

“Who is Jesus for you?”

“TRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE”

8. Who is that man?

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It was only natural that the people who followed Him, particularly those who were with such an outstanding personality all the time, should have asked themselves: “Who is this man?”

Nicodemus, a learned and cultured man who lived the human experience intensely, immediately recognized that that man could only come from God.

But even the uncouth and illiterate people who left everything to follow Him did not behave differently. Romano Guardini observes: “They approach Him, listen to Him, come back and ultimately are impressed by a personality without compare. This impression gradually becomes a conviction: Jesus is superior to any other being.”¹

There is something inexplicable about Him, something we cannot quite grasp.

By sharing their lives with Christ it became obvious that it was only too natural, too right to trust Him. To oppose this evidence would be tantamount to going against oneself. Thus they were unable not to believe in Him simply because He may have made a statement that they did not understand: “in order to be coherent with what we have seen, to be coherent with ourselves, we have to accept even that which you say and yet we cannot understand. Only in you do we find our meaning.” We could use these words to translate Peter’s reasonable attitude in the episode described in chapter 6 of Saint John’s Gospel.²

What is the difference between the excited crowd a few days before this episode and this small group of faithful followers, who are also enthusiastic but in a different way? The crowd sought Him for their own reasons and that is why, when He began to explain why He had come—an explanation that went beyond anyone’s expectations—they left Him. They were more attached to their own limits than to the truth.

But the group of the faithful did not leave even though they did not understand. When they asked Him “Who are you?” and He answered mysteriously: “My Father and I are one,” they accepted these words, even though they did not understand them.³

They would understand only on the day of the Pentecost, when they would be given a supernatural intelligence. As we have already observed, a few hours before He ascended into Heaven, they asked Him: “Master, when will you establish this Kingdom of Israel?”⁴

They understood very little even after His death and resurrection. But they preserved the mysterious answer because “He had spoken it.”

¹ *Essenza del cristianesimo*. Brescia: Morcelliana 1993.

² See John 6:67-9.

³ John 10:30.

⁴ See Acts 1:6.

* Source: *The Journey to Truth Is an Experience*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal 2006, pp. 64-65.