

Chapter XIV

SHORTLY after the war, Professor Zimmern prophesied that the figure of greatest interest to the coming generation would be Jesus. The revival of interest in one whose fame has lasted two thousand years must denote a desire not only to interpret him anew, but to ascertain his relationship to the needs of present-day life. Whether the public has created the demand for the books, or authors are far in advance of public interest, can scarcely be decided, for no recent book on Jesus has reached the best-seller stage.

One striking feature of the production of works on Jesus during the past ten years is the number of titles which do not mention Christ or the gospels. Out of forty-four titles only three mentioned Christ. This may not be as significant as it appears, for the rationalist attitude of the last century has not changed much. Perhaps there is now less desire to support the notion of a myth, since so many serious works have appeared giving more and new historical data concerning the life of Jesus. Nevertheless, for every work of negative criticism, maintaining the opinion that such a person never existed, there are ten or a dozen, perhaps many more, which take the positive position and deal with an historically authenticated person. Something of a new literature on the subject has appeared since Dr. Eisler published the result of his researches concerning the various mutilations of the texts of Josephus and particularly the discovery of the Slavonic version. Still, the great question of the real significance of the mission of Jesus remains where it was. Whether the gospel stories of him are

legends or not may be material for the controversionalists, but there is other matter of far greater consequence to be considered, and whether it be established that Jesus lived, or did not exist, makes little or no difference to the value of the message contained in the gospel. But suppose proof of his existence were essential before anyone considered it worth while studying the significance of his mission, it is not necessary to rely only on Josephus or Tacitus or even rabbinical sources. The student can rely on the gospels and from them draw inferentially the full portrait of a person who could never have been invented by a living soul at any time; not by a Sophocles, a Shakespeare, or a Cervantes. Because Jesus is absolutely unique: the man, the mission, the utterances, the philosophy, the incidents, and time and place; all are perfectly fitted, congruous in the highest degree. He could never have been the fictitious creature of the finest creative imagination that ever existed. He is real in every essential. And this world figure lives in the gospels, after two thousand years of bitter controversy quite beside the main matter, the vital question, which has threatened time and again to submerge his history in a mass of extraneous affairs.

It is possible for the student to take Matthew and Mark, with few additions from Luke and John, and give a complete portrait of Jesus. A consistent character, and consistency is essential for such a character, can be reconstructed out of the mass of misunderstanding and contradiction which every honest investigator finds in the gospels. This work has been attempted by hundreds of authors without success, so far, and the reason is not far to seek: They have failed, first, to realize that Jesus was a Galilean of Galilee at the time of Judas of Gaulon; and, second, that his mission was primarily economic in a purely religious sense, not necessarily political or social.

Jesus was a religious anarchist in the highest sense: "The kingdom (reign) of God is within you!"

Now that much is known of what censors did to the works of Josephus, what late collaborators did to the early versions of the gospels, the great question of who is fitted, or qualified, to sort and sift the sayings of and events concerning Jesus, as they appear in the New Testament, is not so important as it was when Higher Criticism reserved the field for itself. Any serious student in or out of a university or theological college can go to work and make his own version of the life and times of Jesus, for he now has all the published aids to consult in the library across the street. Indeed, numbers are already at the task. With the revival of interest in Jesus of Nazareth there may come a great change in the attitude of the serious man-in-the-street to the church. The man who for the past fifty years has been putting questions to the church without hope of a reply he could understand will be followed by an informed inquirer who may know every stereotyped reply of the church. The newcomer will waste no debate over tradition and poetry; he may indeed cherish all the precious tokens of service and discipline as dearly as any vicar does, but he will want to come to grips at once with the problem of all ages: state crime and involuntary poverty. He will ask: "Are you in favour of the reign of God on earth?" On the answer will depend not only the action of the inquirer, but the future of the church as an institution of service to mankind. Life, here and now, will be the chief concern of the informed churchless man. Beaten and defrauded by the state, he is sure to seek a non-political haven which will care for him and one that will give him hope of enjoying that equality of opportunity which the Archbishop of Canterbury had in mind years ago, when he was at York. The alternative is

despair. The state has failed, failed all along the line. No one knows better than the workless object of charity that man does not live by bread alone, for bread in lieu of work is a poison which kills the spirit while it soothes the stomach. He is likely to raise the whole question of rights, for he will know that the church in the past gave to mankind many of the most fervent advocates of natural rights, and that the early church sprang into being from the clearest expression of fundamentals to be found in any system of worship. And the church contains to this day every essential of the pure thought of Jesus, notwithstanding decrees of councils, creeds, and articles. Religion, if it means anything, is now what it was at its birth in Galilee: that which seeks to bind all men to an invisible God! No one can change that. That the church has often failed to bind men, that it has served interests inimical to those of mankind, is not a reason for ignoring its enfeebled presence now. The church has learned the meaning of the past, but it has not yet learned that unity of purpose, fundamental purpose, is essential if it is to survive and become strong. Nothing but a fundamentally religious institution can offer man the principles of justice he seeks. It must rid itself of all participation in politics if it is to succeed in being the dominant factor in the life of the people. It must be completely free from all those material interests of the state which have hindered its progress. Now it is face to face with dissolution of personnel and fabric. The loveliest monuments of its glory crumble, and many a living is threatened with decay. Whence will come the funds to sustain it, when the state gathers into its insatiable maw the small surplus men reserved for it? Only from the people who enjoy equality of opportunity to produce can it look for material sustenance. Taxation has always been the weapon which in the end gave

the death thrust to the worship form of mankind, and taxation now threatens to devour the tithe, by reducing the payer to impoverishment. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof," is as true today as it was of old time, but the church has not realized that its own material existence depends on man's opportunity to use the earth, so that from his surplus the church can be supported. All wealth is produced by labour from land. So long as the state cost comparatively little, there was enough for the church if it carried out its real purpose. But when war and the consequences of war, which added department to department, increasing speedily the number of bureaucrats; when enormous expenditure on armies, navies, and those ventures giving no adequate return for individual benefits received—such as new roads and all the charitable assistance to unemployment, pensions, and sickness—raised the burden of taxation beyond the producing power of industry, there was little or nothing left for the church but its endowments. Sheer necessity must force the church to face one way, not two; it can no longer have it both ways. Either it turns completely to mankind or it dissolves with the state; it cannot help mankind and the state, too. Its attitude must be strictly defined. It must leave the state to its own devices. But, it may be urged, man makes the state, and the state's care is man. That was considered by some churchmen to be a decisive argument two or three generations ago. Few churchmen now would try to maintain that ill-considered thesis. The man-in-the-street of this day is better informed, and he might easily riddle such a statement. All is changed. Even the procrastinating statesman, when he talks of "a change for the better coming," ought to know it took Europe twenty years to recover from the Franco-German war. Then the world was pretty nearly wide open for development; now it is not. Then

the machine was in its infancy; now it is not. Government then cost comparatively little, and taxes left some surplus. If it took Europe twenty years to recover from the economic and commercial disasters which followed the Franco-German war, how long will it take the world to recover from those of the world war? So the informed man-in-the-street might point to the state's care of man and ask when and how man can get out of the clutches of the state that is so kind to him.

There is one very serious question concerning the man-in-the-street that arises now, and it is this: is he to be held responsible for his acts? Or is he really the feeble-minded simpleton that grandfatherly senators, evangelical Labour members, and paternalistic Liberals make him out to be? Or is he such a complete fool as their investigations, committees, and literature picture him? Take two sorry exhibitions of his utter want of gumption in buying and selling stocks and bonds, and his shameful credulity in believing one set of government tipsters and not the other. What the man-in-the-street thinks of all these fuddle-headed legislators would be worth knowing. Probably he would say: they always hold their investigations years too late. Of course, nothing can be done by politicians until the disasters happen—and then nothing can be done. For anyone to suggest that politicians will ever be so courageous as to investigate the working of the Stock Exchange while a boom is in process, is only another form of credulity of the kind fostered by fatherly fabians. In the years when people went mad and paper values soared, there were a number of influential people who warned the public, including senators and other legislators, that it was unwise to place money on call, and that many stocks were not worth the prices quoted for them, but no one took heed, no house of legislature was adjourned to consider a matter of immediate

importance; there is no record so far produced of any political dignitary taking action in the legislature, in the press, or on the platform. The men who did warn the people raised a storm of bitter criticism against themselves, for "daring to spoil the game at its height." They were called "kill-joys," and "calamity howlers." Mr. Whitney, the President of the New York Stock Exchange, is perfectly right: the public had every opportunity to find the information, but the public did not take the trouble. It went in with its eyes wide open, and, of course, came out with its pockets empty. What action on the part of legislators could have stemmed the rising Stock Exchange tide of 1928? Is it not time politicians give up the idea that the general public must never learn from experience? The average working man, whether employed or not, does no whining about the wicked Stock Exchange and the naughty bankers. Numbers of them unemployed at this time, men who have lost their savings in banks that have failed, say quite frankly they have to take their medicine. Numbers of them say they had the chance several times a few years ago to get out, but they did not trust caution and moderation; they wanted a lot of money, and they wanted it quickly. Charwomen, lift-boys, errand-boys, all the small-pay folk either wished, or actually tried to, get rich in a hurry, and numbers of trustworthy reports show that politicians and clergymen were imbued with the same ideas. If legislators are labouring under the delusion that they are seriously intending to alter radically Stock Exchange systems in conducting these investigations, that the reason for examining witnesses is to enable legislators to draw conclusions to be embodied in bills that may become the law of the land, then it is possible for them to hoodwink themselves into the belief that gambling can be abolished by statute. The whole thing reeks with hypocrisy.

Probably the man-in-the-street will realize that it is not this and that that is wrong: the Stock Exchange, selling short, gold standard, tariffs, appropriations; and every form of graft, but that it is the system which is rotten to the core, because it is built up on an utterly false economic basis. The bureaucracy is what is left of the middle form of the state, that is: the organization of the political means for exploitation of the economic means. When that was the sole object of feudal institutions, even the serf had a chance. Some authorities say he had twenty acres and a hut, privileges in the forests and on the commons, and paid to the lords of manors one or two days' service in the year. Suppose the authorities, Thorold Rogers and others, exaggerate, and that five acres and a hut were the average portion of the serf; contrast his position with that of the free citizen of today! So in this wreck of the feudal system there is no valid reason for the existence of the bureaucracy. It cannot even manage its own affairs.

Who is this creature who must be coddled and guided by especially gifted politicians? What is this citizen who must be restrained and pampered by sentimental reformers? Is it some curious animal that can only reach an adult stage when politicians want it to vote and governments want it to go to war? It is possible to infer from the treatment it receives at the hands of legislators that it cannot think for itself. Experience teaches it nothing. A burnt child dreads the fire, but surely it would be granting it a lot of common sense to say it is a child. But it has to produce wealth, because the economic pressure of marrying and propagating drives it to find sustenance for itself and its dependants, and this fact seems to indicate that it possesses thought for the morrow. It cannot, therefore, be utterly destitute of mind. Yet the beast has to find the means of satisfying its desire for food, and that of its

young, though the beast very often takes no thought for the morrow; indeed, in numbers of cases it seems confident of supply.

Can this creature be made of the same stuff that is in the architect, the engineer, the mathematician? Manifestly so; there is little or no difference in form. Strange, an architect can design a cathedral; more, a town; an engineer can bridge a harbour, tunnel a mountain or a stream; a mathematician, enclosed in a small bare room, can test the Newtonian law of gravitation. For these achievements years of study are necessary, the principles of sciences must be learned and obeyed. But anybody can be a politician; no study is required; the observation of principles would be a waste of time; anybody who can be nominated and elected can be a legislator. No examination in an institution of learning is demanded. So long as the person is not a bankrupt, can talk and sign its name, it is eligible somewhere, somewhen, for a legislature. Years ago there was an idea abroad that such a person should know at least something of the principles of political economy, but no one now would dream of harbouring such an idea. Political democracy in practice is seemingly a system which dispenses with endowment and competency; the exceptions are known and granted. Skilful lawyers, clever bankers, resourceful merchants, and competent craftsmen, as legislators, with little or no protest permit the business of the state to be conducted as if bankruptcy were the sole aim of government. Somehow they cannot apply the knowledge they have gained in business, and which they find useful in ordering their own affairs, to the affairs of state. Party loyalty paralyses the zeal of the would-be rebel, and social aims sterilize all desire to go into the opposition lobby. The legislature is a sad place for the man who makes it uncomfortable for his party or his

government. Yet legislators must legislate for their constituents; they are the judges of how and when the electors shall be taxed, how and why their movements shall be restricted, their liberties curtailed, their industry regulated; when they shall make war, and hate neighbours. Did savages ever indulge in such a fetish?

Only in the tags and perorations of orators there can be found sometimes a faint note of promise or presentiment of the possibilities of the controlled and buffeted creature called man; of him who produces, votes, and goes to war; the chore-man. And of what is he and his progeny capable outside the domain of legislators? When the Bethlehem choir sings the Bach B-minor mass, suddenly the victim of legislatures is transformed. Lo, he is a musician. He has studied a score, he has mastered the intricacies of the Sanctus and the Hosanna. Again, when the Business Men's Orchestra—plain business men, ordinary tax-payers—play a classical symphony, or César Franck's D-minor, the expert is filled with amazement and rejoices. Out of the hovels of towns children are sent who master the fiddle, the piano, who model and chisel, who paint; and for every one who can be assisted by charity to persevere in the art there are three, perhaps, who cannot be aided. The well-to-do folk who are known to take an interest in the arts, outside all they do for the support of the art schools, are petitioned over and over again every year to help a child of the poor to better instruction, to gain admittance to the schools. Every poverty-stricken district yields talents society at its best, no matter what its members earn, can ill afford to neglect.

And when a hungry soul needs refreshment from music, or sculpture, or painting, or literature, it must, in the main, depend on charity to furnish it. It is not the over-fed, surfeited

few, the patrons of artistic performances, who find much of the necessary funds. Neighbourly help and small subscriptions from folk of modest incomes undoubtedly make up a large percentage of the aid. It is pathetic to hear the stories of sacrifice; and, now that poverty has overtaken the millions, to listen to the tales of broken studies, careers postponed, pawned pianos, and no school fees, is not only utterly disheartening but painful.

Men in the arts constantly reveal capacities unknown in the political field. Consider the achievement of a great symphony orchestra: every individual fitted for his task; the discipline, the cohesion, the responsiveness, the vast background of technique mastered, a mighty literature studied and learned, alert to all the subtleties of interpretation, and the secret of oneness of effect apprehended. The human greatness expressed by a first-class symphony orchestra is one of the wonders of the world. The world of politics knows it not; the military establishments, ancient or modern, never revealed such consummate mastery of detail, such invincible discipline. And these, these artists are now in fear of poverty, while politicians talk of balancing a budget for a year, lowering tariffs, militarism, and reparations, which are the consequences of their own utter incompetency. The political field is the only one to be found in any department of life that is without purpose, skill, and discipline. It is said: "No one knows how to govern; no one knows the function of government: politicians do not know how."

Two men on an upright steel post, over a hundred feet above the pavement, guide a great girder into position, fix it, and bolt it. They must know how; not only their lives, but the lives of people below depend on their skill. The officers on the bridge of a ship at night, in foggy weather, near the ice-

fields, must, for four hours at a stretch, give all of hearing, seeing, and understanding to every change of the indicators, to navigate successfully and bring the ship to port. Yet no one thinks it necessary for a politician to be skilled in what was called the art of government.

Plain man, the voting, war-fighting man, in his own sphere shows clearly that he is capable of learning a trade and, when he is employed, rearing a family decently. He has with little or no social advantages learned to be an engineer, an electrician, a miner, a farmer, a sailor, and so on. From his ranks are recruited the leaders in industry and the arts. There are now millions of sons of plain men striving to get a chance to fit themselves for journeymen's jobs. Even in this depression, when the prospect is shrouded in gloom, youth, in its desire to learn the rudiments of the crafts, reveals the only ray of hope that lights up the future. Its faith may be only the faith of youth, a faith that is but cannot be explained; still, it lives, in spite of all the menace of the coming years. That the young will learn in a little while that they are of the much-too-many, that the machine they hoped to make or use will require fewer and fewer technicians, does not occur to them; such a thought never enters their minds. Their confidence in the future is sublime and heart-breaking. But plain man seldom thinks it necessary to learn the essential lesson of life itself: how to be fed, warmed, clothed, and housed with comfort and security. When he was at work he insured against accident and death, but he took no steps to assure himself abundance. That is why injustice is of so long life. The system depends upon plain man's economic ignorance for its maintenance. Suppose the system of education should begin at the beginning, with the motive of mankind; and the child should learn as early as possible that it is a land animal, and that it

will always strive to satisfy its desires and needs with the least exertion; where would the education authorities look for the educators? Where are they? Our establishments of learning can teach plain man almost everything but elementary economics.

The potential worth of the political dupe is incalculable. What he might do if he had a real chance cannot be estimated. Nothing is sure, of course, nothing is sure. What he would do if the chance were given, no one would pretend to say. The point is: the economic chance has not been given. And it is not the province of those who have made a chaos of Europe and reduced America to industrial stagnation to say what is good for the victims. The time is perhaps come when the victims realize that the vote is not the only instrument left for moving legislatures.