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# JESUS CHRIST

THE CENTRE  
OF LIFE



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THE WORLD'S YOUNG WOMEN'S  
CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

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JESUS CHRIST  
THE CENTRE OF LIFE

*A Symposium*

WORLD'S YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

52 Rue des Paquis, Geneva, Switzerland

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## PREFACE

AT the meeting of the World's Council in Geneva 1934, we rededicated ourselves to making our Christian purpose the chief point of emphasis in our work. A call to study was one of the results of this decision.

The subject of this study pointed to the conviction that not the consideration of some principles or a philosophy of life built on some sayings or acts of Jesus would bring us any further. Not a creed or a moral code or a way of life alone can be the true dynamic of our work, but only faith in the living person : Jesus Christ.

Who is He? How can we know Him? How can we partake of the life He has come to bring? How can we be used by Him for the work He has come to accomplish? Those become burning questions.

In many different ways national associations have taken up the topic, indicated by the World's Association : Jesus Christ, who He is, what He gives, what He asks, using in many instances the outlines prepared in various countries, showing many different approaches to this study.

This booklet intends to stimulate our thinking afresh. In it we have the witness of leaders of our movement from different countries as to what means to them the conviction that Christ is the centre of life. There is great diversity in these answers. Is this a true picture of the diversity in our movement? Do we also perceive the unity?

Let us study these answers. Let us try to visualise the backgrounds from which they come, the reasons why they are as they are. The reasons why the one states what seems to some of us superfluous and antiquated; why the next one omits what seems to others among us absolutely essential. Let all these testimonies make us face the challenging question Christ puts to each one of us personally : But *you*, who say *you* that I am?

If we compare the situation in the world to-day to that of four years ago we cannot but see that the necessity for a clear answer to this question is more imperious than ever before. In the book Prof. H. Kraemer has written in preparation for the

Madras conference of the International Missionary Council he makes some very challenging statements. "There is a dim, but nevertheless all-pervading conviction that religion, especially Christianity, is a matter of history, doomed to die, meat for the weak, and not for the self-reliant man of to-day." "Many of those who still cling to religion and God, do not know how to demonstrate the relevance of God and religion to real life. They are ultimately undermined by uncertainty, although they keep to their loyalties."

I believe that an exceedingly sore spot is touched upon here, and that this applies in a greater degree to most of us than we dare to acknowledge. But then we must let this challenge sink down to the deepest depth of our hearts and probe ourselves, personally and as a group, in how far this is true. But then we shall also agree with Professor Kraemer that "in the midst of the cataclysmic events of the modern world" we desperately need "a clear consciousness of our faith."

When Kagawa says about missions that their "starting point is the divine commission to proclaim the Lordship of Christ over all life" this certainly also applies to an association such as ours. But then it is essential for us all that we know who Christ is and on what this claim to Lordship over all life rests.

Do we clearly see why the Gospel of Christ and the religions of the world cannot really be compared and why to be religious and to be a Christian are two entirely different concepts? Why Christ is fundamentally different from all founders of religions and leaders of religious life? Why it is that we not only reverence Him for the beautiful and deep words He spoke and the acts of infinite love He performed, but are ready to accept that "Jesus represents His own person and work as central in His whole message," a presumption we cannot accept from any man!

We all have to ask ourselves: Are we able to make a sharp distinction between Christ and organised Christianity? Can we help to remove that huge stumbling block for thousands and thousands, who only see Christianity and Christians and let all they do or fail to do thoroughly obscure and distort their view on Christ? Are we free of this entanglement and ready to have all organised Christianity submitted to the full judgment of God and men, and nevertheless to witness unwaveringly and triumphantly to the claims of Christ?

Do we realise when we acknowledge Christ to be the Living One to-day, that He could and should be for us the one



through whose life we live, by whose power we act, whose service and glory should be the sole motive and goal of all we do as realistically as this was true for St. Paul, who felt he did not live any more but Christ lived in him?

We simply have to come to a clear answer, not only because we ourselves cannot live by uncertainties and relativisms but because the world around us forces us. The Christian Church must make the claim of the absolute sovereignty of Christ valid, must show that she knows this to be a matter of life and death to her, or else be pushed out of the way. In the decisive struggle into which the Christian community is being drawn in country after country, there is no chance for a vague idealism flavoured by some Christian thoughts, just as there is no chance for a self-satisfied orthodoxy, that by isolation has closed itself to confrontation with the criticisms of the outside world and has therefore failed to forge the weapons that are needed to-day for modern warfare in the spiritual realm. Not only personally, but as a body, calling itself a Christian association, we must come to full clarity and unshakeable certainty as to who is this Christ whose name we evoke and what faith in Him means.

C. M. VAN ASCH VAN WIJCK



## CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE . . . . . 3

C. M. van Asch van Wijck.

### JESUS CHRIST—THE CENTRE OF LIFE

1. Helen K. Kim . . . . . 9
2. Julia Matouskova . . . . . 13
3. Augustine L. Franz . . . . . 19
4. Leila Anderson . . . . . 23
5. Hilda Grenfell . . . . . 27
6. Sosa Matthew . . . . . 33
7. Elisabeth Schmidt . . . . . 37



## JESUS CHRIST—THE CENTRE OF LIFE

HELEN K. KIM

THE centre of life really means the whole of life. And the whole of life includes all its different phases and aspects. Let us consider four of them from the standpoint of the individual, although the same principles are applicable to any collective living.

1. *The Material Aspect.* We live in and through the material environment. Whether we like it or not, our physical well-being is dependent upon our daily bread more than anything else. Our clothes and dwelling-places are of great importance. Much of our cultural heritage is expressed and handed down to us in tangible forms. How can our life and all our relationships to the material environment be Christ-centred?

Subjectively the standard of our daily living should be according to the needs of the body for its wholesome existence and objectively according to the average level of the given society. The subjective conditions are easily fulfilled, for people do look after their bodily needs as a rule. The objective standard raises contention. Even among otherwise good Christians, it is considered all right to live on any high standard of living provided one can afford it out of his own purse. If Christ is to be the centre of our purse, such an attitude cannot be allowed. Christ would say, "My purse is first God's purse, and He wants me to remember His needy children all over the world rather than spend lavishly upon myself. My need is not greater than that of my ordinary brother. What is left over and above is a trust fund from God to be used in raising the general level rather than my own, all out of proportion to the average current standard." The more prosperous we are the greater our need of an objective standard of living. In the expenditure of our material goods, the spirit of Christian sisterhood must prevail, before we can claim a Christ-centred life. As I write these lines my eyes fall upon the cushion on which I sit and the desk over which I write. The cushion is worth about ten yen and the desk

eighteen yen. There are many who have neither cushions nor desks. But even among those who have them, the high average will not exceed a cushion valued at one yen and desk at five. My only excuse is that they have both been gifts to me. But that does not release me from the responsibility of sitting on a cushion and at the same time keeping nine of my sisters on the bare floor with all its dampness, cold, and hardness. Some of them may catch cold, develop pneumonia and even die. Nor does it enable me to evade the fact that while I sit over this desk, two of my sisters must stoop and work without desks, developing poor posture and probably even tuberculosis. It is only a vivid testimony of my living without the Christian conscience in regard to my material environment. Am I the only sinner in this respect? And how easily and therefore meaninglessly we say the words "Christian living!"

2. *The Human Relationships*. Is Christ the centre of all our human relationships? Are we applying the Christian ethical principles vigorously in all our daily contacts with other fellow human beings? If we can answer these two questions in the affirmative we can almost say, "We have attained."

Christ-centred relationship between two people is more meaningful and lasting than the ordinary blood-kinship. And doing the will of God constitutes and establishes this relationship. "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and sister, and mother." What draws us to people and people to us? In many cases it is something else besides doing the will of God: wealth, fame, popularity, attractiveness, looks, common interests, etc. These may or may not be harmless, and in some cases even help to make human relationships enjoyable and meaningful. But these alone without the devout intent and diligent pursuance to "do the will of God" on both sides do not constitute and keep the soul-satisfying and personality-growing human relationships. How many men and women face the tragic ending of the most intimate relationship just because this essential issue was overlooked at the beginning! Our love for family must be purified by our love of God. All our friendships must be bound up with our ever-abiding enthusiasm to "do the will of God."

The principle of Christian ethics needs no explanation and amplification. The only thing needed is its application in all our daily contacts. "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them."

Only as this gets done we come to possess the life with Christ in the centre. Race barriers and colour lines will vanish away as the dark clouds with the appearance of the great sun.

3. *The Work.* We live through our work at least eight hours of each day. Unless Christ is in its centre very really our life will be far from being Christian. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." This should be the ultimate goal and final motive for all our work whatever its nature may be. All work when sanctified by Christian motives is contributory to Kingdom-building.

Students in colleges can have more immediate and also legitimate objectives for their work. Knowledge and skill, health and personality, and even good grades and prizes are all right to work for. As soon as these become the sole objectives, even their attainment is difficult and meaningless. These make one's thoughts and consciousness concentrate on self. The self-forgetting, all-absorbing power comes only from the Kingdom-centred motive for work and living.

What brings in politics into church circles and so-called Christian institutions? The leaders and workers who play politics or who got in through playing politics remember the Kingdom only when they make speeches, write articles, and formulate the article on the purpose of the organisation. As they think, feel and work the rest of the time, something else seems to be uppermost in their minds—such superficial things as better positions, greater power, more pay and higher popularity than they already have. They forget the parables of the leaven and of the mustard seed. Their own usefulness as well as that of the institutions in their charge comes to an end. They sow tares instead of wheat.

There is an old Korean doctor who heals the sick and gives away herb medicines free of charge. He spends several months up in the mountains in the spring and summer to pick and dry the herbs. He comes back to his humble cottage in the fall to give them away. The courtyard and the gateway are thronged with people waiting their turn to see this kind-hearted doctor. They wait in expectancy and hope; they go away helped and comforted. The scene reminds me of the great Doctor among His people. We would have many more hospitals of such spirit among the needy people, if more of our doctors would have the interest of Christ's Kingdom at heart rather than the transitory objectives.

4. *The Thought Life.* "Man is what he thinks" is probably

putting it too strongly. Nevertheless, the truth is there. What one thinks most does determine his character. All the three above aspects of our lives cannot be Christ-centred, unless He is enthroned in the centre of our thought-life. This means personal religion and devotion. The why and what-for of living is Christ and His will. For a human being to achieve a truly Christian life is no easy task, and certainly not an accident. His thoughts must dwell in the noble realm of Christ's thoughts. To meditate upon His words and works is his daily meat and drink.

His habitual stay in Christ's presence makes his heart overflow with that all-giving love, until his personality cannot help but radiate Christ's spirit. Selfish motives have no chance in his actions. Seeking after lower values and selfish interests becomes totally alien to his thinking. His mental climate is like the clear blue sky of a sunny May day with all its balmy graces ready to be poured into the lives of others. And the most wholesome thing about it all is that he is not conscious of it. Such a genuine and sincere Christian character never knows what a blessing he is. His thought-life is the fountain from which the life-blessing water flows.

When all the nominal and partial Christians of to-day become full Christians, this world will see the reincarnation of Christ's life and spirit. And these people possessed by the spirit of Christ will christianise fully all the institutions that are now only nominally or partially Christian. Then this troubled mankind will have the needed power at hand to solve all its perplexing problems.



## JESUS CHRIST—THE CENTRE OF LIFE

JULIA MATOUSKOVA

“Without continual reference to an ultimate standard and absolute judgment all work tends to lose its significance.”

J. H. Oldham.

OUR Associations have in these last years felt keenly the need to reassure themselves again of the real foundation of all our work and to examine its full meaning.

The reasons for this have been external as well as internal. Those who are concerned with youth in these days are confronted with the spreading influence of unchristian ideologies amongst youth, especially in the so-called Christian countries. It is not a movement of youth itself but youth is being nurtured in different parts of the world by single sets of ideas of a local or regional character: they are being artificially isolated from contacts with youth of other lands or with other traditions: their need for admiration and devotion is being misused for developing loyalties to men who brazenly contradict Christian principles. All these tendencies, which are very local, are elaborating special ideologies, each of which claims a Messianic mission for humanity. This aspect appeals especially to youth who find in it a cause worth living for. These ideologies exert an influence not only in countries where there is political power behind them but they have also a certain attraction for people in free countries because of their practical results in unifying nations and because of their radical solutions of certain problems. Their most harmful influence is in the splitting up of humanity into interest groups of an exclusive character, each with its own centre of absolute authority. At this point they come into conflict with the Christian conviction of the supreme and final authority of Jesus Christ. So the question under whose authority we are calling youth leads us back to examine the claims of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

Another reason for such an examination is an internal one. Anybody who is familiar with the life of a modern Association

centre, no matter in what part of the world, will notice its great busyness and number of activities. Work is being done on many lines and most Association leaders are looking out for opportunities to increase the scope of their activities. This effort is determined by the ever-increasing needs of the young women whom we desire to serve. But in the very desire to serve the needs of youth we are in danger of letting our service be determined by purely human wishes and considerations and losing sight of the Master in Whose service we stand. Association history nevertheless shows that service for women has usually been started by individual leaders who felt called or perhaps compelled by God to serve in a special field. This necessity of a divine initiative still holds true for every worker in a Christian association, but it is equally necessary for the Association as a movement. It is always a serious question what needs, among the many, an association should choose to serve and how it should awaken in its membership still higher needs and call forth a sacrificial response. Here then appears the necessity "to refer the work to an ultimate standard and absolute judgment." This ultimate standard and absolute judgment is for Christians Jesus Christ Himself. When our Associations desire to examine earnestly all their work they have to place it in the light of the truth revealed in Jesus.

Such a re-examination was at the bottom of our world's study of Jesus Christ in the last three years. Though the approaches to this study were most varied, showing the historical, cultural, confessional background from which each of us started the examination of the challenging personality of Jesus Christ, these different lines converged on a few fundamental facts recognised by all earnest inquirers. We were forced to ponder over the significance of this concentration on the verities which have been central in the thinking of the Christian community from its very beginnings. Even to-day's stress on them is not an effort to explain old dogmatical formulations which have come down to us either from the Old or the New Testament and which form the structure of the teachings of the Christian Church, but rather a statement of the fundamental realities encountered by those who try to understand Jesus. They are not the possession of our membership at large: we cannot even claim that all our associations are presenting them consistently to their members, but we know that whatever life of faith is found in our associations is

based on and is taking its strength from these few fundamental convictions.

The first one of them is that Christ is the revelation of God. In man's search to know God there is a never-ending struggle to grasp by intellectual and other means the true nature of God. But none of these efforts has reached God Himself. It was necessary that He should reveal Himself freely because of His love and compassion for men, that He should break through the separation between heaven and earth. God, the Creator and Lord of the universe, broke into history, claimed this world as His own, visited it, taking upon Himself a human form, became incarnate in the historical figure of Jesus. He gave Himself to men to be known and loved; it is a unique, unrepeatable event. "Christ is the outstretched hand of God to humanity," as someone said. We have His words: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." And our conception of God will tell whether we have penetrated deeply enough into the greatness of Jesus to transform our ideas about God. To all those who are still to-day disquieted about the ultimate reality behind the life of the individual and of the universe, Christ is the Way to discover it and becomes the Truth for the followers of the Way.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. This is not only an article of the Christian creed but an experience of a vast number of those who have earnestly tried to follow Jesus. His earthly life shows such power over all those forces which hamper man's life—be they physical or moral—that we to-day are asking just as His contemporaries did centuries ago: "Where does this power come from?" And the answer must be looked for in Jesus' own words, especially as recorded in St. John's Gospel: "This commandment have I received of my Father," or: "I and the Father are one," etc. For those whom words are not convincing enough there is the language of works, as Christ Himself claimed: "Though ye believe not me, believe the works." The authority with which He spoke was a puzzle to His contemporaries and can be understood only from His unique relationship to the Father. In all the Gospels there sounds a strong note of an extraordinary communion with God. Beginning from the baptism of Jesus, all through His ministry, transfiguration, and passion, the title of Son of God has a deep meaning for Christ, implying that He is in complete dependence on the Father and also that He is the object of His special care and love.

At the same time the figure of Jesus has nothing unreal or remote about it. He remains truly the Son of man, not in any apocalyptic sense as found in the Old Testament, but in His every-day life where He was subject to human needs—hunger, sleep, sorrow and suffering. Moved by the suffering of the sick, lifting up the dejected, creating a new freedom for men, recognising the penitent hearts and forgiving sins, having compassion with the aimless masses. The records show us Jesus living so fully the life of His time, that there are hardly any doubts in our age as to His humanity and the way He lived His life: the way in which He met suffering, for instance, has placed Him in the position of judge of our ways. It is an arresting fact to observe what an appeal the man Jesus, the wholeness of His character, has for believers and unbelievers alike. They seem to recognise the greatness of personality manifested in Him as the true ideal of humanity.

But even if Christ did take upon Himself all the humble forms of a human life, He has a special place among men. His unbroken communion with God, His deep insight and understanding of the nature of man, and His power to make people whole and lift them out of the power of sin, His victory over suffering and death, make Him the Saviour of mankind. The words of St. Paul, that the Gospel of Christ “is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” have content also for our day. It is not only the experience of those who walked the earth with our Lord and who were helped by Him in very concrete difficulties—though Paul was one of those who did not know Christ in the flesh—but also of a vast crowd of persons both in the Church and outside it who have been saved by the living Christ from inner conflicts, despair, sins. And also re-created, transformed into new men and women. It is a power still active to-day in individual lives as well as in the life of His community and we dimly see that it is the saving power for the universe.

This might seem like an individual experience projected into history, but we see that from the time of the apostles there has been a body of men in the world who were linked together by their loyalty to Christ, who introduced a new manner of life, who were in the world but not of the world, who were free from all human masters but who followed devotedly the one Master who was their living head. This body, the Church, is the continuation of Christ’s work in the world, she has been called to life by Him and takes her mission from Him. Christ



is the head of this invisible body which is put into the world to wage battle against the forces of evil and to seek the glory of God.

Though these characteristics of Jesus—as the revelation of God, the Son of God, the Son of man, the living head of the Church—are fundamental ones, they are not the only ones nor is there any set order for the individual Christian in which he or she should form their knowledge of Jesus. We see in the New Testament a number of ways by which people discovered the full truth about Jesus—not human ways but rather special God-given moments in which men were confronted with the living Christ. Not necessarily Christ in the flesh, but often the risen Lord who was transforming the lives of those who had accepted Him as their Lord.

There is no better example of a Christ-centred life than that of St. Paul. From the simple encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus there grows upon Paul the realisation that he has met the living power of God. As he himself describes it in the epistle to the Philippians, it seems that he caught on the road to Damascus a glimpse of the greatness and glory of Christ which haunted him and determined the whole of his life ever after. He speaks of his desire to gain Christ, to know Him, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. He uses passionate language—"I press on . . . that I may lay hold on . . . stretching forward"—and we feel how it is a matter of life and death for him, this preoccupation with Jesus Christ. Even if "to lay hold on" might suggest something static we see from Paul's life that this effort to know Christ made of his life the most dynamic, outreaching, heroic kind of life we find among the disciples of Jesus. And this growth in depth and scope was accompanied for St. Paul by a vivid sense of "not yet" and by the certainty that he was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. Christ became the Lord of his life and the source of its power. The experience of St. Paul is not an isolated instance but he points the way for all of us. We also have had our first encounters with the living Christ, when we felt His power, when our heart and our conscience were touched by Him and we felt that Christ had addressed us personally. In such moments a process is started between the individual soul and Christ Himself which brings forth faith. Though this is God's appeal to man, the growth of this new relationship depends on the faithfulness and obedience with which we follow that momentary vision—

how we lay hold on it, to use St. Paul's words. Or it may depend on the question whether we have let ourselves be carried away by Christ Jesus, whether we have let ourselves be overcome by Him. Has He become the only Lord of our life, is He our "centrum securitatis" in life and death? This can not be attained in one decision, definitely once for ever, but it is a constant process of deciding all our actions in the light of our knowledge of Jesus Christ every day anew, recognising Him as the absolute judge over our motives, desires and actions. Those who have kept close company to Jesus—who were willing to pay the price for it—have lived lives of a new quality, reflecting something of the glory of Jesus.

We who are carrying responsibilities for the formation of the characters of young people have a double task. First to witness to the power of Christ in our own lives and secondly to see to it that every member who spends some time in the Association carries away from it a deeper, sounder knowledge of Jesus Christ. And not only in each individual life Christ should be receiving a growing place but also the Association as a community of Christians and part of the invisible body of Christ must have all its activities controlled by its one Head, which means that it should continually refer all its activities to the ultimate standard given by Christ's requirements of His disciples. Only in doing this shall we be able to help youth to choose the right direction among the clamouring voices of our day and save our Associations from the danger of being submerged by man-designed and man-centred activities.

## JESUS CHRIST—THE CENTRE OF LIFE

AUGUSTINE L. FRANZ

JESUS CHRIST, in deep humility I attempt to write about Thee. They asked me to do it, my Lord. But there is already so much talking of men about Thee. And every word that we speak about Thee, my Lord, is a blemish on Thy name. For who are we that we should undertake to say anything about Thee.

But now the wonder is that Thou Thyself hast called us to be witnesses of Thee. Therefore forgive us, our Lord, when this witness is as we ourselves are: sinful and imperfect. For even as we write about Thee, my Lord, about Thee who art holy and to whom we have given our heart, evil thoughts are in our minds, thoughts of our own glory and honour which we hope to obtain by writing about Thee in an original way. Forgive it, Lord! And put all that away and make us see Thee, conquering, so that all by-thoughts disappear. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

This is Jesus. He has declared God to us. He makes it possible for us to understand God, to know what God is like.

The moment we see Jesus like this, that is, the moment God reveals Himself to us, there is like the opening of a door, the widening of our horizon, an experience of something utterly new, something never dreamed of, something "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man." This experience changes our whole life from the bottom. This does not mean that all of a sudden we have become perfect beings without sins. No, but it does mean that we no longer see our life in the plain, but that we see it now in relation to God, a living God, not merely the driver of a mechanical world, that rolls along, ruled by laws of nature. We now see our life in the light of eternity. This means a fundamental change of our life. This is "being born again." We now see things in other proportions. Things formerly very important have no meaning now, and things formerly considered mean and low have become in the light of eternity

things that matter. We now understand something of the strange words spoken by Jesus in His sermon on the mountain. We now understand that this is *Life*. Formerly we did not really live, for there was no perspective; we did not know whence we came and whither we go. Now we know. "This is life eternal; that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

Jesus said: "I am the life." And this is true, for without Him there is no life, no real life.

"Jesus Christ, the centre of life," even life itself. When we try to think about His being, when we read about Him with a heart earnestly longing to know, it gradually all becomes quiet in us, very quiet, till all problems vanish away and there remains nothing but the Lord and we find ourselves bending our knees and folding our hands as Thomas did. "My Lord and my God."

But we may not stand still at this point as Peter wanted to do on the mountain when seeing Jesus' face shining and Moses and Elias talking with Him, and he offered to make three tabernacles, one for Jesus, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. We often long to do this, to stand still in adoration for our Lord. But the Lord is working and when we want to follow him, we too must work, lest we stay behind. Jesus says to them who will follow him: "Go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

The Y.W.C.A., Young Women's Christian Association, Young Women's *Christian* Association.

"Christian"; this can't have another meaning but: Christ in the centre, no, even stronger: Christ the foundation, and the only foundation of the Association's life.

I know "Christian" sometimes means certain habits, certain ideas, certain principles, certain doctrines. But that was not what the founders of the Y.W.C.A. meant by the word. For them the Y.W.C.A. was not to represent certain habits, certain ideas, certain principles or doctrines. Think of Emma Robarts, and her prayer—and Bible-study—meetings. And think of Lady Kinnaird, beginning her work, driven by the love of Christ. And read the "World's" basis and aim.

"Christian" in our Association's name cannot mean anything else but Christ the very foundation of the Association's existence.

What does it mean for our programme of activities?

"Christ the centre of the Association's life." It does mean



that we never can hide this fact. That we always have to show clearly that we are Christian. If not, He is not in the centre of our Association's life. This may result in not reaching the great mass, but only a small group of women and girls. We will have to accept this. We will always have to look for ways to reach as many girls and women as possible, but never at the expense of the place of Christ in our Association's life. Our aim is "to bring young women to such knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour as shall manifest itself in character and conduct." How can we work towards it without speaking of Jesus Christ, without Bible-study? We cannot know Christ but through the Bible.

If "Christian" meant certain habits and certain ideas, we could be a Christian association without Christ, because we ourselves could carry out the "Christian" habits and we ourselves could teach the "Christian" ideas, and we would not need the Bible. But when Christ Himself is to be the centre of our Association's life—who is Christ, what do we know of Him? We cannot know by ourselves what Christ wants us to be—we as leaders in the Y.W.C.A. have to study the Bible seriously, more seriously even because we are leaders—and we will have to bring the Bible into the lives of our members because they have a claim to it, because we want them to be independent beings, because we want them to examine the scriptures themselves.

This is true for associations everywhere, but it has a special meaning for associations in the so-called "eastern" countries. For here Christianity is looked upon as something "western" because it was brought here by western people. So I believe we have to lead the people as soon as possible to the Bible, so that they need not believe what we are telling them about Christ, but that they may examine the scriptures themselves.

Is not one of the causes of the weakness of the Christian Church in the world that there is too much Christianity without the Bible—and without Christ? And is not the reason of our slackness in study of the Bible the thought, perhaps ignorant, that we can bring Christ out of ourselves, that He is part of our being, and the lack of the sense that Jesus is the son of the living God and that He is absolutely different from us so that we cannot know Him "out of ourselves" but only by what those who lived in close relation with God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit have recorded for us of Him.

"Jesus Christ the centre of life. . . ."

“In prayer we turn our souls to thee. Be thou in the midst of our Association’s life. Make us willing to hear thy voice. . . .”

There should be in our Association’s life periods of quiet in which we may listen to our Master’s voice. Let us use our committee-meetings not only to discuss plans, but let us before all other things keep quiet so that we may hear His voice, so that His light may shine over all our work, so that His purifying judgment may go over the Y.W.C.A.

Jesus Christ the centre of our Association’s life.

From this centre should go out all our activities. One of our leaders in girls’ work has said it in a fine way :

There is in the Bible a very fine word, a word we never should forget in all our work : “Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” (I Corinthians x, 31).

But how can we do sports and have classes of first aid and play games to the glory of God ?

I like to see it like this : A very simple, uneducated girl is engaged to a gentleman holding an eminent place in society. This girl will do her utmost to develop her talents as well as she can. She will like to learn to speak French, she will like to read books, she will do her best to learn good manners, to know how to behave correctly. All this she will do to become a perfect wife to her husband, not a hindrance, but one able to help and to understand him.

So we, in our life and work, will try to develop our talents, as well as we can, so that the Lord may use us, His property. Of course, when having gymnastics, or folk dancing, or a cooking-class, we do not always think of God. Neither does the engaged girl when studying French think of her fiancé. Still the girl’s deepest motive is love. And so our deepest motive to all our activities ought to be love to our heavenly Father, who first drew us by His infinite love.

## JESUS CHRIST—THE CENTRE OF LIFE

LEILA ANDERSON

IN a recent article in *Christendom* John Middleton Murry says, "In the impasse of Europe to-day, is revealed the fallacy of Marxism, which holds that morality and religion arise from the material technique of production. If this were more than a half-truth, Europe would be a community to-day. As a matter of fact, it is a chaos." Not only Europe but the world is in a chaotic condition to-day, and we all face uncertainty as we think of the months ahead. We have not met the demands of our industrial civilisation, and we are paying the price. We in America cling to individualism, self-expression, "freedom," getting ahead, while the need is for something else. In our religious associations often we do not find the help we need. On the one hand Christianity has become so enmeshed in the culture of the time that it offers little light and guidance to bewildered people, and on the other hand it is so other-worldly in its orientation, it repels those who have any hope at all for history and those who have not the leisure and comfort to concentrate on other-worldliness.

There is so much to-day that goes under the name of Christianity. The beliefs of some Christians seem impossible to other Christians. At times the attitudes and actions of those who deny Christianity seem far superior to those of many who profess it. In the long history of Christianity there is much which throws light on these differences, and in the study of human nature itself understanding of differences is to be found. There is, however, something which binds together all of us who belong to the Christian World Movement. We have in common the Bible and we have Jesus and we have the continuing Presence. The roots of our Christianity are to be found in the Gospels. We are told by scholars to-day that the Gospels are not so much biographies as they are records of the teaching and preaching of the early Christian Church. What then do we find in these remarkable records which gives us light and which draws us together in one fellowship?

First of all, we learn from Jesus the nature of God. It is in Him that we see life at its highest and best. It is from the created that we learn of the nature of the creator. And it is here that we find parables in which Jesus tells His disciples what God is like. God is like the father of the prodigal son; He is like the shepherd who searches for his lost sheep; He is like the woman who sweeps her house in her search for a lost coin. He is always eager to find the lost. He treats men with equality. He sends His rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

We learn from Jesus not only the relationship and attitude which God has toward man, but we learn also the attitude which man ought to have toward God. In reply to the question, "What must I do to live?" Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." He said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God," and "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it." He told of the merchant who sold all that he had and bought one pearl, and the man who sold all that he had to buy a field in which a treasure was hidden. These are the men who understand Jesus' secret of life. They are not the conventional men but are the consecrated men. All of us are in a sense the children of God. We all experience His mercy and His Goodness, but these men whom Jesus describes are aware of their relationship to God and make of it something more and something different from what most men make of theirs.

And then we learn from Jesus what it means to be children of the same father, i.e. to be brothers. We are, in the light of our love of God, to love our neighbours as ourselves. We are not to treat people as they treat us but rather as we would be treated. We are bound together in this world, and we must learn to live together or suffer as men are suffering now. Individualism, with its ignoring of the needs of others, cannot be defended in the name of Christianity. History has shown that the method of "every man for himself" does not work, and in the life of Jesus we have the most dramatic and convincing denial of that philosophy. The ideal of the Christian is universal community and freedom of the spirit. And the community in which he is interested is not an imaginary one but a real one in which men live as brothers in all the relationships of their lives. Jesus' emphasis was not on imaginary matters but rather on what is real. He dealt to a great extent in the concrete and the specific. His emphasis on practice



rather than theory, on action rather than on beliefs, is found throughout His teachings. He said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father." Again he said, "By their fruits ye shall know them. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. . . . The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil. . . . Therefore, by their fruits ye shall know them." The real test of our relationship to God is to be found in our relationship to men. "How can you love God whom you have not seen if you love not your brother whom you have seen?"

And so we learn from Jesus that God cares for man and seeks him and that man must give his devotion to the Highest and must follow the Good wherever he sees it in his day-to-day experience. He must not give his complete devotion to any one form of society, to any one person or group of persons, to any one way of action, to any one set of beliefs. As Troeltsch said, "There are no absolutes in history, but there is an Absolute for me." But this does not free us from entering into the life of the world, of working in political movements, of participating in religious organisations, of holding economic theories on the basis of which we work. Jesus' life and teachings do not lead men to withdraw from the conflict and struggles of the time in which they live, but to live actively in the midst of great tension.

Christians know that they live in a world which has little peace and far too little justice, and in which the will of God does not prevail. But at the same time Jesus says, "The Kingdom of Heaven is among you." Surely the Kingdom is not only that toward which we look but is also a present reality. As a contemporary English writer has said, "The temporal process of human society for the creation of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth falls within an eternal reality which gives it not merely temporal but an eternal significance. Without that eternal reality the temporal process would itself be unreal and without significance." We discover for ourselves the meaning of the words, "The Kingdom of Heaven is among you" when we relate ourselves to God as Jesus said we must.

And so there is always, even in the midst of the breaking down of our civilisation, newness of life for those who follow Jesus. There is also suffering and apparent failure. But there is meaning and purpose in our living, and we are not without joy. In the words of Thomas à Kempis, "Blessed is he that understandeth what it is to love Jesus. Love Him, and keep Him for thy friend, who when all go away, will not forsake thee, nor suffer thee to perish in the end."

## JESUS CHRIST—THE CENTRE OF LIFE

HILDA GRENFELL

THE thoughts in this little paper have come pressing in between the world events of the last months, events which more than ever before seem to engage the soul in conflict with despair, as one after one we seem to watch the lights of freedom and goodwill going out all over the world.

But with a strange irrelevance, behind all the doubts, have sounded with challenging insistence those great words of our Lord's about little children—"Except ye receive the Kingdom like a little child ye shall not enter therein."

To what quality of personal, un-self-regarding religion do these words recall us? Apparently making nought of learning, to what wisdom do they point as of such heavenly quality as to supersede all other? What could be their meaning in relation to current events, and more especially to our task, as a worldwide Association, of witnessing to our Master?

And here surely we are brought to the very heart and centre of Christ's teaching. Away from all the ideas, central to so many religions of Initiation before Redemption, He declares that all we need is to recognise ourselves in that simple relationship of child to Father. Thus He tells us we shall experience those great promises of God's prevenient grace, of His mercy which when we sin redeems us, gathers us up when we fall, saves us by the countless ways in which our Heavenly Father decrees we may be saved and which reaches us through ever repeated gifts of forgiveness, not once but over and over again, before we ask, when we ask, and when for sheer weakness and sinfulness we cannot ask. What tremendous asseverations these are! From the heart of what experience may we know them to be true? At what journey's end may we proclaim their universality? There comes before the mind's eye a diagram of our earthly life. On it is traced the path of time, that highway our feet have trod, are treading and shall tread. Along that pathway time is "taken" and used up, as our clock-time journey continues. But above that path of time, over-arching it and exactly spanning it, is the

arch of promise, the arch of heavenly values, the pledge and token of the love of God enframing all our lives. To that arch as children who look up in wonder to the rainbow, we all may turn in wonder and worship. Its radiant light penetrates every moment of our day. With our eyes bent low in fear on earthly tasks we may lose our sense of it, but it is there and it is children that know this, for child hands are raised to it spontaneously and freely as the burning heart of childhood beats in a rhythm of responsive joy to all that is lovely.

In our Association of those of all ages, all races and all kinds, do we remember often enough to preserve this worshipping childlikeness as distinctive of our companionship? The words which follow are an attempted analysis of this very childlikeness of which the Bible speaks. They will be pathetic in their inadequacy, as needs must be any human quest of a mystery so great and so holy. But since it is one of which our Lord spoke with such reverence and such love, we may perhaps attempt to trace out some at least of its qualities.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

What type of heart is it that shall be of such a purity as to earn such a vision? Our Lord surely means us in this context to remember that loveliest of His creations, pure and unsullied from the mint of His making—the childlike heart.

It is hard to see the connection of such thoughts as these with the picture we see of our contemporary world, which bears such signs of age and disillusionment. But there is one—if we but keep our eyes on that scene in Galilee. “And He took a little child and set him in the midst”—of men as fearful and as puzzled as we.

To-day is a day of large movements, group definitions. We are all of us the subject—one might almost say the victim—of many organisations seeking to touch and control our thinking and affect our welfare. These stretch from those mainly careful for our spiritual welfare to those who frankly see our value as part of some political or propagandist activity. There is great danger that the young, alluded to so constantly as “Youth,” feel themselves as it were a separated horizontal layer in the populations of to-day, almost, by their very age-grouping, doomed to think in such and such ways as defined in their elders’ puzzled analysis of the elements of contemporary life and thought. This specialised terminology tends to deaden the whole idea of individuality and the preciousness of personal outlook.



To reach great numbers, organisations and co-ordinating agencies must of course exist, but only those which bear constantly in mind the idea of the needs and value of their members as differentiated persons carry within them the secret of persistent value. The Y.W.C.A. must never forget this. Can we truly look at our membership of one million and yet think of the million in terms of the one, and what her needs, her difficulties, her capacities are? Perhaps we are readier at realising her needs than we are her capacities.

It is at this very point that our Lord's words about childlikeness come with such relevance and bring infinite comfort to the individual soul. For our individual member often feels herself beset, puzzled, her identity in danger, alluded to dangerously often under the plural of "they" and the neutrality of "it"! Does she not in her secret heart feel herself primarily to be that which our Lord so penetratingly and insistently described by the use of the word "child"? Should we not think of our Association's relationship to its members as a family relationship, in which each member can feel safe as children in an ideal home feel safe? It is not so much that here something is *given* to the child by its parents as that something within the child is released, and this release is in proportion to the sense the child in its turn has, of that child-like heavenly quality in its parents, which gives them the capacity of responding to God's love down through the inevitable processes of becoming aware, informed, puzzled, and at times intellectually choked with facts whose truth seems so defeatingly relative and partial. "Except ye receive the Kingdom of God like a little child"—Christ's conditions are laid down. It is a call to intense self-purification. But He cannot mean it to be impossibly hard to obey. Do we perhaps strain after an ideal of comprehending faith that is too difficult and beyond our human capacity? God our Father never fails to maintain His part of this holy relationship with every human soul. He stands constant with His gifts of love and beauty, strength and forgiveness, and before He gives He has created the power in each of us to receive these gifts and to be sustained by them.

To disentangle the human history of His unflinchingness, we need to start at the very beginning, in the days when the first religious experience came, when those whom we loved and trusted broke silence and accounted for the strange world on which we looked out. They spoke of it not as separated parts but as a whole, a complete something which God had created.

The sudden revelation of the world as not merely that of which our senses told us, but also of what our hearts and minds experienced, is a moment of such spiritual enlargement that the stretch of life that lies behind it recedes and is lost. However much the memory of this moment is blurred in later years, the first introduction to the fact of traditional religion from those whom as a child we loved and trusted is, for all its simplicity and early datedness, the first supreme moment in the thinking life of any human being and its effect cannot be overrated. After it, life can never be the same again. The statements we then heard became a challenge to acceptance or to refutation, and to compass refutation the world of later experience gets strangely busy. The potency of these early beliefs is derived from their simplicity and their acceptability to the child soul.

It is this which gives them their elemental quality; their inescapability later will come from this power within them that comes from all elemental things. It will show itself in their power to evoke loyalty or impatience, fervour or denial, as manhood approaches with its subtle whisperings that recollections of such teaching are mere echoes of childish and outworn fantasies. And no less is their elemental quality shown in their power to return in memory to the stricken heart. It is that return which we must guard, and its continuance through the straining times of adolescence and the taking up of civic responsibility. The blessed rule of Church attendance and Bible reading in childhood, to those fortunate enough to have experienced it, secures the possession for life of words of supreme and final beauty. "The souls of the righteous are in the Hand of God." "Grant that we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal."

Do what one may by impatience or inattention, these haunting cadences become part of the very fibre of our being. The melody of such lovely phrases blends with the other melodies that sounded as yet unbroken in the childish ear, the melody of tenderness and care meted out by those who loved us and served our childish needs. They date back to that unquestioning acceptance—"faithful" acceptance as theology would call it—of the recurrent beauties of the seasons, when with the joy that almost hurts in its intensity, we experience those things in nature to scale with a child's capacities to enjoy, the flowers, the woods, the streams, and the inhabitants of the world of our imagination. In this world indeed we lived out on a miniature scale that life of perfection of which the great

cadences of religion spoke. It was a world where perfection as we saw it reigned, in which miracles happened, making changes always for the better, and confounding evil. To return from these experiences, from this world of our own perfect imagining to one where God was explained as existent, as a loving Power, and where Christ was known as Redeemer and Friend, did no violence to our conception of things. That pain and grief were conquerable we knew: however intense, they were not the ultimate reality. It was a matter of experience that God, Who was the God of love, decreed that joy should come in the morning, for it did come. Hate brought sorrow and pain, love brought joy, courage strength, prayer victory over temptation. It was easy to see that when all these processes were reversed we brought sorrow down upon ourselves.

There was no sense of frustration or injustice when this happened. We had been naughty and pain ensued as we deserved. But the escape lay within our power. We would listen again and act upon some memory of God's word or in response to the example of some beloved elder person, and the balance would be righted again and the lovely law of love be vindicated again. It is the story of childhood, but is there not some analogy in it for us as we take up our task with those of the age which follows it? To the growing soul, emerging from childhood with its personal, immediate, irrefutable, because experienced, knowledge of Holiness, life so often becomes confusion. Voices cry out that sin is not sin but pre-determined behaviourism, that religion is escape-mechanism to enable the imagination to inhabit an unreal world, that justice is relative and love a pious dream. They say that men are puppets, being crushed under the wheels of a relentless destiny, particles ploughed under the great chariots in the march of history, spirals of matter allowed to whirl for a moment in the vortex of the time-process and then sink back into the dust. The other outlook, the other faith, that seemed so plainly acceptable, so true as fitting the facts of experience in the garden of our youth, seems destined to wither, to become the target of attacks from beliefs hurled from outside and supported, or rather admitted, by a traitorous sagging of the very fibre of our own mind and spirit. There appears within us the very red devil of acquiescence that overturns all that formerly stood so fair and firm—experienced love, faith, courage, self-sacrifice, wisdom, patience, joy, peace, with their flowering of adoration and worship of God

in Christ as the Giver of all these gifts, the Ultimate Reality, the Clue to all enigmas, the Anchorage of faith.

Many dark moments have to be lived through while the human soul weathers the blizzard of these religious torments. But at all times when the storms rage most fiercely, or inky darkness envelops us, and a cloying flatness, as of oil, seems to hold up the keel of the boat in which the soul voyages, there sound across the wastes those cadences that the child-soul had known to utter truth—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth." "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." "God loved us before we loved Him." "Perfect love casteth out fear." "Your joy no man taketh from you." These call to us again down the corridors of memory and Christ speaks to us across the wastes of unlovely human experience. "Cor ad cor loquitur"—heart to heart speaking—from God "Who is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." To the realms of such a righteousness shall we return for it was from such a home that we came. "Except ye become as little children ye shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven." That is the condition of heavenly citizenship. It is only as children to children that we have any authority to speak. Age makes no difference to this relationship, for in the eyes of our Heavenly Father we are all children and the child-element in us all is the one that predisposes to heavenly wisdom.

In these days when disillusionment threatens us, ageing and weakening many traditional beliefs and standards, and as we see them cast aside as too outworn for to-day's use, let us remember afresh that purity of heart which, against however changing a background, shall attain for us the vision of God. May our Association be in this sense a new order of "Illuminati" and our eyes capable, as the eyes of children are so perfectly capable, of seeing God in all things lovely and of good report. Let our relationship be free of all taint of superiority, as between those who have found and those who are seeking, but rather let us be sharers together of God's prevenient Grace and Love, keeping ourselves expectant always of those revelations of Himself which He never fails to give to the Childlike heart. For it is in this very promise that we know that it is not the will of our Father that one of us, His little ones, should perish.



## JESUS CHRIST—THE CENTRE OF LIFE

SOSA MATTHEW

“I AM come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.”

How apt are these words when we consider the history of India. “The thief cometh not but that he may steal and kill and destroy : but I came that they might have life and might have it abundantly.”

India has awakened from a great sleep and is now faced with life and activity. There is agitation, unrest, dissatisfaction with the existing system and effort for reconstruction in every sphere of life—political, social and religious. The Western influence and civilisation have paved the way for it.

Though for years India had been apparently content with the British rule she has now begun to claim her right to have a hand in her own Government. She feels her responsibility to herself and awakening from her slumber has begun to work for her own freedom and growth. Even in Indian States where there is self-government the cry for freedom and recognition of rights is predominant. Her cry is not for change of government but for communal representation. Even the depressed classes are demanding their rights to have a voice in their own government. A sense of responsibility is felt and that is a sign of life and light within.

India has successfully tried to uphold her deep rooted principle of Ahimsa, i.e. that the way of success is the way of suffering. She believes in co-operation and constitutional procedure, though the path to the goal is long and full of difficulties. In this struggle it is interesting to see the daughters of India working side by side with their brothers in the building up of an Indian Nation.

Christians on the whole have been keeping their hands off politics, though individuals have sacrificed their lives in this cause, and hence not made the distinct contribution they should have made. Christian ideals and the Spirit of Christ have been working in Ghandhiji and other political leaders who have given up their high position and large salary and spent their lives for the good of the country. Men and women

have been ready to undergo want and shame and suffering and even jail. The spirit of God is working, but in the political world complete life is not found. There is division, communal hatred and hence lack of power and fulness of life.

Looking at the religious world we see more or less the same state of affairs. There is a great religious awakening. India is a religious country and in her soil were born the great religious founders of Buddhism and Jainism and leaders of Hinduism, and Hinduism has earned that name for her. Hinduism does not centre round a person or a particular code of teachings but on signs and ceremonies which are distinct for different castes. Life has been centred round these observances and anybody who observed these ceremonies would pass for a Hindu. Every action in daily life is given a religious colouring—getting up early in the morning and bathing, studying, eating after washing hands, the birth of a child, the feeding of the child, everything has a religious reason, hence life is religion for a Hindu. You can be a very religious and orthodox Hindu, with outward observances, without an inner meaning and a change of heart. Caste system, the cancer of India, is the framework of Hinduism.

It is a historical fact that Christians, and a Christian Community called the Syrians, had settled down in Malabar from the first century of the Christian era. They lost the first love and enthusiasm of St. Thomas their apostle and failed to be a living Church imparting Christ's love and life to people round about. They formed another caste and tried to keep up their distinctive characteristics and position in the community. The Church did not have life abundant, but managed to exist, faithfully maintaining caste. As a Church there was no life and growth. Thus Christianity failed to appeal to the people of the country as a religion for them.

Later on Christianity as a religion came from the west. They brought the Bible and translated it, and the Spirit of evangelism was spread; but as it came from the west with all its western ways, it has remained always a foreign religion and is still a western religion not having much attraction for India. Also different missions in the west came to India and started missionary work which were not united enough. It is sad that the divisions in the west have been imported to India also. This division of the Churches has been the greatest barrier in India for the spreading of the Kingdom of God.

Though Christianity has not been accepted by India as her

religion, the principles of Christ have been accepted. His spirit has been working and guiding people. His teaching about the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man has been preached and, to a certain extent, practised by the Church. This indirect influence has resulted in the Temple Entry proclamation and the breaking down of the caste system. This event has been a great epoch in the history of the Travancore State and a great forward step in the Hindu community. The caste system is broken and with it the framework of Hinduism is also shaken and shattered. It will take time to wipe out the caste system completely in practice. The Brahmans and the high caste Hindus are not reconciled to this step in their hearts. It is cutting the ground from under their feet. In Travancore, though the Churches have not been very much alive, the Christians form one third of the whole population and it is noticeable that in this State it is the Hindu Maharaja who has opened the State Temples to all castes of Hindus.

All over India there is religious unrest. The depressed classes cry out against a religion based on caste and which upholds castes. Instigated by several motives the depressed classes rush to the Christian Church. There is an awakening of self-respect and sense of personal worth in them. This flow into Christianity is not looked upon with favour by the Hindu leaders and so they are trying to break down caste which is the root cause of it, and thus keep them in the Hindu fold by any means.

Indian social life is very complicated. Each community has its own peculiar social customs. There is no time or space to write in detail about the various interesting customs. Caste system, the foundation of the social order, is the greatest barrier for social development. It is so deep rooted that even the Christians who preach the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God have been forced into the observance of caste in their practical life. Untouchability and poverty made the mass of India forget their self-respect and importance in the sight of God. Superstition, ignorance and poverty kept them down in the dust and who can lift them up but the Spirit of God? Christ can redeem them and make new creatures of them. India is also groaning under the clutches of communal struggle. Political, religious and social struggle has taken the colour of communal hatred. There is not a united India and India is trying to become a Nation. The

All India Women's Conference and other organisations work hard towards this purpose. No artificial method will work. Change of the individual heart must be effected. Who has the power for it? Who holds the world together? Christ alone can do it, and men in whom Christ lives.

India needs Christ to solve all her problems, to heal the divisions, to give real freedom, to give a new meaning to life, and to give a new vision of a Nation. When we look at the world for the past two thousand years we see that the foolish Christians had the courage, love and vision to hold the world together. A really living church, Christian homes, men and women filled with the spirit of God are wanted to reveal Christ, and not only His principles, to the world. The heart of India is tender and she will not be able to refuse the Man on the cross. Associations such as the Y.W.C.A. have a great part to play in this. They have the greatest possibility of uniting the different denominations of the Christian Church and of bringing them into better understanding with the outside world. An Indian is born religious. He is bred and brought up in religious observances and he is prepared to go to any extent for his faith. In such an heritage there is the danger of losing the inner reality and being satisfied with outward appearance alone. When Christ enters such a heart with His abundant life, He will be able to make a definite contribution to the building of India and the Indian Church after the ideal Christ has shown. Christ holds the world. He is the centre of life, because He keeps man near to God and near to each other with a common purpose and goal in life and supplies power for the attainment of the same.



## JESUS CHRIST—THE CENTRE OF LIFE

ELISABETH SCHMIDT

SCULPTORS, often anonymous, have brought as an offering to the doorways of our Gothic Cathedrals those statues which we still admire to-day—Christ triumphant or Christ suffering, Christ blessing or Christ the Judge, all these statues honour the *same* Lord. We recognise this, and yet each one is different. It is always so whenever we want to “paint Christ”; we can never give anything but *our* vision of the same Lord. And indeed we should not regret this too much.

Jesus is nearly always shown to us in the Gospels as speaking to men, in a crowd, in a small group, or to one person alone. Jesus is someone whom men have met. Jesus is someone whom we ourselves also have met—before this personal meeting He did not exist for us—and when we speak of Him it is always to some extent of our meeting with Him that we speak.

Jesus is someone who comes to us, but whom we cannot seek. It is God whom we seek. Because it is impossible to live without seeking. As soon as our intelligence issues from unconsciousness, as soon as the heart becomes aware of the abyss of suffering and tastes its sharpness, the soul is assailed by questions: Whence do we come? We have embarked, says Pascal, but no one has told us the secret of our voyage, and all our travelling companions do their best to make us forget the port whither we are bound. And more despairing still is the riddle of what we are to ourselves. We try to look at ourselves in the mirror of others and we do not recognise ourselves. It is then that we seek for God, as the one who holds the secret of all our mysteries. We seek Him as one might seek for a system. . . . And Jesus comes to us. Jesus, a very concrete *person*, who tasted the savour of the things of the earth, who knew the relentless succession of mornings and days, of evenings and nights . . . a person who lived through hours of incomprehensible suffering which bring sweat to the brow, and uttered that great cry with his last breath. He does not bring us the answers we seek, the explanation of all our

agonised Whys. He himself is the living *Answer*. We have embarked and our first need is not for speculations but for someone to be at our side during the journey. That is what He is. On our roads here below we need to know how to take the step which must be taken at once and concretely. Jesus, when He meets us, says "follow Me." And at this first contact with Him we begin to realise that He is not like other people; by an immediate intuition, we know that in Him dwells all the fulness which we shall never exhaust. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." His authority disturbs us and reassures us at the same time. We have no need to ask Him where He will lead us. We are safe following Him because we know that He has the "words of eternal life." One can only express very badly all that those words "follow Me" represent. We do not follow Jesus as we follow this or that master here below. Jesus makes demands which no leader of men (even the most ambitious) has ever dared to make. In His presence, we stake our life, this life of which we do not understand very much, but in which nevertheless our liberty is a fact. He turns it upside down, or rather, He asks us to give it to Him, to "lose it for His sake." And in spite of all the resistance of our human pride He draws us irresistibly because we know that He is the Truth.

In Him we have found more than a master, and better: to the disciples who have consented to follow Him and to do His will, He says: "Ye are my friends"; He establishes a communion between Himself and us which in no way diminishes His authority. This does not mean only His compassion for our wounds and our sorrows—it means an unsuspected tenderness expressed in His words: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth." Friendship means sharing—and we know how He shares our sorrows and our joys. Jesus is the Great Friend who does not desert us when all others fail to understand us. It is He whose hand we feel on our shoulder when we give way. It is He whose intercession never fails; He protects us with a guard of prayer. But it is also He who allows us to share something of His plans. "Lovest thou Me?" He asks, before entrusting to Peter the care of His sheep. "Lovest thou Me?" He asks us always. And then He leads us on to do a work of mercy for Him and with Him. He entrusts to us the wandering sheep of His flock, the sick sheep to heal and console. . . . He sends us out to the most distant sheep, even to the very ends of the earth.

But to be "in the friendship of Jesus Christ," as our French religious writers say, means to be always aware that He first loved us, and that He only asks for our lives because He has given us His own. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

"Did Christ do it, or did He only say it?" a Burmese judge once asked the missionary Adoniram Judson. He *did* it. This is the old, old story which is told once again for us, and which becomes new.

And many things are only discovered little by little in the life of faith. We do not know at once whence comes the light which seems to make a halo round the manger of Bethlehem. The glory of Christ is so veiled in humility and humiliation that it is visible only to the disciples. But we need to see in the Cross the last degree of humiliation . . . humiliation of Christ leaving the glory which He had with the Father, humiliation of Christ who takes upon Him the form of a servant. This human nearness of Jesus to us is just an act of love. Jesus is someone whom we meet because He seeks us at the cost of His life.

Nor do we know at once how glorious was the light of the Resurrection, and the triumph of the Ascension, and our ignorant minds move on from the glory left to the glory recovered, discovering little by little what kind of Master Jesus is. Our vision of Christ can be summed up in two words: "Our Lord."

Lord—the word shows the title which belongs to Him, the Lord of life and of peace, the Lord to whom has been given "a name which is above every name," but the possessive "our" must always be added to show fully the Lordship which He wishes to have in our lives.

The Lordship which above all we wish to give Him.

Wretched, anxious, despairing sinners, for all of us, in diverse ways, He is *our Lord*.

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