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Jesus Christ

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A STUDY OF
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS CHRIST
IN THE MODERN WORLD

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Jesus Christ, the Dynamic
of Life

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JESUS CHRIST, THE DYNAMIC OF LIFE

OUTLINE

Our Quest: The discovery of an effective motivation for the good life.

The New Testament presents Jesus Christ as the answer. Is he?

Recognition of the presence of distressing denials in theory and facts

I. *An intelligent answer demands a factual study of motives.*

The range of the study—Its confusions.

Three major groups suggested as a simple classification and a key to the understanding of human nature.

1. Egoistic impulses.
2. Social impulses.
3. Creative impulses.

II. *Is there anything in Jesus Christ which will enlist these energies of personality in the achievement of the good life?*

1. In Jesus as a mythus or ideology?

2. In the historical Jesus?

A—The historical debate between right- and left-wing scholarship.

B—The demands of the moralizing process.

C—Their answer in Jesus.

(1) The general character of his appeal.

(a) His satisfying demonstration of the good life.

(b) The conviction he produces that he speaks for Ultimate Reality.

(c) The sense of his living presence, its meaning.

(2) His appeal to the egoistic motives.

(a) The desire for security.

(b) The desire for a feeling of personal worth.

(c) The desire for mastery, power, achievement.

(3) His appeal to the social impulses.

(a) Broadens them—makes them inclusive.

(b) Deepens them by inspiring a new reverence for humanity. Because of his demonstration of human possibilities. Because of his devotion to humanity on the cross.

(c) He links these social impulses to God.

(4) His appeal to the creative impulses; their power.

(a) He inspires a critical approach to the *status quo*.

(b) He summons men to build a better world.

The kingdom of God ideal—Its inexhaustible character and its fascination.

(5) The release of power he makes possible.

(a) By conveying assurance of forgiveness.

(b) By begetting faith.

Conclusion.

JESUS CHRIST, THE DYNAMIC OF LIFE

OUR QUEST

OUR supreme task is the development of the good life. We have no interest in schemes of salvation which promise to set in motion celestial legal machinery, the final result of whose operations will be the release of the transgressor from deserved penalty and his entrance into some far land of personal bliss. Rather are we concerned how to foster in men and women now that quality of life which we call moral and spiritual, which is eternal. About the details of such life there will necessarily be debate, for we still "only see the baffling reflections in a mirror." Our limitations of knowledge preclude unanimity of judgment in this as in every other sphere. But while we may differ as to specific qualities and concrete expressions of the good life, we all recognize its main characteristics. To us who are Christian in sympathy and outlook it includes the appreciations, attitudes, character, and conduct disclosed in the deeds and urged in the teachings of Jesus. It involves faith in and co-operation with that Ultimate Reality whom we call God, and earnest and sacrificial endeavors to make God's will regnant in individual and social life, to realize the kingdom of God upon earth.

Our quest, therefore, is to discover an effective motivation which may be employed to inspire and enable folk of all races, classes, ages, and conditions to live the kind of life which has commended itself to the enlightened Christian consciousness as supremely desirable. What can we hold before men which will arouse their physical and psychical energies, and enlist them in the glorious effort to make the Christian ideal the commanding reality in their personal and institutional activities?

THE NEW TESTAMENT ANSWER

The New Testament presents Christ as the end of our quest. It not only interprets his mission in terms of the more abundant life, but adds its own testimony concerning his power to beget a new and amazing life among those who accepted him as Lord and Master. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."¹ There certainly can be no question but that those who associated with Jesus, and those who believed on him through their word, were sure that in Jesus they had both the promise of the life to come and the power needed to make life here morally victorious, bringing it spiritually into tune with the Infinite. To a weary, dispirited, disillusioned, defeated generation they preached with the exuberant gladness of men who

¹ 2 Corinthians 5. 17.

had found an answer to all its woe and weakness. Good news is the only phrase which fitly describes what they eagerly offered to their contemporary world.

Is it equally good news to our world? Is Jesus Christ an adequate moral and spiritual dynamic for this harried, bewildered, neurotic generation in which we live? Can he control its passions, release its suppressions, break up its distorting complexes, furnish the Ideal about which its anarchic impulses may be fused into a moral unity, offer it a career sufficiently entrancing to mobilize all its energies? Can he create those human and divine relationships which will make its homes sanctuaries, transform its industries into producers of men as well as goods, change political brigandage into councils of welfare for "the beloved community," inaugurate international peace? We cannot afford a mistake here. The issues are too solemn, the perils too real, to waste our time and pin our hopes upon an ancient Figure, however honorable, heroic, and helpful, when measured by the standards and evaluated by the crude judgments of the dim past, if he is inadequate to the needs of the present and future.

DISTRESSING FACTS

We must confess that there are many distressing facts which confront us as we attempt to deal realistically with moral and spiritual conditions within the pale of Christendom. Here, where Christ has been preached the longest, and praised the most extravagantly, ethical and religious results have been tragically disappointing. Vast economic wealth and power are in the hands of those who call themselves Christian, but he would be rash indeed who would attempt to prove that there is much that is Christlike in the use of them. The one movement on a national scale in our time to end hunger, and to provide employment for all, is taking place, not in Christian America, but in atheistic Russia, not under the recognized leadership of Jesus Christ, but under the influence of Karl Marx. Nor is the indictment of such a situation mitigated by the assertion that poverty is not so poignant here, and that there is, therefore, no demand for such heroic undertakings. While it is true that the underprivileged in America are in far better situation than the same class in Russia, relatively speaking they are not much more favored. It is more shameful to be hungry in the midst of plenty than to starve amid general famine; to be denied the culture which one craves, because it is everywhere in evidence, than to be untaught amid a prevalent ignorance which is scarcely self-conscious. There is much Christian charity in evidence here, but as yet no such Christian reorganization of an outworn, discredited economic order as would begin to-morrow if the men who repeat the name of Christ were moved by him to employ their skill and their power in anything closely resembling Christlike concern for the unfit and the broken. We are thankful for the awakening conscience about war, but we have to reckon with the fact that millions have been slaughtered in martial conflicts engineered by statesmen and fought by armies who

claimed allegiance to the Prince of Peace. The plight of the Negro in America raises disconcerting queries concerning the power of Christ to create that passion for brotherhood without which the future of a world rapidly being turned into a neighborhood will be dark and bloody. Nor can we shut our eyes to the blindness to beauty, the indifference to truth, the idolatry of mere possessions, the utter frivolity of purpose which characterize many who belong to the Christian Church, listen most regularly to its sermons and fight most bitterly for the faith once delivered to the saints. In a word, so many believers, as Wong Kuei Shung poignantly reminds us, "have only sung a beautiful tune."

Almost equally distressing is the fact that Christian churches seem to prosper when other than Christian motives are employed in their programs or are operative in their life. Curiosity appears to be more effective in drawing men than the cross; the spectacular makes an appeal which outweighs the spiritual; the promise of a fight fills pews which the promise of light leaves empty. And the effectiveness of the church as a social ladder enlists the time and energy of multitudes whom "the traffic of Jacob's ladder" leaves cold. "Live-wire preachers" are characterized not by their connection with Calvary but by their surcharge with the tingling elements which send crowds to the theater, the prize fight, and the beauty parade. Too often the preachers who do rely upon the appeal of Christ are left with small congregations, apparently not much concerned with either the moral or spiritual life, but wishing only that their preacher would wake up to do the thing which interests their headline-harried, scenario-saturated, club-cluttered minds.

All these facts, and many others like them, we are compelled in honesty to recognize. What do they mean? After all our rhapsodies about him is there nothing in Jesus Christ which can successfully challenge pagan and materialistic ideals, inspire men to discover a nobler way of life, captivate their errant and perverted energies, and unify them in a successful drive toward the realization of those ends which we agree to be of supreme worth? The humanist answers: "Nothing." He would have us pay our respects to Jesus as we do to Plato and Phidias and Raphael, but assures us that we must find in our present scientific knowledge of man and the universe whatever incentives can helpfully operate to produce the good life. Is he right? Is Jesus a mere object of religious romance to whom distance lends an enchantment involving no surrender; a Sunday idyll for pulpit recitation helping to make an enjoyable week-end but having no power to grapple with the conscience, arouse the will, control the life? Or are the distressing moral and spiritual failures in Christian communities the result, not of the impotence of Jesus Christ, but of a faulty presentation of him, faulty both in content and method? Have we stifled with dull educational methods, smothered with ornate pulpit rhetoric, and buried in an impossible theology, the redemptive, regenerating, invigorating appeal of Jesus? If men could see the real Jesus, would he become for them the dynamic of a vigorous moral and spiritual life?

THE DEMANDS OF INTELLIGENCE²

An intelligent and convincing answer to such questions demands first of all a factual study to discover what really moves men to action. Before we can affirm or deny that there is in Jesus Christ adequate motivation for desirable individual and social conduct the obligation is upon us to listen to what science has to say concerning the motives which actually operate in human life. We have earnestly sought to fulfill that obligation. We have knocked at the doors of the clinical psychologist, the clinical sociologist, the economic determinist, the religious educator, and have inquired of each what they have discovered to be the forces which move men to action. We have explored the fields of religious experience within and without Christianity to learn what ideals, beliefs, and influences arouse energy and control conduct. Many answers have been returned, and they have not been in perfect agreement with each other. The economic determinist is sure that bread-and-butter motives are fundamental; the mystic is equally sure that it is the hunger for the Infinite which is the most powerful incentive to which appeal can be made. And all the way between these two extremes lies scattered a host of drives and interests, called by various names, and so overlapping and contradicting one another that the first impression made upon the inquirer is of a chaos out of which no spirit, human or divine, could evoke order, and evolve either a hierarchy or democracy of intelligible motives. But the situation is not quite so hopeless as it first appears. By and by, out of the confusion emerges a rather simple basic classification which, though like the alphabet, capable of amazingly complex combinations, nevertheless provides the key whereby one may begin the studies which yield fruitful results from the very beginning and hold out the promise of an ever-growing body of indispensable knowledge about ourselves.

Life begins with a few fundamental drives² which are modified and conditioned as the result of experience and may be sublimated almost beyond recognition. The ego instinct, for example, may be so redirected that it furnishes the energy for a great social crusade, strange as it may seem. The herd impulse may be so thwarted as to make a man a misanthrope, driven apart from, or arrayed against, his fellows. The sex interest often becomes the force which enriches the world of art with immortal canvases, or sends a cultured woman down into the slums to be the angel of deliverance to those who have only "a crust of bread and a corner to weep in."

Upon these fundamental biological impulses, apparently, are superimposed other interests, which are hard to relate to the original physical impulsions, but seem to be ideal and spiritual, both in origin and end. Just as the wetness of water, the glory of the flower, or the song of the bird, cannot be resolved back into the original chemical elements of water or flower or bird, but are the emergence

² It is not the intention here to commit anyone to any particular theory of human action by the use of the term "drive," "impulse" or "interest" or "motive" would serve just as well. What is intended is to indicate the normal response of human beings to situations, a response which is made possible by the "set" and the energy of the organism.

of something new which has independent reality, operating according to its own laws, so with the birth of consciousness. We are confronted with a new phenomenon which cannot be interpreted in bio-chemical terms, but has unique reality of its own. While it is more or less limited by the physical organism, in connection with which it came into being, it has its own rules, its own forces, its own goals, and in turn seems capable of controlling the so-called instinctive drives for ideal ends which have appealed to it. A mere genetic survey of motives, therefore, is not enough. If one would know the secret of human conduct, he must not stop with the discovery of the fundamental physical reactions of the body to its environment. He must pass to a study of what actually moves man with awakened consciousness to action.

WHAT ARE MOTIVES TO ACTION?

Such an investigation reveals three major groups of motives. These groups are not offered as ultimate. They often touch and overlap. They almost never act alone. Some students would reduce them to two or even one. Others would divide them still further or would classify the discovered drives differently. But the divisions now to be suggested at least cover the main motives of life and furnish the concepts of motivation with which our quest may be pursued.

1. There are the egoistic impulses which, beginning with a mere blind interest in self-preservation, are modified and redirected until they operate as desire for economic independence; as concern for reward and punishment; as zest for mastery, power, and achievement; as a longing for immortality.

2. Socializing motives form the second group. At the outset perhaps mere variations of the herd instinct, they become, in the course of growth from childhood to maturity, family, group, and class loyalty, an interest, more or less intense, in satisfactory relations with one's fellow workers, a desire for sympathetic response from one's associates. They frequently widen until they become a consciousness of, and a response to, what is believed to be Ultimate Reality. They are the forces which impel men to seek fellowship both human and divine. When one beholds the atheistic Lenin standing in Highgate Cemetery, London, by the grave of Karl Marx in the attitude of prayer, one comes to understand how powerful are the forces, which move even the unbeliever to seek a wider fellowship than his own dominant ideas, or his present friends, can provide.

3. The creative interest in human nature must also be reckoned with. Some think it not merely the chief, but the only one. However that may be—and many have doubts on that point—its power is indisputable. Its biological basis is the sex-instinct, the satisfaction of which has been the occasion of some of life's greatest tragedies and the inspiration of many heroic and arduous endeavors. But man's passion for creative activity has a capacity for turning away from primitive satisfaction toward ends more social than these. It

may become the drive toward the production of beauty, in color, sound, or form; the pursuit and expression of truth in the laboratory and in literature; the various forms of social service; and especially the costly labors involved in the attempt to create a more humane social order, a new kingdom of love and righteousness. Mr. Sherwood Eddy met a member of one of the wealthiest families of Old Russia and expressed surprise that he should be willing to accept a five-dollar-a-day salary and the simple regime offered by the Soviets. The sufficient explanation offered was the enthusiastic declaration, "But we are building a new world!" There is something in man which gets into action when the opportunity for creative labor is presented, impelling him to unprecedented and almost unbelievable sacrifices.

There are some motivating experiences of which we have record which are a bit difficult to classify under either of these three main groups. But we believe further study will reveal that there is a direct connection with one or maybe all of them. The investigation of the psychology of religious experience, for example, reveals that the experience of belief "carries with it a considerable dynamic for moral and spiritual living." Suppose that it were so simple a belief as that in a Father God and in

" . . . one far off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves."

An experience of such a belief belongs not exclusively to either the egoistic, socializing, or creative group of motives, but is, rather, related to them all. By its assurance of a kindly Providence it satisfies the egoistic cravings; by its notion of an All-Father, and therefore of the universal brotherhood of humanity, it appeals to the socializing impulses; and by its presentation of an ultimate goal related to the Father's will, it enlists all the power which is released through the creative instincts.

We do not urge this particular outline of motives as final or even complete. But we do believe that it covers the situation with a fair degree of adequacy, that it furnishes an effective clue to an understanding of human nature, and that, with it in mind, we may approach Jesus Christ, asking whether there is in him anything that will enlist the energies of personality in the achievement of the good life.

CAN JESUS ENLIST THESE ENERGIES IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOOD LIFE?

For an answer we go directly to the Jesus of history. We believe that "the historical Jesus, by his example and instruction, was the sceptered sovereign of the early Christian movement." We do not believe that any ideology which has taken upon itself the name of Jesus, nor any mythology which has grown up about any figure of history, can provide sufficient motivation for the life of to-day. Neither speculative reason nor pictures of the imagination can have the significance of a living experience, even though

that experience occurred in a distant century and in a far-away land. Harnack said thirty years ago: "There is no other fact in all history which mankind needs so much to have brought home as this: 'A man of the name of Jesus Christ once stood in our midst.'"

WHO WAS JESUS?

Who was this Jesus of history? We want no illusions and will accept no evasions. We cannot build the good life upon a fable. Nor can we find nourishment for our spirits in a faith that is nervous about facts. Do we know anything certain about Jesus, and if so, what? Radical and conservative scholarship will return different answers to that question. Both agree that Jesus lived. Only dilettantes still enter their denial. As skeptical a scholar as Bultman declares: "The doubt relative to the actual historical existence of Jesus is unfounded and does not deserve so much as a word in refutation."³ Beyond this assurance of the historicity of Jesus, however, the two schools are at no little variance with each other concerning the details of his life, and the interpretation of his personality. Each, in spite of its effort to approach the investigation of the historical records with an open mind, cannot escape certain presuppositions which necessarily determine its decisions on mooted points, its selection of authentic material, and its final picture of Jesus. Radical scholars begin with a conviction about natural law, which automatically rules out the wonder-stories of the Gospels, peremptorily dismissing any statements which make of Jesus a religious object rather than a religious subject. Conservative scholars have their presuppositions too, born out of their experience with Christ, and their consequent readiness to believe great things about One who has meant so much to them. Both schools have their dogmatisms which, though not apparent to themselves, do not escape the eye of the amateur who comes to them for information about this most fascinating Person in history. John Ruskin once said that "an observer on the shore might discover some things about the sea which are unnoticed even by the fish that swim in it." Occasionally there is an advantage in not being too deeply immersed in a subject. At any rate, as we have pondered the results of profound historical scholarship, expressing our immense debt to the men who have toiled so arduously to recover for our modern eyes not only the words and deeds of Jesus, but the historical setting which is so very helpful, if not indispensable, to their interpretation, there has arisen before our minds a portrait of the Master which, while not agreeing perfectly with the extreme conclusions of either radical or conservative, seems to us inescapable.

To the Jesus of that portrait we now turn eagerly to discover what there is in him which can awaken the slumbering energies of personality, capture powers which have run amuck, unify and enlist the total self for the sublime ends to which we agree life should be

³ The discussion in Germany, culminating in about 1910, as summarized in Case's *The Historicity of Jesus*. The later controversy in France is adequately dealt with in Maurice Goguel's *Jesus a Nazarene—Myth or History?*

dedicated. Our hearts have leaped for joy as we have compared the needs and demands of personality with all that Jesus said, and did, and was. The Gospels indicate that he knew what was in man. Modern scientific study of man has made thrillingly clear that Jesus touched those inexhaustible springs of motive with which science has made us acquainted, in so far as those motives can be harnessed to the good life. What he was makes a direct appeal to what man is. What he said falls not upon the ear only, but upon the area of man's deepest needs. What he did is the most vitalizing incentive to what man ought to do. After we become acquainted with all that science has to tell us about human nature and what that human nature needs for the awakening and fulfillment of its highest possibilities, and then turn to the real Jesus to whom history has introduced us, we cannot refrain from the doxology of Simeon,

"Mine eyes have seen thy salvation
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples."

If salvation is the divine answer to man's need for a sufficient dynamic for the moral and spiritual life, then salvation has arrived in Jesus Christ.

THE DEMANDS OF THE MORALIZING PROCESS

The moralization of life seems to occur after this fashion. (1) The conscious self of every person is by its very nature capable of the recognition of values. By wise teaching, guidance, and convincing example it can be led into the appreciation of larger and larger values, even to the Ultimate Value. (2) The conscious self is capable of examining its life in the light of these values. Where life fails in the incarnation of such values there is a sense of guilt and unhappiness. Where it succeeds there is happiness and peace. (3) The conscious self is an important factor in the redirection of the native impulses away from their primitive objectives and satisfactions toward these higher values—a process which psychology has christened sublimation.⁴

⁴Exponents of objective psychology (behaviorism) of course would not agree with the terminology used above. In simple, untechnical language what they envisage is a bio-chemical organism in response to its environment. That response is capable of almost unlimited modification by experience, so that the prick of a pin, for example, may be followed not by the jerk of a muscle, which is the primitive response, but by a flow of words, profane or pious, which is the complex result of a series of conditioning experiences. Whether or not any such an organism will respond to an appeal made in behalf of the good life will depend, subjectively on its past experiences, objectively on the manner in which the appeal is presented.

One of America's leading authorities on objective psychology was asked how he would go about the task of influencing another to adopt a course of action. His reply in substance was: "Forget terminology. When I was a young man I heard an address on the art of preaching. The speaker laid down the following rules: 'Capture the attention, convince the mind, arouse the emotions, stimulate the will.' I cannot give you any better counsel than that." In a word, in spite of their vastly different theory of human behavior, they fall back upon certain tried and trusty methods when they approach the task of influencing human behavior, especially in adults. It seems to the observer that the characterization of Christians which Browning puts in the mouth of a Jew is pertinent to these behaviorists "whose life laughs through and spits at their creed," but they would reply that life and the laboratory demand a different set of axioms, and while they would repudiate the phraseology used above, namely, egoistic impulses, social impulses, creative impulses, they would tell us to act as if men were interested in self-preservation, fellowship, creation, and assure us that we should probably secure favorable responses. They would deny to our analysis scientific validity but would bless it as a working mythology of personality and the moral life.

The quest, therefore, is for one who, or that which, will be able to discover these nobler ends and convince the individual of their superior worth. Once such a conviction is had, the energies within, whose power is often so fearfully prostituted in the pursuit of evil, will furnish valuable motivation for the attainment of the good. The beginning, at least, of the moral dynamic is not the magical investment of man with a mysterious power from without. It is the release of the equally mysterious power within, with which God has endowed man, and its enlistment for those moral ends for which God purposes it to be used. It may well be true, and we believe it is, that a fresh increment of divine power is added to the moral use of the power already in hand. But it never precedes such use; neither is it given as a substitute for it. Is there in Jesus Christ that which can reveal to man the supreme values, convince him that they are supreme, and thus cause the conscious self to direct the energy of life toward goodness and God?

1. The affirmative answer seems inescapable, not merely because of his charming portrayal of the good life, but because of his satisfying demonstration of it. There is at once a simplicity and comprehensiveness about his teachings which elevate them to the supreme place among the classics of the ethical and spiritual life. With unerring insight he seized upon the great fundamental principles of character and conduct, and embodied them in unforgettable paradox, parable, hyperbole, and homily. He did not construct a system. He did something infinitely better. He imparted a spirit. There have been arguments many over the significance of this or that saying of Jesus. We hear him only through the lips of his reporters, and sometimes those lips furnish a halting medium. It is not always easy to discover what Jesus actually did say upon any particular occasion. But we are not at all uncertain about the major meanings involved, or about what would be required if anyone purposed to live in the spirit of Jesus. That spirit makes a unique appeal because it is the product of a teaching given perfect illustration in a life. A well-known scientist writes: "Poetic and dramatic presentations of certain human relationships are far more likely to set up a habit of appreciation of sympathy, and perhaps of acquiescence, than an appeal to reason would be."⁵ Theories are sometimes very captivating, but they do not compare with action in ability to produce conviction.

But this is not all. There is something about Jesus, explain it how you will, which persuades men that he is in touch with Ultimate Reality. It is not merely that he did such wonderful deeds, lived such a superlative life as to convince men that he tapped more than human resources. It is not because, glorious as the fact is, the conviction came to his first disciples that God had raised him from the dead, and that he was alive forevermore. It is something more intimate with the life of our own age, more closely connected with our common experience. When he speaks, men seem to hear in his

⁵ Dr. H. M. Johnson, Mellon Institute, Pittsburgh, Pa.

voice the tones of the Infinite. When he acts, they have an impression of divine activity as if they were watching God at work. What has happened to multitudes, and what seems likely to continue happening for a long time to come, is that as men and women study him they feel impelled to say: "This is not only a good way to live. This is the only way we can live and be at home in the universe."

Again Jesus seems to many to be not merely a first-century illustration of an *en rapport* with ultimate reality which witnesses to the nature of that reality, but a living Person with whom a genuine fellowship has been and may be enjoyed. One dare not pass by the testimony of Christian experience through the centuries which seems to be the literal, personal fulfillment of a familiar word, "Lo, I am with you always." The interpretation of such an experience will depend upon the theological position of the interpreter. Recognizing that it may mean more, it at least means this: as many men and women read the story and meditate upon the meanings of the Jesus of history, they not only are seized with a unique sense of the presence of God, but they find themselves thinking of God in terms of Jesus. When they have an experience of divine fellowship it is to them like a return of Jesus. These experiences, vivid as they have been, are convincing testimony that it is impossible for many of our own time to think of God, or have fellowship with him, except in terms of the Jesus of history.

At any rate this paper, which attempts to be a report of findings, must record the deep, inescapable certainty of many of our contemporaries, whose critical intelligence has won for them a commanding position in the thought of their generation, that Jesus knew and bore witness to the ultimate truth about God. "Jesus is a vista into the heart of reality." "I find in him the most ultimate meaning I can discover." "He was so fundamental in his thinking that he got into the heart of things." And Professor George Herbert Palmer, dean of American philosophers, writes: "But when I ask myself where I shall find my deepest insight into the being of God, and learn how he can be best connected with my life, I have no doubt where it can be had. In Jesus of Nazareth."⁶ These are sample testimonies to the impressions which Jesus makes upon minds which know the facts of his life and subsequent influence.

Because of these impressions, Jesus wins the conscious mind to his way of life. The conscious mind begins to redirect the impulses toward those human-divine ends disclosed in Jesus. The energies linked with the impulses become energies for good and not for evil. Life moves in the direction of God.

2. The egoistic motives drive men to seek security. In the quest for security terrible things happen. Men steal, lie, cheat, compromise, and kill; they betray their friends, dishonor their families, scuttle their convictions; they sell their knowledge and skill to predatory commercial interests, form alliances with despicable political groups, surrender everything which makes life splendid—all to

⁶ P. 46, *Contemporary American Philosophy*.

make a living, maintain a position, achieve security, preserve existence. So fearful is the power of the egoistic impulse!

(a) Whatever proposes to make man a moral being must be able to capture this impulse and direct it to moral ends. This Jesus seeks to do by differentiating between temporal and ultimate security, and by offering such ultimate security, not to trickery and force, but to the virtues whose crowning expression is love. He tried to lift men's thoughts from houses to the Father's house of many mansions; from wealth to the treasures which neither moth nor rust can corrupt; from social and political power to thrones in realms spiritual and eternal; from salutations in the market place to the final "Well done" of the King; from mere continuance of physical life to the glories of the life everlasting. He makes a direct appeal to the egoistic interests of men, but he sublimates those interests in behalf of objectives which are divine and eternal, offering the realization of those objectives to those who walk the paths of virtue here.

It would be difficult to think of a more powerful appeal to this side of human nature than Jesus makes—especially because he can persuade men that he knows what he is talking about. He does not convince everybody. Some will not listen to him long enough to feel the significance of his utterances. Others are under the spell of current skepticisms of one sort or another. Some think him only an idle dreamer. Spengler's conclusion is theirs: "No faith has ever changed the world and no fact can ever overthrow belief." Irreconcilable opposition between fact and faith is their appraisal of life and history, and they propose to stake their careers not on the beliefs of Jesus, but on the facts of science. This mood is especially manifest in some college circles, where there is an ill-concealed impatience with any reference to Jesus as a norm for conduct or a clue to reality. Still others are afflicted with what psychology calls the narcissus-complex: they are absorbed in themselves, and no appeal from without seems able to win them. But there is about the career of Jesus that which has demanded the attention and compelled the confidence of multitudes.

He built his life and risked his influence upon the program which he proposed for others. The pre-eminence of that life, and the persistence of that influence amid all the kaleidoscopic changes of subsequent centuries, make it a reasonable conclusion that Jesus either hit upon, or was in conscious relation to, the ultimate nature of things. Only a life in harmony with abiding reality could achieve such indestructible glory.

It is just this persuasion that Jesus is a revelation of the heart of things which gives such potency to his appeal to the self. Man, ever in search for security, hears and turns in the direction Jesus has indicated, and is thus led at least to the beginnings of a moral life. He is not being good merely to get to heaven, but he believes that he has discovered that sanctity and security are one in God's universe, and while, as we shall see later, that is not the only reason for his interest in sanctity, it at least is one incentive, deriving its power from an element which God has set in human nature, and which

those who try to deal with human nature helpfully must keep in mind.

(b) One phase of the egoistic impulse is a desire for a sense of worth. To feel oneself a person among other persons is beyond doubt one of the dominant motives in life. Striking is the appeal which Jesus makes to this motive. He tells men not only that they may be persons among other persons, but that they may be persons in the presence of God, if they discard the strut and the fever of selfish ambition, and join the company of the meek, the lowly, the pure in heart, and the hungry after righteousness. He demonstrates that such qualities are within their reach by giving in his own life an exhibition of their attainment. His humanity, which happily history has recovered from the fog of theology, a humanity of struggle with temptation, of battle against weakness, by its very achievement gives every one of us a new pride in our human heritage, and a new faith in the possibility of achieving that character which may live with God forever. "If, then," writes Shen Tzu-chan,⁷ "Jesus . . . never once during his life was subject to great and unavoidable temptations, then he loses all meaning to me. I have lost the One who was tempted and struggled and battled and finally overcame. . . . [His] staggering was the normal behavior of a man; the victory bore the stamp of divinity. In that moment he sprang from the human level to the throne of the divine: and I will gladly share in his struggle to the very last."

(c) The egoistic impulse manifests itself as a desire for mastery, power, achievement. Jesus enlists this desire by his offer to make men masters of themselves, to give them moral power, to help them to notable achievements. Long familiar is the classic definition of conversion by Professor William James—a process by which "a self consciously divided, defeated, inferior, unhappy becomes consciously united, victorious, superior, happy." Such conversions are by no means confined to the influence of Christianity. They occur in other religions, even in the realm of science and art. But we think it can be said without exaggeration that Jesus is the supreme converting power at work in human life, and that the conversions under his influence are of a higher type than result from any other. Our study seems to make clear that conversion is the result of the capacity of the conflicting interests within personality to fuse about a single ideal so that the conflict is at an end, and the energies of the self are linked to the ideal. The quality of the conversion is therefore determined by the quality of the ideal which has captured the throne. Because, to us, Jesus is the supreme ideal, conversions effected through his influence are therefore to a higher level, and a more complete mastery, than through any other influence. Here again we can cite only two or three significant testimonies from critical sources: "When we let Jesus take possession of us, things begin to happen." "He presents a technique for getting rid of a sense of failure." "He gives a value around which experience becomes integrated."

Each of these echoes, in modern critical thought-forms, the tri-

⁷ Shanghai, China.

umphant voice of a far and uncritical yesterday: "In all of these things we are more than conquerors through him who hath loved us." In this ability to bring to men who accept his moral leadership the feeling and the fact of mastery, as well as in his offer of security and his enhancement of the sense of personal worth, Jesus enlists in behalf of the moral and spiritual life a powerful group of energies.

3. As we turn to the socializing impulses with which science has made us acquainted, we witness similar demonstration of Jesus Christ as Lord of the human heart. These impulses often play havoc with life. They sometimes issue in narrow loyalties to family, class, or nation, and so lead men to disregard the claims of the outsider, and even to wage war against them. In their craving for sympathetic response, they often foster a too-great deference to the opinion of the crowd, and men become pursuers of popularity, and traitors to unpopular truth. Often there is a blind search for fellowship which fails because there is no understanding of the strait gate and the narrow way which lead into the hearts of men and into fellowship with God.

(a) Jesus takes these social impulses and broadens their quest. He directs them not to a small clan, but out toward the whole world of men. Though he confined his own ministry largely to his own people, his heart was the home of all humanity, and whenever men have placed their hearts beside his long enough to catch its pulsations of universal love, they have felt their interests and affections leaping over all boundaries of race and creed, and seeking to share their best with all who will have it. Under his influence the missionary has made perilous journeys across the seven seas, giving sacrificial service under all skies. Men, whom fate and diplomatic blundering and economic rivalry have ranged against each other amid the horrors of the battlefield, have, nevertheless, in the midst of the general hate and wrath, pitied their foes, and have loathed the necessity of conflict, and now, at long last, have risen above the delusions and treacheries of Cæsar to stand by the side of Christ in a daring renunciation of war. The passion for unity has never entirely died out of a sadly sundered Christendom, and ever and anon, under the influence of renewed fellowship with Christ, reaches out to tear down the fences built amid the exigencies of warring ideas about God, and to re-establish organic fellowship with all who name the name of Christ. There is to-day a fascinating growth of conviction that fellowship with others must recognize their peculiar insights into life and their unique outlook upon the universe, so that within the Christian movement itself there is a new breadth of sympathy and understanding, which promises to provide a surer foundation for a world-fellowship of men and women of all religions. In a word, history does indicate that the more deeply men live with Christ the more eager are they to share their life with all humanity.

(b) By the new valuation of human beings which arises from a spiritual appreciation of the Jesus of history, the natural tendency toward fellowship which is the basis for all social ethics is not only broadened, but heightened, purified, and strengthened, until it issues

in a sacrificial human relationship. Wang Kuei-Sheng brings an interesting Oriental reaction when he says, "We can believe in ourselves only after we see the manhood of Jesus." But seeing the manhood of Jesus we do acquire a new reverence for all manhood and womanhood. Add to that Christ's costly devotion to humanity culminating on Calvary, which again comes to us like an echo of God's appraisal, and it cannot be wondered that they who give Jesus a chance should feel greatly drawn to establish helpful and redemptive relationships with their fellows. Those who cannot entertain very sure convictions about Jesus as an apocalypse of God hasten to admit that he has given them their most complete revelation of man, and from that revelation they receive their greatest stimulus to fellowship and service.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the immediate value of the cross as an appeal to the social motives. Professor Wieman, of the University of Chicago, in a communication to the Commission says: "Jesus endured the suffering necessary to initiate a communizing process at deeper levels than had been known before. . . . That kind of interaction which engenders mutual understanding at the deeper levels of experience cannot be brought to men unless someone first undergoes the cruelest kind of misunderstanding in introducing it. . . . The interaction among men which engenders community of shared experience, in so far as it issues from the life of Jesus, is the saving power of Christ in the world." And we shall not forget that word of Father Tyrell's, which speaks for the experience of many who have "dared the pang nor grudged the throe" involved in service to their fellows: "Again and again I have been tempted to give up the struggle, but always the figure of that strange Man hanging on his cross sends me back to my work again." No man who catches the spirit of Jesus can hold persons in contempt. If they were worth a cross from such as he, they are worth every contribution we can make to their well-being. So Jesus takes the natural craving for one's fellows which every normal human feels, intensifies it, and, forbidding its expression on lower levels and in baser activities, makes it a driving power in the direction of such reverential and sacrificial relationship to our fellows that, if it became universal, the profanation of womanhood for the sake of sensual satisfaction, the exploitation of childhood and manhood in the quest of material profits, the destruction of human life in international war, would be at an end.

(c) The supreme achievement of Jesus in the realm of social motives is the unique fashion in which he directs them outward, not only toward humanity but to God himself, and by a process, which some psychologists have vainly denied, and none has explained, becomes the mediator between God and man, imparting to men the deepest assurance they have of God's existence, and the most glad-some sense of his presence. "He gives to me a personalizing element in my experience of God," says one brilliant scholar. "He is our way to God," devoutly affirms another. The mystic experience is not confined to Christianity, for God hath not left himself with-

out a witness anywhere. But it seems to be a clear reading of history that conscious fellowship with God, which leaves man uniquely himself yet aware of Another, has had its noblest and most frequent illustration among the people who have submitted to the influence of Jesus Christ. In him is the most alluring promise of an answer to a plaintive cry of yesterday echoing still in the troubled heart of a skeptical to-day, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us." While a Gandhi, with all the spiritual passion of his quest for God, must mournfully confess that, at the present rate, it may require a million years, thousands of humble disciples of Christ thankfully say in one language or another, "I have found."

4. The appeal which Jesus makes to the creative impulses in human nature has not yet been sufficiently pondered by his advocates nor released upon society. It is not merely Russian Communists who are capable of enthusiasm over the chance to build a better world. Dreams of Utopias have not been confined to the literary breast of a Thomas More. Nor has a mystical idealist like Blake a monopoly upon the spirit which cries,

"I shall not cease from mental fight
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land."

There is something in the hearts of millions which awaits a summons to make creative contribution to the establishment of a new social order where none shall hurt or make afraid, where

All men's good shall be each man's rule
And universal peace like a shaft of light across the land.

Particularly is that true now when mass production is robbing men of pride of craftsmanship, and a faulty economy is not able to compensate that plunder with the leisure and the resources for creative living.

How deeply Jesus speaks to this our need! Two striking facts fairly leap at us even from the most thoroughgoing humanistic interpretation of his life. First, his discriminating approach to the past. To the best wisdom of the fathers, he brought the criticism of an enlightened conscience. Second, his confident expectation of a coming kingdom of God, when the will of the Father would be done on earth as in heaven, and when, therefore, those "good things" which the Father is eager to give will be the heritage of all.

When men become acquainted with this side of Jesus, things begin to happen. The placid acceptance of the *status quo* is at an end. The blind submission to a hurtful economic creed or social code simply because of its age dies. Men begin to study laws and institutions from the standpoint not of their immemorial sanctity but of their present actual relation to human welfare. They do not get from Jesus specific direction as to what they must do, but they do receive from him a divine compulsion to do something. "He inspires much truth he did not teach," affirms a keen American thinker. And from far-away China comes reply: "Jesus did not

help me to answer all these questions. He only gave me a kind of faith, placed me on the right track, so that I could answer them for myself."

Fascinating is the story of the influence of Jesus Christ upon many who have been reared in the traditions of the non-Christian faiths. Abundant testimony comes out of Asia and Africa of great structural changes taking place in these ancient systems, as their adherents feel the impact of his person and life.

An elaborate paper would be required to enumerate the present-day accomplishments of Jesus in the midst of the ethnic faiths. We can only make note of the following: (1) Many of the ethical standards by which conduct is judged in the fields of politics, economics, and social life are those represented by the words and example of Jesus. (2) Ancient passages from their Scriptures seeming to embody his teachings and ancient religious teachers resembling him in spirit are emerging from obscurity. On the other hand, many teachers who hitherto have been authoritative are falling into neglect because of their contradiction of Jesus. Religious biographies are being rewritten in the light of the character of Jesus. (3) Decided shifts of religious emphasis are apparent in the writings of their more modern exponents to bring these systems into greater harmony with the teachings of Jesus. (4) An honored place has been opened for Jesus within the circle of non-Christian faiths as one of the great outstanding religious teachers of the race. Many who do not call themselves by his name worship him and find him central in their religious experience or term him the highest fulfillment of their ancient heritage. (5) There are new sects in the non-Christian faith, new movements in social reform, and organized missions of service carried on by non-Christians which frankly confess their debt to Jesus of Nazareth.

Stimulating the human mind to a searching criticism of all that comes from the past, he summons it to devotion in the making of a glorious future. The kingdom of God ideal which he exalts is undoubtedly one of the most commanding which has ever laid hold upon the human imagination, requiring human labor and sacrifice. That ideal has often been cramped and distorted by its interpreters. But somehow it succeeds again and again in emerging from the tomb of other-worldly theology and escaping the graveclothes of prosaic exegesis, walking in our midst with beauty and power. We have listened to the debates between those who claim that Jesus' view of the Kingdom was purely apocalyptic in character and those who believe that his genius guarantees an escape from apocalyptic trammels. We have also heard the arguments as to whether his interpretation of the Kingdom was individual or social. It seems to us that both are wrong and both are right; right in recognizing the presence of these elements in his teaching, wrong in attempting to interpret him as dominated exclusively by any of them. "The error of the church has not consisted in explaining the message so variously, but in breaking it up into fragments and insisting that some one fragment was the whole. When men go back to Jesus' message

of the Kingdom, they always find in it some truth hitherto neglected, on which the new knowledge and the new truth can base themselves. There is room within its borders for all the meanings which men have found in it or will find. All fulfillments of the divine purpose were foreshadowed by Jesus when he spoke of the kingdom of God."⁸

This glorious object of creative endeavor Jesus holds before us, and brings very near to us. He makes it worthy of the noblest heroism and costliest sacrifice, but he also relates it to the common tasks of the passing day, the cup of cold water given to the thirsty, the treatment of the sick and the stranger. It is something to which we can all contribute by our prayers, by our faithfulness in unpleasant duty, and by the spirit we introduce into ordinary relations. If it challenges by its magnificence, it charms by its immanence. We may begin to-day those labors which will have their part in the preparation for the divine society.

The power of that appeal has already been felt by many in our generation, and they have literally left all and followed Him. Others will follow in their train when preachers and teachers of religion with sympathy and understanding actually lift up the Christ as the pioneer and revealer of the everlasting but ever present Kingdom. We shall then witness a still larger fulfillment of the ancient expectation that he "will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just." For there is, in the Jesus of the Kingdom-hope, that which can captivate the most significant creative impulses in the heart of man.

5. Other things are necessary if the full power with which God has endowed men is to be released for moral and spiritual achievement.

(a) Failure must be reckoned with. The high challenge of Jesus begets holy purpose. The low moods and unresolved conflicts within personality defeat that purpose. Instead of achievement there is frustration; instead of righteousness, sin. A sense of guilt arises. With it the self cannot live in comfort. Unless forgiveness can be assured and the sense of guilt purged away, there will be an effort more or less successful to repress it. If completely repressed, it becomes a crippling complex. If only partially buried, it remains a haunting memory which operates in turn as a plaguing source of continued temptation. "Few things so disintegrate our lives and so paralyze our effort for the future as self-reproach and remorse about the past."⁹ It is psychologically true, as ministers and psychiatrists alike know, that when the assurance of forgiveness is effectively conveyed, men do "rise to walk in newness of life."

That Jesus is effective here all generations including the present testify. Despite all theological difficulties the cross whereon he died comes to men as the climax of a matchless series of lessons on the forgiving love of God. "Calvary was not a deed done to move God to take pity on men. It was the Great Teacher's last and

⁸ Pp. 192, 194, Scott, *The Kingdom of God in the New Testament*.

⁹ Barry, *Christianity and Psychology*, p. 82.

sublimest utterance to man about the everlasting pity and patience of God."¹⁰ In its presence men receive assurance that their penitence is met with pardon. If the heart of God is anything like the heart broken on that "hill lone and gray," it will not refuse forgiveness even to the worst of returning prodigals. That is the conviction which made our fathers sing,

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away."

We may choose a different metaphor to express our experience, but through all changes in phraseology the old meaning abides. There is cleansing at the cross!

(b) Significant, too, is the function of Jesus as a creator of the faith-attitude which is indispensable to a life of moral and spiritual victory. One who has had great success in dealing with personal problems declares: "Those who are finding difficulty in attaining a personality in harmony with their conscience are not obsessed by metaphysical or theological difficulties, but with the difficulty of psychological development. . . . They have lost all faith in their own ability. Hence into their very being must be introduced the faith that not their love to God but his love to them . . . must be their sure foundation."¹¹

Great moral achievement depends upon the persistent mood of faith. Such a mood easily becomes a habit where men are certain of a divine ally. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The assurance of divine love streaming from Christ's life and death has supplied to a multitude that confidence which has marshaled all their powers in the service of increasing moral victory, and in consecration to the welfare of their fellow men.

CONCLUSION

This is what Jesus means to us. This is what he does for us, not because we are different from any of God's children anywhere, but because we have tried to understand him and live in spiritual fellowship with him. If similar convictions and results have not been wrought in a multitude who have professed his name, it must be because they have caught but a limited and distorted view of him as the result of false interpretations of him in the teaching and practice of the home, the school, the church, and the professedly Christian members of society; because he has been to them only a vague figure in a drama of redemption, an object of emotional reverie and sentimental worship instead of the searchingly ethical Jesus of the gospels; because they have hastily and constantly turned away, in impatience, from the costly moral challenge, and in fear of the social reconstruction which his discipleship may involve. Aware, as we are, of our oneness with all humanity, its weakness, its limitations, its baffling problems, its searching temptations, we are compelled

¹⁰ *Contemporary Preaching*, p. 162.

¹¹ Mackenzie, p. 890, *Souls in the Making*.

to believe that One who has discovered for us so much meaning, and helped us to incarnate it in our lives, will become to all who grant him a permanent and pre-eminent place at the center of the self, the dynamic of a vigorous and ever-expanding moral and spiritual life. The task is upon the church to effect so radical a revision of educational and evangelistic methods, of preaching and services of worship, that youth and age alike will become acquainted with the real Jesus. And the challenge to all of us who are his followers is to exhibit, in lives of costly devotion, an enthusiasm for him which will awaken in the indifferent and the hostile an eagerness to know him which shall lead to a discovery of, and a dedication to, his way of life.

QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS PROPOSED FOR USE IN DISCUSSION GROUPS

Questions

1. Do you agree with the paper in its statement of the fundamental drives or impulses in human behavior?
2. Is it fair to say that Jesus, alone of the great religious teachers, arouses men at these elemental levels?
3. What, do you think, accounts for the incandescent enthusiasm of the Communist youth in Russia? Does it throw any light on our problem?
4. What place in your thought is occupied by the actual historical Jesus?
5. How far do you consider his miraculous birth, miracle-working, physical resurrection, sinlessness, essential to his personality?
6. In what fact does the authority of Jesus lie, if any?
7. How can a first-century Galilæan Peasant have anything to offer our twentieth-century world?
8. What do you understand by Jesus' phrase, "the kingdom of God"?
9. In what sense, if any, can sins be forgiven?
10. What difference does your thought of Jesus make in your actual, everyday life?

Projects

1. Read Cabot's *What Men Live By*, and prepare your own statement as to how Jesus fits into the scheme of that discussion.
2. Reproduce twenty studies from William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience* illustrating the power of Jesus in changing lives.
3. Procure statements from a representative group in your church on the topic "What Jesus Means to Me," and then correlate the answers with the discussion in this paper.

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