

[PDF] The Life Of Our Lord: Written For His Children During The Years 1846 To 1849

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Description:

Charles Dickens wrote *The Life of Our Lord* around the same time he was finishing up , but to readers raised on a diet of Dickensian wit and indignation, his rendering of Jesus' life may come as something of a surprise. You won't find even the shadow of a Micawber or a Mrs. Gamp anywhere in this brief volume; no Pecksniffs, Podsnaps, or Mulberries, either. Instead, Dickens approaches his subject with simple reverence, retelling the New Testament in a manner suitable for his own young children--who were, in fact, his only intended audience. Indeed, he strictly forbade publication of *The Life* during his lifetime and begged his sister to make sure that they "would never even hand the manuscript, or a copy of it, to anyone to take out of the house." It wasn't until the death of Dickens's last living son that the manuscript was finally published in 1934. Though he left his trademark

comedy behind, Dickens's liberal social conscience is still evident in what he chooses to emphasize about Jesus: "My Dear Children," he begins, I am very anxious that you should know something about the History of Jesus Christ. For everybody ought to know about Him. No one ever lived who was so good, so kind, so gentle, and so sorry for all people who did wrong, or were in any way ill or miserable, as He was. This is a simple, straightforward account of Jesus' life and teachings, with an occasional touch of whimsy: "You never saw a locust, because they belong to that country near Jerusalem, which is a great way off. So do camels, but I think you have seen a camel. At all events, they are brought over here, sometimes; and if you would like to see one, I will show you one." Occasionally, Victorian attitudes and prejudices creep through--Dickens writes that the Jewish Sabbath was Sunday, that Jews were "very ignorant and passionate," and also that "they were very proud, and believed that no people were good but themselves." Fortunately, such comments are few and far between, and for the most part the author focuses on the miracles Jesus performed and on the lessons in charity, forgiveness, and compassion that Christians can take away from them. This may not be among the greatest of Charles Dickens's literary accomplishments, but it is certainly one of his most heartfelt. --*Sheila Bright*

From School Library Journal Grade 3 Up Until 1934, when the last of Dickens' children died, this remained a private document, unpublished at the author's wish. It was written for his own children as a simple introduction to Jesus Christ. Always a rebel against religious pomposity and high-flown theology, Dickens intended his family to learn about the human Christ who served the poor, loved children, and lived a beautiful and blameless life. He seldom alludes to Christ's divinity. Since this is a father's personal statement and not a faithful version of Gospels and Acts, perhaps he can be forgiven the condescensions and discrepancies appearing in the manuscript, such as confusing Herodias with Salome and Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany, stating that the Hebrew Sabbath occurs on Sunday, and eliminating Moses and Elijah from the Transfiguration. Unfortunately, however, an anti-Semitic tone appears whenever he mentions the Jews by name. He both ignores Jesus' Jewishness and the fact that his followers were largely Jewish. The work is probably best viewed as a period piece done with the author's usual charm and fervor, including earnest asides to his audience, but not polished with his usual care. The format is handsome. Each page of text is framed with a decorative border. The full-page illustrations, done in warm soft colors, are crisp and solid. There are no references to specific New Testament sources. Foreward, afterward, facsimiles of pages from the manuscript, and several prayers of the Dickens family are also included. Patricia Pearl, First Presbyterian School, Martinsville, Va.
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