

**THE CHRISTIAN
ADVENTURE,
PP. 1-133**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649507726

The Christian Adventure, pp. 1-133 by A. Herbert Gray

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A. HERBERT GRAY

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THE CHRISTIAN ADVENTURE

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ASSOCIATION PRESS
NEW YORK: 347 MADISON AVENUE
1920

PREFACE

THERE are no arguments about the truth of Christianity in this book. It is wholly concerned with the preliminary question, "What is Christianity?"

I have had uncounted discussions with men and women about the truth of Christianity, and in the vast proportion of them I have found that they were talking about one thing while I was talking about another.

Sometimes I have found myself hoping devoutly that the thing which my interrogators called Christianity could *not* be proved true.

Therefore in these pages I have confined myself to an effort to present the message of Jesus as He gave it to the world. Within the limits set to me it has not been possible to do more than write a series of outlines, and I am painfully aware that no single topic has been adequately handled.

Yet I hope that what I have written may at least suggest to some that Christianity embodies the one summons to men and women that is adequate to their humanity, and that it offers to the race the one hope of solving all the problems of civilization.

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Once men and women have really accepted Christianity so conceived, it is my faith that they will very soon offer to the world a demonstration of its truth beyond all challenge.

A. H. G.

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CHAPTER I

JESUS

THE man who would understand Christianity must begin by understanding Jesus. Churches, creeds, and theologies are secondary affairs, however important. No man can know whether or no Christianity offers him the great things which in his heart he wants until he has faced Jesus and come to know both what Jesus was, and what Jesus offers. Churches frequently make mistakes. Creeds are never more than partially successful attempts to state truths. But Jesus either was or was not the embodiment of the essential secret of life, and while churches may come and go, and while creeds may change again and again, Christianity stands or falls by mankind's judgment on Him.

His Selflessness.—Almost at a first glance Jesus presents us with a strange combination. On the one hand, He quietly assumed an absolute authority; and on the other, He was entirely without self-regard in the ordinary sense. He never sought anything for Himself, and was serene in spirit though He had no status in society, no certain means of livelihood, and no security for life itself. In most men, even though they be good men, there is an undercurrent of thought about self which every

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now and then becomes apparent. In Jesus no such thoughts appear. He gave Himself lavishly to others, and never seemed to stop to consider what the world might think of Him. He was so free from vanity that the opinion of men actually did not matter to Him. Such a thing as jealousy is unthinkable in connection with Him. He did not plan out a career for Himself, and of what we call personal ambition there was no trace in all His life.

He did indeed reveal to His disciples¹ that once at the beginning of His public life He had a great struggle over this matter. At that point, when a full sense of His powers first came to Him, His human self made a very stubborn effort at self-assertion. He was racked and tossed for days on end by the familiar ambitions of great human spirits. The prospects of worldly dominion and of dazzling outward fame danced before His imagination; and a fight, grim and lonely, had to be faced before He subdued self altogether. The fight may have been renewed in secret again and again in after days, but it never came to the surface. To on-lookers self seemed to be dead in Him altogether. He was content even to be despised, because He sought nothing for Himself.

The ablest and most virile of men will best be able to realize how much that means. Ambition is the last infirmity of noble minds, because for them the great ambitions are possibilities. But the

¹ It is obvious that the disciples can only have known about the Temptation because Jesus, for reasons of His own, for once broke through His reserve and told them that tremendous story of His own inner life.