

# Christianity to Me:

## Approaching God in Love

### CHRISTIANISME POUR MOI :

### S'APPROCHER DE DIEU DANS L'AMOUR

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**Abstract:** In the history of humanity, numerous kings and emperors founded their empires upon force, which caused untold human disasters, but Jesus Christ, who lived in poverty and was reared in obscurity, founded his empire upon love, which brings people hope, peace, and joy. Jesus Christ is the founder of Christianity. Jesus Christ, the Lord and savior of humanity, is the greatest central fact in the world's history. As we all know, the whole world uses the birth year of Jesus Christ as a standard for our calendar. The names of the past proud statesmen of Greece and Rome have come and gone. The names of past scientists, philosopher have come and gone; but the name of this Man abounds more and more. Christianity has brought humanity new hope, and can save people from moral decay. Christians are the messengers of God's love and peace to the world. Christ showed us what love is, and we are justified by his love, grace and sacrifice. Our hearts are purified by His love and we are no more the hopeless. Christianity plays a very important role in human civilization. The cornerstone of Christianity is love, and as we know, love conquers everything and in love, leaders and common people are equal in dignity, comrades and dissidents respect each other, and victors and losers coexist peacefully. Love is the sole hope and power to change this world into a better place. With love and piety, people can approach God and live their lives perfectly.

**Key words:** love, peace, God, Jesus Christ, Christianity

**Résumé:** Dans l'histoire humaine, d'innombrables empereurs ont fondé de vive force leur royaume, tout en apportant à l'humanité des douleurs indicibles. Mais Jésus-Christ, qui est né dans la misère et a grandi dans une famille humble, a établi son propre royaume dans l'amour et a apporté à l'homme de nouvelles espérance, paix et joie. Bien que l'Eglise chrétienne n'ait pas été fondée, non par Jésus-Christ lui-même, mais par ses apôtres et disciples, il est le maître de l'Eglise. Le prêcheur britannique réputé Charles Spurgeon indique de façon pénétrante que Jésus-Christ est le fait central le plus important dans l'histoire humaine. Aujourd'hui, le monde entier considère l'année de sa naissance comme la première année de l'ère chrétienne et le jour de sa renaissance le jour de repos, ce qui est unique dans l'histoire humaine. Les noms de grands hommes politiques de la Grèce et du Rome ont déjà disparu, ceux des scientifiques et des historiens célèbres se sont effacés, mais cet homme, les gens qui connaissent son nom sont de plus en plus nombreux. Jésus, tout en délivrant l'homme de la disparition de la morale, lui a apporté de la nouvelle vie. Les chrétiens, comme messagers de l'amour et de la paix, diffusent l'amour de Dieu dans le monde. Jésus nous montre son amour désintéressé. Son amour, sa grâce et son sang nous aident à nous débarrasser de nos malveillances et nous apportent de la nouvelle vie et de l'espérance. Le christianisme joue un rôle important dans l'histoire de la civilisation humaine, parce que le principe de cette religion est l'amour. Dans l'amour, les dirigeants et les civils sont égaux, les camarades et les adversaires se respectent, les triomphateurs et les perdants coexistent pacifiquement. Seul un tel amour est capable de rendre notre monde meilleur. Quand il est rempli d'amour et de ferveur, l'homme pourrait s'approcher, dans la vie parfaite, du créateur de l'univers.

**Mots-Clés:** amour, paix, Dieu, Jésus-Christ, christianisme

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\* Received 12 August 2007; accepted 24 November 2007

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As we all know, the whole world uses the birth year of Jesus Christ as a standard for our calendar. The first year of Anno Domini we use today was calculated in A.D. 525 by Dionysius, the leader of the Roman Seminary. The disciples of Jesus Christ started Christianity in the decade after Jesus was crucified, and believed to be resurrected and ascended to heaven. Even though Jesus himself didn't establish the Christian church, those who accepted Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord established it; thus, Jesus is still the Lord of the church. The church started in Jerusalem and then spread to Judea, Samaria, and to the rest of the world.

Nowadays, the name "Jesus Christ" is no longer strange to most of us, as there are a total of 1.93 billion people worshipping Him. The name "Christian" originates from Christ. But what do Christians believe? What are the basic beliefs of Christianity? Although there may be some dissensions in different Christian churches, all Christians believe that God created the heavens and earth out of a great void as the holy Bible states; thus, Christians believe that God has inspired the sixty-six books of the *Old and New Testaments* of the Bible and the Bible is the only standard for all believers in their daily lives and their beliefs.

Christians believe in only one true God who exists in the Trinity composed of the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit. Because Adam and Eve, the very first people God created in his image, sinned against God, they were exiled out of Eden and ever since then the relationship between God and human beings has been severed. For, according to Christianity, God is holy and righteous and he will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.

Christians also believe that Jesus Christ is God's only begotten son, our savior, who was sent by God to save humanity, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, was crucified, dead and rose again from the dead after three days. He suffered by taking all the sins of humanity onto himself and accepting the judgment of God. Jesus Christ sacrificed himself for all humanity in order to accomplish the plan of salvation of God. For whoever believes in Jesus Christ, the blood he shed on the cross will wash away their sins, qualify them as children of God, and allow them to live eternally. As Jesus says in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"; and in John 12:46-47, Jesus says, "I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness. I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."

## 2. CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

### 2.1 Christian morality

People living in different cultures do many things and view things very differently, but most people value love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; which are the fruits of the Holy spirit according to Galatians 5:22. As the Bible says there is no law against such things. How could there be such unity in our moral standards despite our geographic and political differences?

According to Jeremiah 31:33, God says, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they will be My people," and "In that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them" (Romans 2:15). Thus, God has created a common foundation for morality and conscience by putting His law in the hearts of all people so that they are able to distinguish between right and wrong. Jesus Christ commands us to be holy and perfect, for God himself is holy and perfect, and God reveals the highest standard of morality to mankind by the perfect life Jesus Christ lived. As what Jesus claims in the Bible people who have his commandments and keep them are those who love him and also they will abide in his love. To live one's life up to the commandments of Jesus Christ is the goal of every Christian.

### 2.2 How do Christians live their lives?

In the history of Christianity, there have been numerous saints who devoted themselves to their belief and showed great faith in God. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to meet some wonderful and faithful Christians with love, compassion, and sincerity in the past five years. Firstly, I would love to tell you about my first best Christian friend, Lisa, who is an American lady with great love, sympathy, and a strong sense of responsibility. She is more like a mother than a sister to me. She worked for an organization of charity, for giving to the poor is an essential part of Christian morality, in Africa for two years. She volunteered to work for another organization of charity in Yunnan Province and helped some village people with agricultural skills such as how to take good care of domestic animals or crops. She was always nice, kind, sweet to whomever she met and lived her life as the Bible taught. The separation between her and me is a kind of sweet sorrow after we lived apart from each other, although I had many good cries because of the long time good-bye, my heart is full of sweet memories of her and I will never forget the love she had for me.

Now I am going to tell you about a Christian couple who are almost as beautiful as angels to me. Although I do not have any personal relationship with them, what they have done has been engraved in my mind forever. This couple is from a very rich family in America. The man was a very famous football player when he was young and the lady's father was the governor of Louisiana, but they left their comfort to help the poor in Yunnan Province. They built schools and adopted orphans and helped as many people as they could with their cheerful spirit. One day the lady was walking on the street and happened to see two little boys were eating something from a trash can. Her eyes burst into tears and she was so shocked by the sight. So she could not help taking them back home and adopted them as her own children. I was so touched when I heard this and I was so thankful that there are some people like her in this world to love and help the homeless or helpless. This couple has been always so generous to help hundreds of orphans and provided them with opportunities to go to school and good living conditions like their own.

Moreover, I cannot wait to tell you about all the people who work in Project Grace, which is an international organization of Christians. There are more than a hundred Christians from different countries volunteering to work for it and to help people in need. Some of them are very skilled doctors or nurses who bring their families with them to China for the responsibility of being a Christian. Following the call of their hearts, they come to give, help, serve... They go to some isolated lepers villages to teach them how to take care of themselves and how to deal with wounds, train them to be people with knowledge of medical skills and teaching. They help some lepers who lack the ability to work or people of advanced years with housework, such as cleaning the house and washing clothes... They also give them medicine, money, and necessities for daily life. They treat people whoever come to their clinic for free and even help them to pay money to go to hospital if they do not have medical equipment they can apply for patients. They also provide the disabled with artificial limbs. They not only heal patients' illnesses but also their hearts by using medical skills and their enduring love, patience, and compassion.

I met some patients when I was a volunteer there before last summer and I was so impressed by almost every patient, especially a girl called Zhou Ping who had one leg amputated. She had no hair because of bone cancer. She was so encouraging to people around her. She had the most beautiful, shining smile I have ever seen in my life. Her faith in God, the creator of the heavens and earth, was out of reach of any kind of disasters. I have a picture of her on my desk lamp and I enjoy looking at her smiling and peaceful face, which always reminds me of the countless blessings in my daily life. Four of my good friends from three different countries also work in Project Grace. One helps lepers and some other patients, one trains teachers from

villages or small towns, another two are involved with the area of AIDS. I remember once my friend's student, who is from a small remote village in Yunnan Province, needed money to go to college. She gave 8000 yuan to help her to realize her dream, but my friend herself is a very plain girl with simple clothing and simple food.

Another dear Christian friend of mine was a foreign teacher in Wuhan one and half years ago. She was so afraid of the severe cold in winter here because she was a vegetarian. But she felt reluctant to turn on air-conditioners for she felt guilty as her students did not have them and she did not pay any money for the electricity. And once she heard a little girl in Shanghai had blood cancer, she gave her money away instead of spending a holiday in Thailand. There are unnumbered cases such as these, so there is no way to list or reveal them.

As the scourge of terrorism and hegemony is more acutely felt, messengers of God are quietly devoting their lives to make this world a better place. Many Christians have gone to different countries wave upon wave amid much misunderstanding, hostility and hardship. They have made sacrifices and some have even died in foreign countries. Why did they do this? Was it for money? No, they were givers. Was it for some power? No, they were critics of the powers. Was it for fame? No, they left their comfort to quietly serve and some of them even died and their bones lie in eternal peace in foreign countries. Their names were not recorded in historical records and their posterity will not get any pension. So what were they really after?

There is only one answer to these questions: Jesus Christ also came and showed great love to people, and died on the cross to fulfill the plan of God's salvation.

### **2.3 How could some people fail to follow the moral law and live their lives ruthlessly?**

The Russian writer Dostoyevsky stated: If there were no God, everything would be permissible. The denial of the existence of God has encouraged the ethic of ruthless competition that underlay such evils as German and Japanese militarism. When people think themselves as animals they act as animals at the same time. Without piety and the fear of God, the hearts of people become as brutal and despicable as they can possibly be. Romans 1:28-32 says: "...and since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, and malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanders, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, and ruthless. They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die – yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them." These biblical

verses reveal to us clearly, the root of all evil originates from the denial of God, the creator of the universe.

A famous thinker, Francis Bacon once wrote: "They that deny God destroy man's nobility; for certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body; and if he be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature. It destroys likewise magnanimity, and the raising of human nature; for take an example of a dog, and mark what generosity and courage he will put on when he finds himself maintained by a man, who to him is instead of a god, or melior natural; which courage is manifestly such as that creature, without that confidence of a better nature than his own, could never attain." (OF ATHEISM)

To atheism, there is no universal love, nor is there forgiveness. Justice comes from weapons, and conspiracy is regarded as wisdom and conflict as glory. This belief is based upon a narrow-minded spirit where superiors are respected, subordinates are humbled, dissidents are not tolerated, victors become rulers and losers must hide or run.

### **3. WHAT IS THE CORNERSTONE OF CHRISTIANITY?**

#### **3.1 The two most important commandments in the Bible**

When a scribe asked Jesus Christ, "which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Mark 12: 29-31)

#### **3.2 The Biblical definition of Love**

Love, the most charming and sweetest word, is used by all ages of people around the world, profaned likewise when people use it cheaply and lose its meaning. So is the Biblical definition of love? Corinthians 13:4-8 says: "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never ends.

These simple and concise words are so easy for people to read, but how many of them have understood the deepest meaning of Love or how many of them have owned some characteristics of it? Let us take an example of 'Love is patient'. We are often mad at each other just for trifles, no matter how a parent loves his or her child, no matter how a spouse loves his or her consort, no matter how a friend loves his or her friend.

The love of us is so light and limited. How could we get angry so easily and turn away from people once we loved so much or once we swore to love forever? Is that really love? Is love just saying, not doing? Can what we do really show what love is? Have we truly learned to love?

#### **3.3 The comparison between God's love and people's love**

Have you ever read the story of Jesus Christ? If not, have you watched the movie 'Passion' directed by Mel Gibson? Were you touched by Jesus Christ's amazing love and grace after you watched it? Yes, I was. I am deeply affected by His love. Jesus Christ chose to die for us when we still rejected him and did not know him, taunted him, abused him... But nothing changed His love for us. Even when the group of murderers tortured him so awfully and nailed him on the cross, he showed no anger or hatred at all, but love. He even prayed to God for the forgiveness of His murderers for they did not know what they were doing. No one can love sinners, but God proves His love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Here, how do you explain, how do you describe, a love that goes from east to west, and runs as deep as it is wide? Can anything in this world be compared with God's love? This kind of love is nonexistent and beyond comparison in this world; it can only come from heaven. Jesus Christ, our savior, loves us according to what he claims love is. With Jesus as a mirror, no one can dare claim to have attained God's standard of "loving your neighbor as yourself".

The Chinese sage Confucius once said, "If you do not like it, do not give it to other people." Though this statement is correct, it is also passive. Jesus Christ asked us to love others as ourselves, to actively love others. In this world, some people also follow the principle, "We will not attack unless we are attacked; if we are attacked, we will certainly counter-attack." But Jesus teaches us to love our enemies, do good to those who hate us, bless those who curse us, pray for those who abuse us. He also says "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. (Luke 6:27-36) Indeed, nothing approaches the love of God for us.

To most people, in response to someone who does not return our love in kind, we might stop communication with them or some may take 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' as their principle. We have often heard that there is no love in this world; that the relationships among people are just built on money,

power, and interest. People judge people from their position, possessions, power, capabilities, clothing... There has been an undesirable trend in recent years towards the worship of money. Obviously, wealth is not the sole prerequisite for happiness and even for some reason does harm to the relationships in different families.

When people are guided by materialistic, utilitarian relativist, and opportunist beliefs that the universe consists only of matter and no God, that man has only this physical life and no spirit, that history is only a series of ruthless competitions and that there is no final judgment, why should people strive for integrity and purity, repent for their sins and abide by permanent and holy values? When people believe in that, this world is just like an accident, human beings are just the product of evolution, people are their own saviors, man can conquer everything, survival belongs to the fittest, there is no so-called right and wrong, and people should not complain of suffering and injustice. For there is no God, there is no truth, there is no point of complaint, there should not be questions like "Why I am here? What is the purpose of my life? Why is there death?"

#### 4. WHAT CAN CHRISTIANITY BRING TO US?

Matteo Ricci came to China more than 400 years ago, in 1582. He was not an envoy of the Italian government, nor was he a distinguished guest of China. Rather, as a messenger of God, he went right into the lowest stratum of Chinese society and spent 20 years in Zaoqing of Guangdong Province. Twenty years later, he preached in Beijing and converted many to Christianity, including Prime Minister Xu Guangqi, Minister of the Water Department Li Zhizao, and Yang Tingyun, Supervisor of Magistrates. These messengers of God also brought science to China. Matteo Ricci wrote a dozen books and taught geometry, astronomy, music, painting, irrigation and cannon technology. Joseph Needham, author of the famous book, *Science and Civilization in China*, commented that since Jesuit missionaries entered China, the science of China and the science of the west became mingled together. Ricci was buried in Beijing and his name was recorded in the official historical records of the Ming Dynasty. His life belongs to China.

Christianity is about love, and as we know, love conquers everything and in love, leaders and common

people are equal in dignity, comrades and dissidents respect each other, and victors and losers coexist peacefully. Only before God can mankind live with real equality. A balance of power is achieved when we recognize that we are by no means perfect. Mutual acceptance can only be based on the fact that we are all God's children, and human dignity comes from the recognition that we are made in the image of God. Only before God can a man truly be a man; no one can become God or trash.

Christianity can save people out of moral decay. There is no way fortune, science and law can replace man's conscience, spiritual salvation and the promotion of virtue. But it cannot be denied that where there are Christians, there is love, peace, forgiveness, repentance, praises and songs of joy. Christianity itself is beyond nationalities. We are the world; we are a part of God's big family. We are united in Jesus Christ, the savior of humanity. People who come from different countries and races have different names and faces are called by the same name – Christian.

For God is love, God's children are the kin of love in like manner. We express our love through our work, families, friends, and through what we have to give to the world. We are sons and daughters of God, here to teach this world how to love. We are here to preach the gospel of love, peace, joy, life...

#### 5. CONCLUSION

With love and piety, the hearts of people could be as kind and compassionate as they can possibly be. Love can tolerate imperfection. Love is meant for our imperfect world where things go wrong. Love is meant to be a spirit that works in painful situations. Love is meant to bring meaning into life where nonsense appears to reign. Love comes into an imperfect world to make it livable. Love is freeing, love is expansive. Love is hope, the sole hope and power to make this world a better place for our posterity. Love brings the world peace, happiness, joy, and prosperity.

For God is love, we can only approach to God in love. Finding the headwaters of love, your heart will be filled by the spring of love. Love brings you joy, and the spring of joy flows out of your heart ceaselessly. Joy will bring you peace, and peace will bring you a peaceful, prosperous, and meaningful life. Love can do the same for society.

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