

## *Historical Significance of Jesus*

On a spring morning in about the year 30 CE, three men were executed by the Roman authorities in Judea. Two were “brigands.” . . . The third was executed as another type of political criminal. He had not robbed, pillaged, murdered or even stored arms. He was convicted, however, of having claimed to be “king of the Jews”—a political title. Those who looked on . . . doubtless thought that the world would little note what happened that spring morning. . . . It turned out, of course, that this third man, Jesus of Nazareth, would become one of the most important figures in human history.

—E. P. Sanders\*

Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of Western culture for almost twenty centuries. If it were possible, with some sort of super-magnet, to pull up out of that history every scrap of metal bearing at least a trace of his name, how much would be left?

—Jaroslav Pelikan†

\*E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993), 1.

†Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 1.