

The Concrete Christ

India is the land of mysticism. You feel it in the very air. Jesus was the supreme mystic. The Unseen was real to him. He spent all night in prayer and communion with the Father. He lived in God and God lived in him. When he said 'I and the Father are one' you feel it is so. Jesus the mystic appeals to India, the land of mysticism. But Jesus the mystic was amazingly concrete and practical. Into an atmosphere filled with speculation and wordy disputation where men are often drunk with the wine of their own wordiness he brings the refreshing sense of practical reality. He taught but he did not speculate. He never used such words as 'perhaps', 'maybe', or 'I think so'. Even his words had a concrete feeling about them. They fell upon the soul with authority of certainty.

He did not discourse on the sacredness of motherhood - he suckled as a babe at his mother's breast, and that scene has forever consecrated motherhood.

He did not argue that life was a growth and character an attainment - he 'grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man'.

He did not speculate on why temptation should be in this world - he met it and after forty days struggle in the wilderness he conquered and 'returned in the power of the spirit to Galilee'.

He did not discourse on the dignity of labor - he worked at a carpenter's bench and his hands were hard with the toil of making yokes and plows, and this forever makes the toil of the hands honorable.

We do not find him discoursing on the necessity of letting one's light shine at home among kinsmen and friends - he announced his program of uplift and healing at Nazareth, his own home, and those who heard 'wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth'. As he came among men he did not try to prove the existence of God - he brought him. He lived in God and men looking upon his face could not find it within themselves to doubt God.

He did not argue as Socrates, the immortality of the soul - he raised the dead.

He did not speculate on how God was a Trinity - he said 'If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you'. Here the Trinity - "I", "Spirit of God", "God" - was not something to be speculated about but was a working force for redemption - the casting out of devils and bringing in of the Kingdom.

He did not teach in a didactic way about the worth of children - he put his hands upon them and setting one in their midst tersely said 'of such is the Kingdom of God', and he raised them from the dead.

He did not argue that God answers prayer - he prayed sometimes all night and in the morning 'the power of the Lord was present to heal'.

He did not paint in glowing colours the beauties of friendship and the need for human sympathy - he wept at the grave of his friend.

He did not argue the worth of womanhood and the necessity for giving them equal rights - he treated them with infinite respect, gave to them his most sublime teaching, and when he arose from the dead he appeared first to a woman.

He did not teach in a schoolroom manner the necessity of humility - he 'girded himself with a towel and washed his disciples feet'.

He did not discuss the question of the worth of personality as we do today - he loved and served persons.

He did not discourse on the equal worth of personality - he went to the poor and outcast and ate with them.

He did not prove how pain and sorrow in the universe could be compatible with the love of God - he took on himself at the cross everything that spoke against the love of God and through that pain and tragedy and sin showed the very love of God.

He did not discourse on how the weakest human material can be transformed and made to contribute to the welfare of the world - he called to himself a set of weak men as the Galilean fishermen, transformed them and sent them out to begin the mightiest movement for uplift and redemption the world has ever seen.

He wrote no books - only once are we told that he wrote and that was in the sand - but he wrote upon the hearts and consciences of people about him and it has become the world's most precious writing.

He did not paint a utopia, far off and unrealizable - he announced that the Kingdom of heaven is within us and is at hand and can be realized here and now.

John sent to him from prison and asked whether he was the one who was to come or should they

look for another? Jesus did not argue the question with the disciples of John - he simply and quietly said 'go and tell John what you see, the blind receive sight, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.' His arguments were the facts produced. He did not discourse on the beauty of love - he loved.

We do not find him arguing that the spiritual life should conquer matter - he walked on water. He greatly felt the pressing necessity of the physical needs of the people around him, but he did not merely speak on their behalf - he fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes. They bring in to him a man with a double malady - sick in body and stricken more deeply in his conscience because of sin. Jesus attended first of all to the deepest malady and said 'thy sins are forgiven thee' In answer to the objections of the people he said 'which is easier to say, thy sins are forgiven thee or take up thy bed and walk?' And that they might know that the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins he said to the palsied man 'Take up thy bed and walk'. The outward concrete miracle was the pledge of the inward.

Jesus has been called the Son of Fact. We find striking illustration of his concreteness at the Judgement seat. To those on the right he does not say 'you believed in me and my doctrines therefore come be welcome into my kingdom'. Instead he says 'I was hungered and you gave me food, I was athirst, and you gave me drink; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came unto me; a stranger and you took me in; naked and you clothed me.' These sons of fact, true followers of his were unable to obtain heaven through a possible mistake and so they objected and said 'when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee, thirsty and gave thee drink, sick and visited thee? and the Master answered 'Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these ye did it unto me'. He was not only concrete himself, he demanded a concrete life from those who were followers.

He told us that the human soul was worth more than the whole material universe, and when he had crossed a storm tossed lake to find a storm tossed soul ridden with devils he did not hesitate to sacrifice the 2000 swine to save this one lost man.

he did not argue the possibility of sinlessness - he presented himself and said 'which of you convinceth me of sin?'

He did not merely ask men to turn the other cheek when smitten on the one, to go the second mile when compelled to go one, to give the cloak also when sued at the law and the coat was taken away, to love our enemies and bless them - he himself did that very thing. The servants struck him on one cheek, he offered the other and the soldiers struck him on that; they compelled him to go with them one mile - from gethsemane to the judgement hall - he went with them two even to calvary. They took away his coat at the judgement hall and he gave them his seamless robe at the cross; and in the agony of the cruel torture of the cross he prayed for his enemies 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do'.

He did not merely tell us that death need have no terror for us - he rose from the dead, and lo now the tomb glows with light.

Many teachers of the world have tried to explain everything - they changed little or nothing. Jesus explained little and changed everything.

Many teachers have tried to diagnose the disease of humanity - Jesus cures it.

Many teachers have told us why the patient is suffering and that he should bear with fortitude - Jesus tells him to take up his bed and walk.

many philosophers speculate on how evil entered the world- Jesus presents himself as the way by which it shall leave.

He did not go into long discussions about the Way to God and the possibility of finding him - he quietly said 'I am the Way'.

Many speculate with Pilate and ask 'what is truth?' Jesus shows himself and says 'I am the Truth'. Jesus defines physical life itself by presenting himself and saying 'I am the Life'. Anyone who truly looks upon him knows in the inmost depths of his soul that he is looking on life itself.

There is no deeper need in India and the world today than just this practical mysticism that Jesus brings to bear upon the problems of life. 'No man is strong who does not bear within himself antithesis strongly marked' The merely mystical man is weak and the merely practical man is weak, but Jesus the practical Mystic, glowing with God and yet stooping in loving service to men, is Strength Incarnate.

It is no wonder that India, tired of speculation, turns unconsciously toward him, the mystic Servant of all.