



The Manhood of the Master

Harry Emerson Fosdick

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Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878 – 1969) was an American Baptist pastor. Fosdick became a central figure in American Protestantism in the 1920s and 1930s and was one of the most prominent ministers of the early 20th Century.

In this book Fosdick writes:

"This book is not a life of the Master nor a study of his teaching. It is an endeavor to understand and appreciate the quality of his character. The significant events of his life are considered, but only for the sake of looking through them into the spirit of the personality who was active there. The principal emphases of his teaching are noted, but only for the sake of understanding the quality of the one from whom the teaching came.

"Neither is the book an attempted contribution to the theology of the Church about Jesus. It is an endeavor, rather, to get back behind the thoughts of the centuries about him, and to see the Man Christ Jesus himself as he lives in the pages of the gospels. Such an attempt has its advantages and disadvantages. Many puzzling questions which concern the chronology of Jesus' life and the exact import of certain of his teachings, do not greatly trouble the student of his character. The broad outlines of his personality are clear and cannot be obscured by details of interpretation. Even deeper problems which concern the dates and composition of the gospels do not present a serious difficulty, for the fundamental qualities and attitudes of our Lord are to be traced in all the gospels, and this book has endeavored to confine itself to these elemental matters.

"Upon the other hand, an appreciation of the Master's character, as of any other character, is necessarily subjective. It inevitably is colored by the mind in which the appreciation is made. This is true even within the gospels, for it is easy to distinguish the aspects of the Master's life and quality which each of the evangelists has stressed. Nevertheless, a sincere endeavor to appreciate the spirit and character of Jesus Christ cannot be without value to those who follow it with independent thought and reverent heart, and to such this book is offered.

Each study is divided into two sections: Daily Readings, and Comment for the Week. This arrangement of the book for daily devotional reading, (the "Morning Watch"), for intensive study and for Bible study group discussion, is an experiment. The Scripture selections are intended to present each week the most salient passages from the New Testament dealing with that aspect of the Master's character which is being considered. The daily comments are purposely made individual in their application; suggestive and devotional rather than informational. The Weekly Comments offer opportunity for a large amount of careful study, and their full value will be felt only by those who read and thoughtfully consider the Scripture references upon which the conclusions of the author have been based. It is hoped that the arrangement of the book will make its use convenient for individual devotional reading as well as for Bible study groups."

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