



JESUS AND THE INTELLECTUAL

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JESUS AND THE INTELLECTUAL

Who, in your opinion, is the most outstanding personality of all time? I have posed this question to people of many religions, even atheists and Communists around the world. The answer from all knowledgeable people is always the same: "Jesus of Nazareth."

I recall the response of a young radical attending the University of California, Berkeley. The campus was the fountainhead of the turbulent student revolution during the 1960's. For an entire week, six hundred of our Campus Crusade staff and students personally shared the claims of Christ in small and large meetings with approximately 23,000 students. Thousands expressed their desire to receive and follow Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

Early in the week I interviewed the acknowledged leader of the revolution. She had been born into a non-Christian religion and was a dedicated atheist and committed Communist, demanding the violent overthrow of our government.



I asked her, "Who is the greatest person who has ever lived? Who in all of history has done the most good for mankind?"

There was a long awkward silence and finally a reluctant reply, "I guess I would have to say Jesus of Nazareth."

People of every religion, if they know the facts, acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the unique personality of all time.

He is the One who has changed the whole course of history. History is His story.

Remove Jesus of Nazareth from history, and it would be a completely different story.

Consider today's date on your calendar. It gives witness to the fact that Jesus of Nazareth lived on the earth. B.C. means "Before Christ," and A.D., anno Domini, is the Latin phrase translated "in the year of our Lord."

No other person has influenced the world for good more than Jesus Christ. Wherever His true message has gone, great changes have taken place in the lives of men and nations.

One writer described Christ's influence in this way:

"Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone and today He is the center-piece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched and all the navies that ever were built, and all of the parliaments that ever have sat, and all the kings that ever reigned put together have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life, Jesus of Nazareth."

During His Ministry, Jesus made many claims about



Himself. He said, for example, that He was equal with God the Father, eternal, and the only way to heaven. Almost everyone who knows anything about Jesus would admit that He had a profound influence on the world. But was He more than just a teacher and leader? Let us examine the evidence surrounding His claims.

JESUS -- MAN, MYTH, OR GOD?

Perhaps you have wondered, Is Christianity really established upon historical facts? Dr. Clifford Herbert Moore, former professor at Harvard University writes:

"Christianity knew its Savior and Redeemer, not as some god whose history was contained in a mythical faith, with rude, primitive and even offensive elements. The Christian's faith is founded on positive, historical and acceptable facts."

A long list could be made of such outstanding scholars who devoutly followed Christ. Dr. William Lyon Phelps, a professor at Yale University for forty years and one of the most distinguished educators in the history of our country, expressed his confidence in the historical evidence concerning the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and frequently shared his personal faith in Christ as Savior and Lord.

It is true that there are men - among them some of the world's most honored scholars - who do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, our Savior. But I am appalled when I talk to many of these men about Christ, for I discover that almost always they are ignorant of the basic truths of the gospel. If you would read any of the writings of Robert Ingersoll, Thomas Paine, or other well-known skeptics, you would be amazed to discover that these men are taking issue with something they do not fully understand. They have erected straw men, labeled them Christians, and then have proceeded to destroy their own creations.

Any reputable argument for the validity of Christianity stands or falls on the proof of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. It is for this reason that His resurrection has been ridiculed and contested through the centuries by all kinds of skeptics. It is for the same reason that men of faith from all walks of life and disciplines of learning have dedicated their entire lives to proving that Jesus truly was raised from the dead.

Learn about the several irrefutable evidences that have brought me to the firm conviction that Jesus was raised from the dead, thereby proving Himself to be the Son of God.

EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE

Many cynics and skeptics deny the claims of Christ. I have met people who are militantly antagonistic toward Him, though I must say that they are in the great minority. Some of them say that He is just a myth or that He is a great man and nothing more. They ridicule the Bible and make fun of those who worship Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

One of the best known skeptics of this century was C.S. Lewis, professor at Oxford University. For years, he was an agnostic who denied the deity of Christ. After a long process of searching for answers, he received Christ as his Savior and Lord. Later he wrote many outstanding books advocating belief in Christ as Savior.

In Mere Christianity, Lewis states:

"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things that Jesus said wouldn't be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the level of a man who says he's a poached egg -- or else he would be the devil of hell; you must take your choice."

ACCEPTING THE TRUTH

I have yet to meet a man who has honestly considered the overwhelming evidence concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who does not admit that He is the Son of God. While some do not believe, they are honest in confessing, "I have not taken the time to read the Bible or consider the historical facts concerning Jesus." Their attitude is founded upon an unfortunate childhood experience, the inconsistency of some Christian, or perhaps the influence of a college professor; but they admit that they have not honestly and sincerely considered the person of Jesus Christ and His claims on their lives.

Consider these passages concerning Jesus of Nazareth, taken from the Word of God: Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews 1:1-2, and Ephesians 1:9-10.

In my quest for truth concerning the resurrection of Jesus, I discovered that many great scholars have believed, and do believe, in His resurrection. After



examining the evidence for the resurrection given by the gospel writers, the late Simon Greenleaf, an authority in jurisprudence at Harvard Law School, concluded, "It was therefore impossible that they [the early Christians] could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact."

Dr. William Lyon Phelps wrote, "It may be said that the historical evidence for the resurrection is stronger than for any other miracle anywhere narrated."

John Singleton Copley, recognized as one of the greatest legal minds in British history, comments, "I know pretty well what evidence is, and I tell you, such evidence as that for the resurrection has never broken down yet."

These evidences satisfied my questions on the validity of the resurrection, and as a result, I invited the living Christ to come into my life almost fifty years ago.

Some years after I made my commitment to Christ as Savior and Lord, I sat in an empty tomb in Jerusalem - the tomb in which many believe the body of Jesus of Nazareth was laid the day of His crucifixion. It has been empty for almost 2,000 years.

I had gone to this garden tomb with great excitement. Somehow I felt that there I would meet with my Lord in a unique and special way. I anticipated that He would manifest Himself to me as in no other place, at no other time. Silently, I waited alone. Nothing happened. I was disappointed.

Then I remembered the words of those angelic beings who spoke to the women on that first Easter morning, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen" (Luke 24:5,6 NASB). Then I understood, as I never quite understood before, that Jesus of Nazareth, the risen Christ, was present in that tomb just as He was and is present in any other part of the world where men place their faith and trust in Him. Yes, He was with me in that tomb because He lives within me. But He is also with me on every continent and in every country where I travel and speak.

Jesus Christ promises to all who place their trust in Him to be with them always, never to leave them or forsake them. Of all the great, life-changing truths contained in the Bible, the most meaningful to me is

that my body is a temple of God and the living, loving Lord, Jesus Christ, actually dwells within me.

Not only is Jesus the Son of God, He also can do things for us that no one else can do. I want to concentrate on four of these.

First, He is the only One who can pardon man from his sin. Second, He alone can give purpose for life. Third, He alone can give peace to a troubled heart. Fourth, and finally, only Jesus can give us power to live an abundant life.

JESUS PARDON SIN

The Bible tells us that God is holy and man is sinful. Sin creates a great gulf between the two, which man cannot bridge no matter how good he is. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23, NASB), and "the wages of sin is death [Eternal Separation from God]" (Romans 6:23, NASB).

But what do we mean by sin? It is not necessarily just a matter of lying, stealing or being immoral. Basically, sin is an attitude. It is going one's own independent way indifferent to God. It is a lack of relationship or fellowship with Him. The Bible clearly defines sin as falling short of God's standard, which is His own perfect righteousness. Sin often manifests itself as self-centeredness, an attitude of active rebellion, or passive indifference to God.

I like to picture your will as a throne in your life. Either you or God is on that throne. If you say, "I am the master of my life; I will do as I please," you qualify as a sinner. If Christ is on that throne, you have accepted Christ's payment for your sin, and He has brought you into a relationship with Him. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is God's only provision for sin. In the Old Testament, the Israelites brought animals to the priest as sacrifices for their sins. These animals had to be perfect, without spot or blemish. The animal was slain and its blood was sprinkled on the altar by the priest as a temporary covering for the individual's sin.

This sacrifice pictured the coming of God's one special "Lamb," Jesus Christ, whose blood would not just cover man's sins temporarily, but would wash them away forever. God sent His only Son, who was without sin, without spot or blemish, to give His life, to shed His blood upon the cross for the forgiveness of



our sins.

The Scriptures say:

"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness"
(Hebrews 9:22, NASB).

"God so greatly loved and dearly prized the whole world that He even gave up His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"(John 3:16, Amplified)

God bridges the gulf to man through His Son. He has promised that we can know Him and have fellowship with Him now and for all eternity, through the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the most precious truth in the Word of God.

FROM RELIGION TO CHRIST

But, you may ask, Is Jesus the only way to God?

At the conclusion of one of my university lectures on "The Uniqueness of Jesus," a young Hindu professor from India approached me. He was angry and impatient. "I resent you Christians," he said. "I resent the arrogance with which you say that Jesus is the only way to God. I believe that Christianity is one way, but only one way. Hinduism is another. Buddhism, Shintoism and other religions are all ways to God," he protested.

I reminded him of the writings of the great Hindu leader Mahatma Gandhi, who for all his devotion to his religion, stated in his autobiography, "It is a constant torture to me that I am still so far from Him whom I know to be my very life and being. I know it is my own wretchedness and wickedness that keeps me from Him" This young professor said that he had once believed that Gandhi was God, but, of course, he no longer believed this.

In addition to being devout, this young man was unusually brilliant. He was completing double doctorates, one in physics and one in chemistry -- at the same time. As we talked, he began to see that Christianity is different.

He saw that Christianity is not just another man-made religion or philosophy, but that it alone makes provision for man's basic need, which is forgiveness of sin. He admitted that, although he was a devout follower of his religion - diligent in the reading of the

sacred Hindu writings and in all of the ritual of his faith - he had never found God.

I called his attention to the differences in the lives of his Christian friends. He admitted that they had something that he did not have. It was obvious that "that something" was the living Savior who had come to live within them and had forgiven them of their sins. Soon we were on our knees together and this young Hindu prayed that Jesus would forgive his sins and become his Savior.

Indeed, no religion in the world provides for the forgiveness of sin. Apart from the cross of Jesus Christ, all men would be forever engulfed in sin and separated from God. What most religions teach is that if a person's good works outweigh his bad works, he will go to heaven or the equivalent. But if his bad works outweigh his good works, he will go to hell or the equivalent, according to his particular religion. Of course, he does not know until this life is over to which place he will go. What a tragedy! How inadequate is such a religion or philosophy.

Take Buddha out of Buddhism, Mohammed out of Islam, and in like manner, the founders of various other religions out of their religions, and little would be changed. But take Christ out of Christianity and there would be nothing left, for Christianity is not a philosophy or ethic, it is a personal relationship with a living Savior who came to earth to pardon us from sin and give us the assurance of eternal life with God in heaven.

JESUS GIVES PURPOSE TO LIFE

Not only is Jesus of Nazareth the only One who can pardon our sins, but He is the only One who can give purpose to life. The Bible says it was through the Son that God made the whole universe, and He has ordained that all creation shall ultimately belong to the Son.

One can really see that God has created everything for a purpose. There is order, system and design to the whole of creation. man is the highest expression of God's creation - the only part with intelligence. God created man with a free will, with a right of choice. he can say "yes" or "no" to God, and, for the most part, he has chosen to say "no." Because of this tragedy, those who have said "no" have never discovered God's purpose for their lives.



I have found through the years that people who do not know Jesus are like a ship without sail, drifting with the tide upon a rough sea. For example, H.G. Wells, famous historian and philosopher, said, at the age of 61, "I have no peace. All life is at the end of the tether."

Pascal, the French physicist and philosopher, wrote:

"There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."

Perhaps, in the quiet of your own heart you are saying, "Yes, there is a vacuum; I am not satisfied with my life."

There are great benefits to be derived from being where God wants you to be and doing what He wants you to do. Consider marriage, for example. Thirty-five years ago, the American divorce rate was nine out of one thousand marriages. According to recent statistics, almost one out of every two marriages in the United States and 60 percent of second marriages now end in divorce. A study done by the University of Minnesota projects that if the current increase continues, by the year 2000 two of three marriages will end in divorce.

But I have observed that where the husband and wife are Christians and have a family time where they read the Bible and pray together daily, the divorce rate is radically reduced to approximately one in every thousand. A relationship with Jesus Christ makes the difference. He brings real purpose to marriage. In view of the facts, who would dare take the gamble of marriage without Christ as Lord of the life of both husband and wife?

You may wonder, "How can Christ make such a great difference?" The answer is simple. If you are on the throne — or will — of your life, your ego and the ego of your spouse will war against each other. Friction is inevitable. But if Christ is on the throne of the lives of both husband and wife, He will not war against Himself, and there will be peace and harmony in the marriage.

The Bible says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (Psalm 37:23, NKJ). And "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). None of us will be truly fulfilled until we invite Christ

to show us the very purpose for which He created us. No one else who ever lived can do this - no man, no religion, no philosophy - only Jesus of Nazareth who is God in the flesh.

JESUS GIVES PEACE

Jesus of Nazareth, the Prince of Peace, is the only One who can give us unshakable peace in a world of turmoil. As someone said, "There will never be peace in the individual heart or at the peace tables of the world until the Prince of Peace reigns supreme in the hearts of men." Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). He also said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Everyone experiences difficulties. The Christian is not exempt. Becoming a Christian does not mean that we will suddenly be ushered into a utopian situation, but rather that we have One with us who said, "Lo, I am with you all the days - perpetually, uniformly and on every occasion - to the (very) close and consummation of the age. I will never leave you, nor forsake you. My peace I give you" (Matthew 28:20, Amplified).

What kind of peace does He give those who trust in Him? It is a quiet confidence that, since our sovereign, loving, all-powerful God is in control, we have nothing to fear. Jesus gives us peace with God through the forgiveness of sin. He provides peace of mind through an unhindered relationship with Him. He shows us how to have peace with man by teaching us how to love others. When He is in control, no situation, heartache or sorrow can ever disturb that peace. Tragedy, heartache and sorrow will come into your life, but Christ, the Prince of Peace, waits to sit upon the throne of your life to give you His pardon, His purpose and His peace.

JESUS GIVES POWER FOR LIVING

Pardon, purpose, and peace are not all that He can give. Jesus of Nazareth is the only one who can give you power to live a new life.

Frequently men and women say, "I would like to become a Christian, but if I do, I am sure that I will never be able to live the life. You don't know the mistakes that I have made, the resentments that I have, my tendencies to sin, my immorality, heavy



drinking, drug addiction, cruel tongue and many, many other problems. I do not believe that I could live the Christian life."

But, as they have received Christ into their lives, these same people have discovered that the Christian life is a supernatural one and that Jesus literally changes them -- their attitudes, their actions, and their desires. When we trust in Him, Jesus Christ literally comes to live within us and lives His life in and through us. Therefore, it is no longer what we do through our own self-effort, but what He does supernaturally, because He is the one who provides the power, and we are merely the instruments through which He releases that power.

NEW LIFE THROUGH NEW BIRTH

The Bible tells of a man named Nicodemus who wanted to follow Jesus but didn't know how. One night, this man - a good, moral, ethical, religious leader, and a ruler of the Jews - came to see Jesus and asked, "Rabbi [meaning Teacher], we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with Him."

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." Nicodemus exclaimed, "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus said, "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." Jesus meant that we are born with a physical body to live on a physical plane; but the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom and God is a spiritual being. If we are to have fellowship with Him, we must become spiritual creatures through a spiritual birth.

Picture a caterpillar - just an ugly, hairy worm - crawling in the dirt. If you could communicate with it, you might say, "Why do you crawl in the dirt? Why don't you fly like the butterfly?"

No doubt it would reply, "It is impossible for me to fly for I am earthbound; I can only crawl in the dust."

Then you suggest, "Let us perform an operation. We will attach some butterfly wings to your body."

"No, that would do no good, " the caterpillar would reply.

Then you ask, "Why don't you take a course in aviation, and then you would be able to fly?" But all of this would be to no avail.

So it is with people who try to become Christians by good works - such as good conduct, church attendance, reading the Bible and praying - rather than by way of the new birth as Jesus commanded. Of course, the caterpillar doesn't remain a caterpillar. One day it weaves about its body a cocoon and out of that cocoon emerges a beautiful butterfly. We do not understand fully what has taken place. We know only that where a worm once crawled in the dust, a butterfly now soars in the skies. So it is in the life of a Christian. We receive a miraculous new birth when Jesus of Nazareth, the risen Lord and Savior, comes to live within us.

This new birth connects us to the supernatural, resurrection power of our Savior. But like an instrument that is not used, we cannot experience this power unless we continue to invite God to work in our lives.

WHO IS ON THE THRONE?

As I said earlier, there is a throne in every life. If you are on that throne - if you are deciding what to do with your life - it is quite likely that you are not a Christian. Christ says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock (the door of your heart - your will, your intellect, your emotions). If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in" (Revelation 3:20).

The Bible promises that "to all who received him [Jesus] ...he have the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). And "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Commitment to Christ involves the surrender of the intellect, the emotions and the will - the total person. Suppose you meet a certain young man or woman about whom you have heard many fine compliments. Intellectually, you like what you see - looks, personality and many other qualities. You like everything about this individual. Would this be enough on which to launch a marriage? No. There is more to marriage than mutual respect and admiration. As you become better acquainted, Cupid finds his mark and you fall in love. Is this sufficient for marriage? No. There is more to marriage than the intellect and the emotions.



Then you become engaged, and the wedding day arrives. How exciting! Intellectually, you believe that he or she is the most wonderful person in all of the world. Emotionally, your heart beats twice as fast when you are together.

But then something even more important takes place. As you stand before the minister to exchange your vows, you commit your wills one to the other. The marriage is not a true marriage where there is no mutual giving of one to the other.

There you have it -- a marriage relationship involves the intellect, the emotions and the will. In becoming a Christian, one must give himself wholly -- intellect, emotions and will -- to Christ.

THE SECRET IS SURRENDER

Perhaps you are saying, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died for my sins. Am I not a Christian?" Not if you have refused to yield your will to Him. Or you may say, "I heard a wonderful sermon, my emotions were stirred and I had a great emotional experience. I even responded to the invitation to go forward for counsel. Am I not a Christian?" Not if you have never relinquished the throne of your life, your will, to Christ. The surrender of the will is the key to becoming a Christian and the secret of living a victorious Christian life.

If you have not already received Christ as your Savior and Lord, will you, in the quiet of this moment, surrender you will to Him - invite Him to come into your life to live His life in you? Your life upon this earth and for all eternity is affected by your decision. Be assured that if you do receive Christ as your Savior and Lord, He will pardon your sin, give purpose to your life, and give you His peace and power. Your life will be forever changed. If you desire to receive Christ, bow your head and pray this prayer:

"Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God and that You died on the cross for my sin. I surrender my will, the throne of my life, to You. Show me Your purpose for my life, and I will follow You. Give me Your peace and power that I may please and honor You, Lord Jesus. Amen!"

If you have received Christ into your life, you have begun the great adventure for which He created you. We are told in the Bible, "What is it that God has said?

That he has given us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son. So whoever has God's Son has life; whoever does not have his Son, does not have life. I have written this to you who believe in the Son of God so that you may know you have eternal life" (1 John 5:11-13, TLB). When you receive Christ, you have eternal life here and now. You need not invite Him in again. He promises His followers, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20, TBL). His Holy Spirit will dwell within us for the remainder of our lives.

Some time ago, I had the privilege of sharing this marvelous truth with a doctor and his wife from Zurich, Switzerland. Dr. and Mrs. Pruppacher had sent their son Hans to the University of California, Los Angeles, to complete his doctoral studies in meteorology. Hans received Christ at one of our meetings and wrote to his parents about his new-found faith. He mentioned my name as the one who had introduced him to our Lord. They wrote back asking if he would set up an appointment for them to see me. At great expense, the father and mother flew all the way to Los Angeles for the express purpose of becoming Christians.

It was a dramatic moment for me when this man of great influence and means and his wife came into my office near the UCLA campus. He began by explaining his own spiritual journey. "I was an atheist for years," he said, "but I found no future in atheism. So, I began to study the religions of the Orient. Again, I found no satisfaction. Then, someone told me the New Testament was where I would find my answers. I began to read it and became convinced Jesus was the one I was looking for. Then we received the letter from Hans telling us how you had helped him to become a Christian. We want you to tell us what you told Hans."

Well, you can imagine how I felt! What a privilege it was to talk to this wonderful couple about my Savior, the living Christ.

I explained how they could receive Christ by simply inviting Him into their lives. Dr. Pruppacher interrupted me. "Mr. Bright," he said, "I've already done that. I receive Jesus into my life every day. On some occasions I ask Him in several times a day."

Now I was puzzled. Relatively new in leading people to the Lord in those days, I didn't know what to say. I prayed silently, "God, help me. What do I say now?" Ephesians 2:8,9 flashed on the screen of my mind:



“It is by grace you have been saved; through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.”

I explained that it is not enough to ask Jesus into your life; you must believe He will come in as He promised. “God honors faith,” I said. “He does not honor your invitation to Him to come in. It is your faith in Him and His promise that He honors. If you open the door, He will come in as He promised. You can ask Jesus into your life a thousand times, and He will never come unless you believe, on the basis of His promise, that He will come.

“You can know for sure He’s in your life because He said He would come in. He promised never to leave you nor forsake you.” I suggested that they receive Christ into their lives one more time on the basis of God’s promise. But even before we prayed, Dr. Pruppacher’s face lit up with assurance of his salvation, and he began to laugh.

He turned to his dear wife and spoke to her in German, telling her what I had shared with him. She began to laugh, a holy laugh, a laugh of assurance. They had been looking for God, and now the light went on, and they were filled with joy.

If you have invited Jesus Christ into your life, you too can have confidence that He is living in you and has given you eternal life as He promised. Jesus would not deceive you. Do not insult Him by asking Him in again. For the rest of your life, as an expression of faith, begin every day thanking Jesus that He is with you as He promised. He is closer to you than your hands or feet and nearer than your breathing. You can draw upon His supernatural life all day, every day, to live the abundant life of adventure which He promises.

Simply begin every day on your knees, acknowledging that He is Lord of your life. Invite Him to walk around in your body, think with your mind, love with your heart, speak with your lips, and continue seeking and saving the lost as He came to this world to do two thousand years ago.

As you continue in obedience to Jesus’ commands, you will experience the fulfillment of His promise of an abundant life. I encourage you to study the Word of God diligently and become active in the vital Christian fellowship of a New Life Group and a local church. May God bless and keep you in this great adventure with Christ our Savior.

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Dr. Bill Bright was the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ International.