

come to the attention of the great political leaders of His day. No disciplined army followed His beck and call. His Name was not spread about during His lifetime in the news that went to distant cities. To the eyes of the Roman governors He was merely a Galilean peasant; yet the influence which He exerted upon those who knew Him, and which was extended through them to others, after His death, spread to the very ends of the earth, and in the course of three centuries overcame all resistance in the mighty Roman Empire.

How could this individual, without the earthly advantages which have belonged to other builders of empires, extend His influence so widely? Surely He was unique among men. There was a quality in Him lacking in others. It was His deity.

The four little books which give us all our first-hand knowledge of the life of Jesus portray a character supreme in all His qualities. Yet there is nothing artificial or unreal about it. He enters fully into all the experiences of human life, but never is sullied by any imperfection. There is no trace of condescension in His friendship. He rebukes the Pharisees and drives the money changers out of the temple, but no arrogance can be found in His demeanor. Everywhere He goes He shares the lives of people of all types, strengthening their weaknesses, pruning their faults, increasing their joys, lessening their sorrows. It is no wonder that the people rejoiced when He entered Jerusalem, and spread their garments before Him, doing homage to His matchless charm.

All other characters described in history or in literature have some flaw in them, but in Him there is none. Where else do we see such a combination of manliness with gentleness, of courage with humility, of forthrightness with kindness? The character described in these pages is the very flower of humanity. There is that in it which convinces every careful student that it contains what no mere human could have done. The picture is human and yet divine. He is weak and yet powerful. Without a place to lay His head He represents Himself as Lord of the universe. With no official position in the church or state of His day He speaks with authority and not like the Scribes. The combination which we find here of the God and the perfect Man, is one which no human writer could have invented. As a literary creation the picture of Jesus Christ is quite unimaginable. The greatest writers of the ages have never been able to produce such a figure. Clearly it is impossible that four comparatively obscure men should each have been able to write a Gospel which would describe such a Man were it not for the fact that they had known the very One whom they described.

Through the ages the picture of Christ in the Gospels has claimed the homage of men of every type. Even those who deny the Christian religion must perforce admit the supremacy of the character of Jesus. Rousseau said, "If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God." Renan declared that, "All the ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus."

The words of Jesus deserve our attention. Though not primarily a teacher, His teachings are unique. Only a few pages will suffice to contain every recorded word He uttered; yet these words have been studied for centuries and still the depth of their meaning has not been reached. He discusses the deepest problems and yet does it in the simplest manner. His figures are drawn from daily life but they go right to the heart of everything with which He deals.

A striking feature of the teachings of Jesus is the assurance with which He speaks. He does not resort to involved or intricate argument. His words show an intuitive knowledge, such as can be paralleled nowhere else. He pierces to the heart of situations and shows their real meaning.