lord,” and “become imitators of Jesus Christ as he himself was imitator of the Father,” Such imitation of Christ will put into operation all the spiritual capacities with which we are endowed. In this way the disciples of Jesus, while joyfully recognizing that He is the Light of the World, will not shirk the high privilege and the tremendous responsibility laid upon them by the terms of their discipleship – ‘You are the light of the world.’

God bless you all.

