

H. W. Rankin Dec '86

FIRST SERIES.

FRIENDLY WORDS  
TO  
EDUCATED NATIVES.

NO. 7

MISSION OF CHRIST.

By G. BOWEN, MISSIONARY.

---

BOMBAY.

TRACT AND BOOK SOCIETY.

---

1882.

*Price 1 Pie.*



maturity of mind and lucidity of perception implied therein. Still, when his parents called upon him to return with them, he obeyed, and going back to Nazareth learned his father's trade which was that of a carpenter, and when Joseph's powers began to fail through age, he was glad to help the family by his hard-earned wages. He did this, knowing well that God designed him for the highest of all ministries, the highest of all functions. His mother had not kept back from him the revelations that accompanied his birth, designating him "a Saviour that should be to all people." And in his own private communion with the Father of spirits, he had fresh ratifications of these announcements. But until the time chosen of the Father should come, he was quite content to be a servant of servants, and without murmuring or chafing, he went on till his thirtieth year, performing the humble duties of a village carpenter.

At this time the people of Judea became greatly interested in a man of God, known as John the Baptist. This person

## 2 *Friendly Words to Educated Natives.*

make their appropriate impression upon us, and we shall then be in a position to say whether his disciples claim too much for him or not.

Jesus was brought up in Nazareth, a provincial town in the country of the Jews, enjoying a not very good reputation. The Jews of Jerusalem looked down upon the people of the province of Galilee and especially of Nazareth, as uninformed and rude. Jesus was brought up by Joseph and Mary, pious persons of humble life. At the age of twelve he was taken by them to the capital at the time of the great annual festival, and when the large company of pilgrims left to return to Galilee, he remained behind. After proceeding some distance his parents became aware that he was not in the company, and returned to Jerusalem seeking him. They eventually found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors of the law, hearing them give their thoughts about the meaning of passages of Scripture, and asking them questions that filled them with astonishment, because of the

by the fact that immense numbers of every grade of society and every phase of religious thought were publicly baptized by him in the river Jordan as a token of their readiness to receive the Messiah whom he was to introduce to them. Then came Jesus of Nazareth and was baptised by him openly. At that moment there was an opening in the heavens, the voice of God was heard exclaiming, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, and the Spirit of God descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove, resting upon him. The time had come for Jesus to enter upon his ministry, and as an ambassador receives credentials from his sovereign, so Jesus was openly acknowledged by God. John the Baptist immediately understood that the great end of his own ministry, the introduction of the Messiah, was now accomplished, and he was content to sink into comparative insignificance that Jesus might be recognized. This was a sublime act of disinterestedness, but it demonstrated the genuineness of his own call and that of Jesus.

#### 4 *Friendly Words to Educated Natives.*

had been dwelling for some time in a wild part of the country, east of the river Jordan, contenting himself with such food as he could find in the wilderness, in coarse raiment, making light of all temporal needs, and preaching to those who would come to hear him with great power and unction and fearlessness. His fame quickly spread; many recognized him as a man specially raised up by God to speak to that generation. He informed them that the Messiah, the divinely-chosen Saviour of the world, was immediately to appear and establish the kingdom of righteousness promised in so many parts of the Old Testament; and he warned them in terrific language against thinking they could have any part in that kingdom, unless they rejected and turned from all their sins. Notwithstanding his severe denunciation of the many sins prevalent at that time, there was such irresistible demonstration of the power of the Most High resting upon him, that he obtained a prodigious influence over the entire nation as is shown

In the Temptation of Jesus it was settled, that he should embody God's idea of the Messiah, and not the Jewish idea. The Jewish conception of the matter was that the promised Deliverer or Messiah should restore them as a nation to more than their pristine greatness, deliver them from the Roman yoke, and give them unrivalled supremacy, compelling all other nations to become their suitors for the knowledge of God and of his ways. The plan of God was that the Messiah should so raise the standard of personal holiness that the faultiness and erroneousness of the religion of the day should be made manifest, and make it evident that no man could be saved by works of his own righteousness. Confining himself strictly to his course, he would naturally arouse the hatred of the religious and influential classes, and might certainly anticipate an ignominious death at their hands, unless he chose to deliver himself from their hands by his own power, which he would not. This then was the course determined on by Jesus

## 6 *Friendly Words to Educated Natives.*

At the very threshold of the ministry of Christ, stands the account of his Temptation. He had to be proved with regard to the use he should make of the supernatural powers belonging to him as the Messiah.

> Will he use them for his own convenience,  
> for the relief of his own wants? Will he  
> use them to win reputation, and be won-  
> dered at for his superiority to common  
> men? Will he use them in the way of ac-  
commodation, falling in somewhat with  
the ideas of the Jews and securing their  
adhesion by a measure of concession?  
With reference to all these points he was tested, and the result showed that he was fully minded to walk by faith, doing only those things that pleased the Father, even though the result should seem to bring ruin and confusion on his life. It was settled in the Temptation that Jesus should end his earthly life on the cross. As Adam the first man was tempted, and by his sin brought ruin upon the race, so the second Adam, the Recoverer of mankind triumphed over the tempter and brought in everlasting righteousness.



identify himself with a handful of obscure Galilean fishermen ; their love of ease was met by his self-denial ; their zeal for human traditions was met by his zeal for the word of God ; their contempt for the lower classes found its contrast in the deep and sympathetic interest which Jesus took in them ; their boasted righteousness was brought low by his declaration that there is none good, save one, God. These qualities of his were exhibited in his life, and were illustrated in his teachings. His teachings made war and continue to make war with the idea of creature righteousness, revealing God as the source of all moral and spiritual good ; and inasmuch as there is nothing that man more clings to, and nothing that is more favoured by religions generally than the idea of human merit, it is evident that by such teaching he necessarily placed himself in antagonism with the mightiest forces controlling human society. Earthly wisdom would have led him to fall in to some extent with the prevalent ideas of religion, so far as to

secure the confidence of influential persons. But he deliberately chose God's plan. He could not be the Anointed One of God, and yet be the acceptable Messiah of the Jews. He chose to be the former, and in choosing this, chose unpopularity, hostility, contumely, rejection, death, and for his true disciples a similarly trying lot till the end of time.

Jesus spent the greater part of his time, during the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years of his ministry, in Galilee, visiting all the towns and villages, teaching in the synagogues and more generally in the open air, and training twelve disciples for the exigencies of the work after his ascension on high. His divine power was constantly exhibited, but not ostentatiously. Power in him was indissolubly associated with beneficence. His miracles were miracles of mercy. Once in the year, at the time of the Passover, he would visit Jerusalem, and speak to the gathered multitudes; and sometimes he was present at the Feast of Tabernacles. The country was under the rule of the Romans, though the Jews

were allowed still to retain some of their political prerogatives. There was constant danger that the Roman authorities would take alarm and cut short his ministry; hence, the necessity of his carrying on his ministry in the more remote provinces.

In the early part of his ministry, Jesus went to Galilee, and thenceforward spent the greater part of his time in that obscure and somewhat despised province. It was not long before he chose from the main body of his disciples, twelve to be continually with him except when sent on a missionary tour in a neighbouring province. It sometimes comes to pass that the choice made by a person at the beginning of his career, is exchanged for a very different choice when success has crowned his efforts. Napoleon, when Emperor, was not content to have Josephine for his wife, but must ally himself by marriage with the house of Hapsburgh. But the humble and illiterate fishermen whom Jesus called from their nets to be his followers, were the very

ones whom he at the close of his ministry and when about to ascend to heaven commissioned to declare his Gospel among all nations. He took common men, men of the people, men looked down upon by the religious people of the time, for the very purpose of showing in them the transforming and elevating power of the grace of God. To accomplish the most formidable work ever undertaken on this earth he chose such instruments as no one else would have deemed in any way suitable. He was not necessarily restricted to such. His miracles of mercy were not confined to the poor; we read of a nobleman whose son he healed, and of a rich young ruler that sought his favour, and of the wealthy Zaccheus in Jericho. Families so signally blessed by him would have been not unwilling to consecrate their most promising children to him, if he had been willing to receive them. But he sought not such. His great aim was to wean mankind from the idolatry of the things of time and sense, the idolatry of wealth and position and worldly power; and he

designedly chose men of inferior position and culture that he might more effectually assail this deep-rooted idolatry, and substitute for temporal distinctions those that are everlasting. Men connect the idea of kingship, authority, influence, with physical power, material wealth and pomp. Christ came to establish the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy, the supremacy of love, of long-suffering, of non-resistance. From the beginning of the world man has been contending with man, and valuing power physical, political, intellectual power of any and every kind, as it enabled him to cope the better with his fellow-man. What is human history but the record of this ceaseless strife, the chronicle of what this man or these men succeeded in accomplishing, and of the changes wrought by the transfer of power from one hand to another? Jesus wanted to establish a kingdom by means of submission, concession, non-resistance, meekness, love, self-renunciation; a kingdom presenting the extraordinary spectacle of each de-

## 14 *Friendly Words to Educated Natives.*

siring to serve the other, to take the lower place, to have the hardest work, the least measure of convenience and comfort and honour, where each one rejoiced in his neighbour's gain rather than his own ; a kingdom where Love combined the ruling and the ruled in one heavenly bond, and in which no one had any private interests or aims of his own. This kingdom had its chief embodiment in Christ himself, and we have only to look to him to ascertain its characteristics. He endured the contradiction of sinners ; he submitted to the assaults of men ; he surrendered himself to human malignity ; and what was the result ? Men executed on his person their utmost extremity of malevolence ; they put him to an ignominious death upon the cross, and then for a moment imagined that they had despatched him and his cause forever. But his own words were verified : " Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The kingdom of heaven proclaimed by

Christ, instead of perishing in his death, clothed itself thereby with power to overcome the world. The apostles caught the ascending mantle of the Saviour, were baptized with his own Spirit, and went forth ever-victorious in twelve different paths. It was with all this in view that Jesus chose the fishermen of the sea of Galilee to be his apostles; and this choice of itself, to one who candidly considers it, is a sufficient proof that he was of God.









