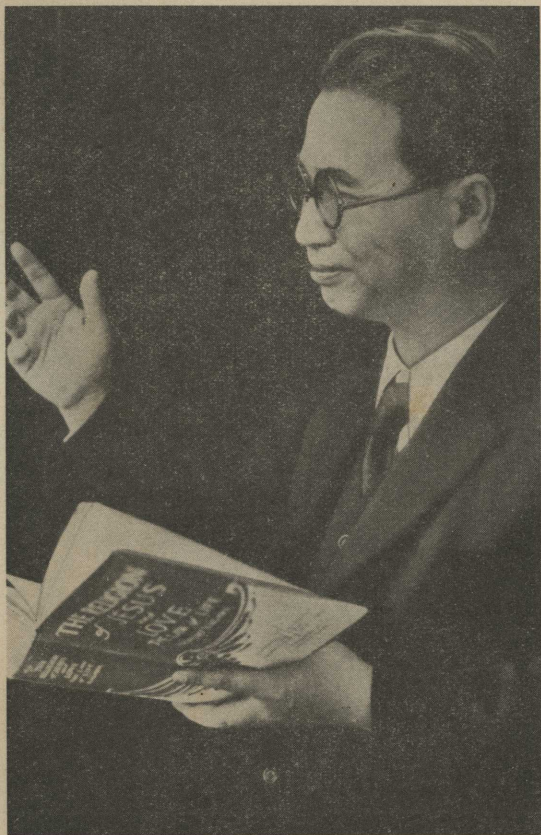


# Impressions of Kagawa

ALAN C. WATSON

Minister of St. Pauls, Christchurch, N.Z.



TOYOHICO KAGAWA

The Kagawa Family.

Morning Prayers at the breakfast table.



# IMPRESSIONS OF KAGAWA

Alan C. Watson

Minister of St. Paul's

Christchurch N. Z.

---

## THE MAN.

“Kagawa.”

“Good morning,” I said. It was seven-thirty on a frosty morning in early June in Christchurch. For weeks I had looked forward to this meeting, and now it was really true. Here was Kagawa on my own door-step, introducing himself in his own characteristic way!

We had been warned that we were to entertain a man who must be carefully guarded from unnecessary interruption, whose health must be conserved with the greatest care. Our knowledge of his life and work—gained from numerous books and articles—had led us to imagine that our distinguished visitor was more or less an invalid. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is well known that Kagawa has suffered severe and protracted illness, that his lung capacity is below normal, that one eye is blind and the other partly so, and yet in the wonderful four days of his stay with us in which so much was done and said and so many people met, he gave the impression of being a perfectly fit man. A tremendous programme of activities was put through, and at the end of it I confess I was utterly



tired out. Kagawa seemed to be still full of life and energy. His amazing capacity for work, his light-hearted endurance, and his apparent physical fitness left me with the feeling that many of us ordinary people are terribly lazy.

Many of my readers have heard Kagawa speak. It is probable that a good deal of what he said was not very intelligible, owing to the indistinctness of his English. But very few could fail to be impressed by his personality. He always seemed to be bigger than his speech. He is more than his message. We felt that we were listening to a really great man. It isn't often that we have the opportunity of entertaining "great" men—and the thought of it is a little awe-inspiring. There was no need to worry about Kagawa's kind of human greatness, for it is the kind that combines high character with the fun and simplicity of a boy. This also surprised me. When we read of what Kagawa has done—as Labour leader, Christian evangelist, social worker, slum-dweller, author of a hundred books,—we picture a man of serious purpose and intense earnestness. We are not wrong. He is serious, and he is intense. These qualities do not prevent him, however, from having boyish qualities. He is eager, enthusiastic, quick to laugh, and full of fun. I must confess that I looked forward to private conversation with him with some little trepidation, and wondered whether I could talk intelligently with so great a man. These fears were groundless. Most of our talks together—at meal times—were interspersed with laughter. In fact some of our meals were quite hilarious affairs.

Kagawa is an overwhelming conversationalist—he can talk about any subject under the sun, and he is very quick to follow the speech of other people. His mind moves with great rapidity and his repartee is remarkable—especially when we remember that it is done in a language foreign to him.

There is always interest in the personal habits of people of other races and nations. Naturally those who have to prepare meals for distinguished foreign visitors are a little concerned to know what to cook for them—especially if they happen to be Japanese, who according to reports live on rice. The prospect of four days of rice pudding is not very cheering to one who is accustomed to roast beef, bacon and all the other things that the dietitian tells us are so bad for our health. Here again, there was no need for alarm. Both Kagawa and Ogawa, his secretary, ate what we ate and seemed to enjoy it too. The only night a rice pudding was brought to the table, they chose the alternative—which was plum pudding!

The Japanese are famed for their grace of manner. When this natural grace is combined with the courtesy of a Christian we behold something very satisfying—a Christian gentleman. After every meal Kagawa rose from the table, made a slight bow to his hostess and said "Thank you very much." In countless little things we noticed this great courtesy and charm of manner. It still gives us a pleasant thrill to recall the scene of our two Japanese friends clearing away the table after meals, and not the least of these memory pictures is one of Kagawa down on his knees making toast,

while he discoursed on the possibilities of the fishing industry in Japan. (He knows quite a lot about this by the way, for he is the first President of the All-Japanese Fishing Federation, which has over a million members.)

The most distinct impression that remains with me is of a man possessing an extraordinary poise of spirit. He was extremely busy,—speaking at three or four meetings a day, as well as visiting many places of interest,—and yet he never seemed to be in a hurry. He was not only meeting with and speaking to hosts of people, but during his stay here he was also writing (three serial stories were kept going in Japanese periodicals during his Australasian tour) and yet he never seemed to be hurried or worried or overworked. This quality of character is not due to any lack of sensitiveness, or to his being phlegmatic. He is unusually sensitive—to “atmosphere,” to people, to meetings—and he feels an insult. He has an intense spirit. Other people have these qualities—but often they are combined with irritability, worry, anxiety and fear. None of these appear in Kagawa. He is in complete control of himself, he rises above the storms of passion, he has absolutely no fear. What is the secret? The answer we will leave for the moment. Suffice it to say that here lies his strength, his greatness, his ability to get things done. If there is one thing he has to teach us it is the old lesson which Christ taught and which Kagawa has learned from his Master: “Whosoever loseth his life shall find it.”



## THE MAN OF THOUGHT

"Ve-e-ery interesting." How familiar became these words during the days of Kagawa's visit! The very pronunciation and stress of the familiar English words were a revelation of his mind and his attitude to life. For him the world is a place of extraordinary interest, and human knowledge is an adventure in which man thinks the thoughts of God. Every single "fact" is an opportunity of looking into the mind of God, even the facts of suffering, destruction, sin. On more than one occasion Kagawa was introduced as a religious philosopher, and that is just what he is. Let me tell you a few things about this Japanese philosopher, as I observed him in action. His delightful secretary, Ogawa, said something to me that I will not forget. "Watch him," he said. This is what I did, and all that I am writing is the result of "watching."

Kagawa is a great thinker. Now some people imagine that a thinker is a dreamer. Nothing could be further from the truth. A true thinker is a realist—he thinks about real things. And how do we get to know about real things? First and foremost by the simple habit of ASKING QUESTIONS. That is what Kagawa did. He asked questions—asked them incessantly. "I am not here in New Zealand to speak so much as to learn." Within a half hour of my meeting him he had asked me at least a dozen questions about my own country—most of which I was unable to answer. The very first one was—"Why do you have so many people in your insane hospitals in New Zea-

land?" Well, why do we? He found out before he left—but not from me. I was with him when he visited the Magnetic Observatory in Christchurch. Here he asked questions about earthquakes, sea currents, temperatures, and so on—questions that were not easy to answer with the small amount of information available in undeveloped New Zealand. He knows quite a bit about earthquakes and their effects—not merely from the practical but from the scientific point of view. His scientific hobbies are the sciences of geology and mathematics. He can memorize a whole sheet of mathematical tables within a few minutes. I saw him doing this with a mass of figures supplied him by the Dominion meteorologist which had to do with New Zealand weather conditions. He was delighted to meet an authority on Corriedale sheep—and plied him with questions about that important animal. The Corriedale may be a decisive factor in the development of Japanese farming. Kagawa possesses the first qualification of a thinker—he is a learner, and he learns by asking questions—of the best books and the best authorities. He took away from Christchurch a large parcel of books—on New Zealand. Books of geology, about birds and sheep, and books on Antarctic exploration. He knew very little about Captain R. F. Scott, and was delighted to hear details of the expedition and its tragic conclusion, and that Scott is one of the authentic heroes of the Anglo-Saxon boy. "So? . . . . Ve-e-ery interesting." . . . .

This leads me to state the second quality of this man as thinker—his EAGERNESS. One felt over-



joyed to be able to tell him something that he did not know. His excitement at learning a new fact was very wonderful. Those of us who were privileged to visit with him the beautiful home and garden of Mr. Stead at Riccarton will never forget the two hours we spent among the renowned collection of New Zealand birds possessed by this authority on the life history of our national birds. Question and answer, and mutual enthusiasm over the discovery of new facts. The simple difference between the South Island and North Island kiwi was pointed out by Mr. Stead. Kagawa was very excited—his eyes on fire with enthusiasm. It was a newly discovered fact for the scientist. “Ve-e-ery interesting.” At the Summer school for deaf children this eager quality of mind and heart was very evident. He took the greatest interest in the work of the various classes we visited, and it was a moving sight to see him taking a class himself for a few minutes. A Japanese speaking in broken English, and teaching a class of children who were stone deaf! It was rather thrilling. We passed the fine statue of Captain James Cook which this city possesses. “I do not think that you New Zealand people make enough of Captain Cook. He was a very great man, and he should be one of your national heroes.” Then he turned to me and asked one of his questions—“Tell me, what was the tonnage of the Discovery?” I quickly confessed my ignorance, but that night I sneaked into my study, took down “Cook’s Voyages,” and at tea I remarked as casually as possible that the Discovery was 367 tons.

You will understand then that Kagawa possesses the true scientific spirit. He seeks knowledge and loves her for her own sake. For him there is the added zest, of course. He is a man of religion. He believes in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And unlike so many of us he believes what he "believes." For Him it's all true. God made the world and all things therein. So then, if you must study mathematics you are studying part of the mind of God. This is the way God thinks. And if you study dietetics you are studying a bit of God's mind. He has made things in this way. He wants us to know and understand the nature of the food we eat. Those who heard Kagawa's address to University students will readily understand this aspect of his thinking. For him each science is a glimpse at one view of Reality, and all the "views" together (which we call the sum-total of human knowledge) are a reflection of that perfect knowledge which is the mind of God. Kagawa is very anxious that students should get this attitude to their study. Science becomes to such a one an endless adventure, an act of worship, a progressive appreciation. It all helps the student to obey the words of the Shorter Catechism, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever" with special emphasis on the "enjoy."

Of the great Greek philosopher Aristotle, it is said that he took all knowledge for his field of study. It is not given to many men to have this enthusiasm for all sorts and conditions of knowledge. Kagawa does possess an encyclopedic taste. For him no in-

formation or fact seems irrelevant or unimportant. He calls himself a Christian evangelist, and that is what he is. It is distinctly unusual to discover an evangelist with an interest in sheep, fish, oysters, exploration, sea currents, factories, labour conditions, churches, and cathedrals, local politics, birds, rocks, radio, and human beings. Believe me, I do not exaggerate, I simply give a selection of the things I know he is interested in. I said that Kagawa is a thinker and that a thinker deals with real things. You will now see what I mean.

A questioner, a seeker, a learner, an eager student with the widest possible interests. All this is a true and accurate description of this Christian thinker of Japan. But there is one other quality we must see, or else our picture is out of proportion. An actual illustration may help to bring this into relief. At the Magnetic Observatory, as I have said, Kagawa asked many questions. One of the scientists present expressed some surprise at his unusual wide interests. "Well, you see, I am a Christian social worker—therefore I must be interested in earthquakes, typhoons, sea currents, and such like." He went on to explain that a social worker should not only do ambulance work at the foot of the cliff but cooperate with those who were erecting fences at the top of the cliff. If it is possible to predict earthquakes (evidently some of the great Japanese seismologists think it is) then the social worker should be prepared for the day of crisis and disaster—he should be ready for the work of evacuation. The same applies to typhoons. He must know of their cause and incidence, and



their effects. This clear understanding of what a Christian social worker and evangelist has to be and do in 20th Century Japan goes a long way in explaining Kagawa's close connection with the Labour Movement in that country, and with the farmers unions. In other words Kagawa pursues knowledge not only for its own sake but also for the use to which it can be put. For him all Truth is one, and all Truth is of God. Very simple isn't it—yes, and very wonderful, and “ve-e-ery interesting.”

#### THE MAN OF FAITH.

In the first chapter I said that Kagawa “is in complete control of himself, he rises above the storms of passion, he has absolutely no fear in him. What is the secret?”

It is of this secret that I now wish to speak,—difficult as the task must be. I have already said that Kagawa's thought begins and ends with God. For him, however, God is much more than an Idea, or the Final Explanation of all things. God is a Person, not merely personal, but a Person. There is a world of difference between believing in God, and in the idea of God. Our knowledge of God is of a very different kind from our knowledge of everything else. Kagawa, the scientist, by the use of his mind, his reason, has accumulated a vast store of knowledge about stars, atoms, earthquakes, sea currents, trees, people. Any other man of his ability could acquire the same amount of knowledge. But Kagawa is more than a man of thought or KNOWLEDGE. He is a man of FAITH. No

man hath seen God at any time. No man can see God. No man by searching can find God. God is known only to the eyes and heart of faith. In his private conversation Kagawa makes it abundantly plain that, for him, God is not an object of knowledge but a living person, a Friend with whom he has constant commerce. He does not try to "prove" God, and he does not need to. He knows God.

Similarly Christ is a Person. Kagawa believes in the "real presence" of Christ, not merely in the Holy Communion, but in the daily sacrament of human life. I found his ideas about Christ quite untheological in the ordinary sense of the word. He is not greatly impressed with the Nicene statements about the Person of Christ, although he is quite aware of how they came to be made. He thinks, however, that too much stress on such theological statements is "bad." It is impersonal, a dealing with ideas and not a grappling with a living reality. At the present time Kagawa is writing a Life of Christ for the Japanese people. I found that he has an extensive knowledge of modern New Testament scholar-ship, especially French, German, and English. His interpretation of Christ will be a portrait of our Lord drawn chiefly from the materials of John's Gospel. He is certain that the character of Christ is a picture of the nature of God's universe, and he knows that the character of Christ is fully expressed in the Cross. For this reason he looks at the Cross, and beyond the Cross to God, and through the eyes of God, he sees that "Love is the Law of Life."

Once again, "Love" is much more than an idea.

What he believes he really believes. He takes his faith seriously. Love is not merely an idea; it is known in its many expressions; it is known by what it does. From our knowledge of his own life we know how Kagawa has tested his faith, and lived by it. In his personal relationships he lives the "law of love." This appears in his every act and word, his grace of manner, his courtesy, his thoughtfulness. An example of the latter. On the last morning in Christchurch, I had arranged to drive Kagawa and Ogawa to the station to catch the 8.35 a.m. train. I happened to remark the evening before that I was due at a school for a Bible lesson at 9 a.m. In the morning Kagawa was early astir, and insisted on leaving home at 8. Both Ogawa and I protested that this was far too early, and at last he gave the reason. "Well, Mr. Watson must be given good time to get back to the school." A little thing. Yes, but surely "the other side of greatness."

Kagawa's conception of Love is more than a relationship between individual persons. He confessed that from his own experience he had learned that one man alone could do very little to advance the cause of Christianity in Japan. He must learn to think and work with other people—to "cooperate!" This is one of his key words. A Christian must cooperate with everyone and every institution in order to establish conditions of life for the people, within which it will be possible for the Law of Love to operate. This leads me to describe a most significant feature of his attitude of faith. He thinks that Christianity is usually too



vague and indefinite. One is not able to say always what Christians really believe about life, morality, social and economic problems. Christians speak with too many voices. The Communists all think and act alike. They know their "doctrine" and they have a definite clear-cut policy, a programme of action. Kagawa thinks that Christians should have PROGRAMMES OF ACTION. An example of this is the Kingdom of God Movement in Japan—a Three-Year Plan. Another example is his great campaign to get a million Christians in Japan in the next five years. Another is his launching of the "Cooperatives," especially cooperative hospitals. He believes that Christianity must express itself in and through Cooperatives. Here we have the "Social Gospel" becoming Christian action. There are many Western Christians who think that Christianity should not commit itself to any social or political system. Karl Barth and others are having a profound influence in the West and to them the "Social Gospel" is a thing to be scorned. Yet here is this little Japanese daring to say that Christianity is of no use unless it can give men the power to reconstruct their economic system in such a way that the mass of the people will have an opportunity to practise the Christian virtues. Who knows? There may come to Western Christianity a new conception of what "our" religion ought to be.

Kagawa is a man of faith. This also means that for him God has a plan. We who call ourselves Christians should understand God's plan, and must have vision to grasp its implications, personal and

social and racial. Most of all we must have Courage, which is just another name for faith. If we are real Christians we will have Courage to practise our religion, no matter what it costs to do so.

Reflection on the experience of four days with Toyohiko Kagawa has led me to see some things very clearly. Here they are in brief. (1) If we really believe in God, life is freed of worry and fear and becomes great fun. (2) If we really believe that this is God's world and that he has a plan for us then we can do an almost unlimited amount of Work, and it will all be very interesting. (3) If we really believe that Christ is the Saviour of the world, then we will not rest until we discover His plan for the world of the twentieth Century. (4) If we are Christians, we are called to proclaim and practise His plan. (5) To do this we must have understanding, vision and courage—and the greatest of these is courage.

\* \* \*

Many of Dr. Kagawa's addresses appear in the magazine, "Friends of Jesus" which will be sent, at the price marked below, by the publisher, Henry Topping, 303 Hyakunin Cho, Yodobashi, Tokyo.

"Friends of Jesus", or "Salting the Earth",

"Economic Foundation of World Peace", or others,  
25 cents per copy

"Shooter at the Sun" (Autobiographical Novel),  
50 cents per copy

"Impressions of Kagawa", or "Kagawa-Gambler for God",  
5 cents per copy