

# **CHRIST AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

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Christ and the kingdom of God by S. H. Hooke

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**S. H. HOOKE**

*Jesus College, Oxford, and Victoria College,  
University of Toronto*



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TO MY WIFE





## FOREWORD

The existence of so admirable a Bible study textbook as Professor Hogg's "Christ's Message of the Kingdom" makes it necessary that I should offer a word of explanation for the *raison d'être* of this book. When Professor Hogg's book came out, I had been working along the lines here laid down for several years, first for myself, and then in small college circles at Oxford. We hailed Professor Hogg's book with joy, and used it largely as a circle text-book in Oxford. But I found myself that the book seemed to call for a companion or supplementary study dealing more in detail with the life of Christ. In this book, as in Professor Hogg's, the Kingdom of God is the central thing. But this book is confined almost entirely to the attempt to trace out in the life of Christ the workings of the principles of the Kingdom of God. More especially does it attempt to set forth Christ as man, subjected to the conditions of his time, and exhibiting in his life the reality of the yoke of the Kingdom of God "learning obedience by the things which he suffered." Hence, while Professor Hogg's book deals extensively with a large range of questions and problems arising out of the practical bearing of the Kingdom of God upon Christian life as a whole, this book deals intensively and more purely in a historical way with the Christ of the Synoptic Gospels and his experience of the workings of the Kingdom of God in his own life. It takes up the life of Christ as the *experimentum crucis* of the reality of "the powers of the age to come."

A sentence of Mr. Glover's, in the course of his memorable address at the Liverpool Conference, 1913, on "The Death of Christ," still rings in my ears—"Was he God, or was he Man, you'd give anything to know!" It just represents the attitude of so many students I have met. Together we have wrestled over the secrets of those scanty records in the Synoptic Gospels, trying to find how men, into the very fiber of whose being had been wrought the jealous monotheism of Israel, should have been forced to offer to a man whom they

had touched and handled, and seen hanging on the felon's gibbet, the worship due to God. Over and over again I have seen such students gradually coming to the realization of Paul's phrase, "God was in Christ." A great deal of current theology unconsciously assumes that the nature of the Incarnation is known, that we can say with certainty what is or what is not possible to God in Incarnation. The standpoint from which this book is written is that we cannot define the method or the manner of God's becoming man, and we cannot say of any particular experience in the life of Christ that it is not proper to God. "Christ died to bring us to God," "God was in Christ." Those two sentences are the keynote of primitive Christianity, and the point of departure for this brief study.

I should like to add, both for myself and for many students whom I know, an expression of sincere gratitude to Professor Hogg for his book. He will probably never know how many students have been decisively helped by it.

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Since the above was set up, Mr. Glover's book, "The Jesus of History," has appeared, to the joy of all students of the life of Christ.

## FOREWORD TO THE WEEKLY STUDIES

The old proverb says that a fool may ask questions which it takes a wise man to answer. My own experience is that to ask the right questions is the beginning of wisdom. Furthermore, experience only answers slowly, and the wise man learns that there is often more profit in the insistent goading of an unanswered question than in the answer gained without travail. The object of these weekly studies is to suggest questions; the object of the weekly chapter following them is to suggest, not answers, but a line of thought along which some kind of answer may be found. In using the book for circle study there is no need for the leader to confine himself to the questions given in each week's study. Other questions are sure to suggest themselves, either to him or to members of the circle. The only thing needed is to draw out the right questions that really matter, and to extinguish the others, tactfully if possible. The secret of success in Bible study circles belongs to the things not seen but eternal. Sincerity, patience, real humility of mind, and prayer, together with a good deal of very real preparation, are at least some of the things to be found somewhere in the circle. If nobody has begun to think about the subject of the week's study until an hour before the circle meets, it will be a dreary business, and the sooner such a circle has a millstone tied around its neck and disappears into the abyss, the better.

So, while not laying down any rules or even suggestions for daily study, this at least is urged—that any student using this book should give a definite and if possible a regular time during the week to read the passages given, to think out their implications, and to make clear to himself his own position, and possibly his own ignorance, on the points raised by the questions. The leader, and possibly members of the circle, may find of some use in preparation the list of literature given in the notes to each week's study. If possible, all the New Testament passages should be read in Moffatt's New Translation by preference, although Weymouth is good. But for