

Chapter XIX

THE uses to which the name of Jesus has been put in the furtherment of political and social movements during the nineteenth century are so utterly foreign to the mission of Jesus, that it is hard to understand how such gifted men as Maurice and others could have been so misled in their study of the synoptics. Many severe reflections on the claims of certain religious social reformers are found in works issued recently, which, to say the least, are disturbing, and reveal an order of criticism scarcely justified because of the misinterpretation of many sincere men.

Spengler says: "To ascribe social purposes to Jesus is a blasphemy. His occasional utterances of a social kind, so far as they are authentic and not merely attributed sayings, tend merely to edification. They contain nothing whatever of new doctrine, and they include proverbs of the sort then in general currency."

It is blasphemy to ascribe mere social purposes; that is, using social purposes with a nineteenth-century connotation. But Spengler is surely wrong when he says that Jesus's utterances of a social kind contain nothing whatever of new doctrine. In the first place, Jesus never once held out the faintest hope of social amelioration under the system. Never once did he make a political appeal. The test lies here: what government, what body of politicians, could attempt to introduce measures designed to further the kingdom of God on earth? It is strange that Maurice or any other great scholar

should ascribe social purposes in connexion with the mission of Jesus. He was no social reformer.

No one held out less hope of social betterment under Cæsar's system than Jesus. Iniquity cannot be overcome in a day, and injustice had been reigning so long that Jesus knew it would take a long time for justice to reach her throne again. There was one way, only one way: "Seek ye first the kingdom and its justice."

Spengler is so taken up with the Apocalyptic idea, so carried away by it, that the sober judgment and careful analysis which he expends to so great advantage in other sections of his work desert him in his hour of greatest need. The Jesus he takes is the Jesus of the prophecies, him of Bethlehem near Jerusalem, not Jesus of Nazareth. With Spengler the Apocalyptic fulfilment is essential to the Magian edifice he constructs. A wonderful thing it is, containing all the lore of the Arabians, but not a temple for him who said: "The kingdom of God is within you."

Scholars must accept either all of Luke, John, and the Christology of the Apostles, or reject it. They must choose historically between Jesus and Paul. It is not a question of worship which is to be decided by the choice; it is a question of understanding the true mission of the man who so loved God, that he, so to speak, transformed himself into God; in the sense Bernard of Clairvaux meant when he said: "He who loves God with inmost soul transforms himself into God." The very essence of mysticism, and that was the secret of Jesus. He so loved God, and so surely found God's kingdom within him, that he transformed himself into God.

There is scarcely a passage in the hundreds of works which deal with the incident of the tribute money that shows the slightest inkling of the great truth expressed by Jesus in

reply to the question of the Herodians. Indeed, it might be said that all criticism and interpretation break down when the three great test questions have to be faced. The first question is: the economic interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount from the viewpoint of non-resistance. The second is: the interpretation of the happenings at Cæsarea Philippi in connexion with the sudden resolve of Jesus to go to Jerusalem, and his reply to Peter who would dissuade him. The third is the question of what Jesus really meant when he said: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Out of forty works published since the war there is not one that comes anywhere near making a logical, understandable answer to these three test questions. There may be books which deal satisfactorily with them, but for some students they are hard to find. (Investigators of Bible literature often confess their inability to read everything that is published.) But Spengler, Klausner, Eisler, and numbers of other well-known authors of this day fail to get anywhere near the truth underlying these three questions. If they cannot divine the real meaning of the first, it is not likely that they will succeed with the other two. They do not realize that the tribute question was the burning question in Galilee. When at Capernaum Peter was asked: "Doth not your master pay tribute?" and he replied: "Yes." Jesus stopped him when he would enter into the house and said: "What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom and tribute? of their own children or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free." Nothing could be clearer; those who pay tribute are slaves. Some have accepted this as proof that Jesus was in favour of paying tribute; to others it proves the reverse. Yet there seems to be something lacking in the version. Evi-

dently Jesus took exception to Peter's reply to the tax-collectors. It is most unlikely that Jesus paid tribute, though it is possible that in such a town as Capernaum they could not enter the gates unless they paid an entrance tax. That might be, but tribute is something else. Anyway, according to the version of Matthew, a miracle had to take place before money could be found for the tax. The real point of this story is that tribute is taken by the kings of the earth from strangers, not from their own children.

Everyone agrees that the aim and purpose of the campaign of the Zealots was to overthrow Rome and abolish tribute because, according to their faith, it was unholy and unlawful for men to pay tribute to a human ruler. Why, then, Spengler, Klausner, and Eisler should imagine that Jesus did not consider the payment of tribute an important matter is inexplicable. Still, the Jesus of Galilee before the events at Caesarea Philippi and before he was disillusioned was not the Jesus in spirit and temper that came into collision with the authorities in Jerusalem. It is the events which took place in Jerusalem which present the greatest difficulties to modern investigators. It seems impossible that they should think outside this system: the organized state. They do not realize, from a religious standpoint, what an awful position they take up, when they imagine that there can be for mankind no other system. This terrible policy of despair, this attitude of utter hopelessness, clouds their vision and makes it almost impossible for them to see Jesus in his true light. Hence the notion of the kingdom *not* on earth; only death can bring relief. And yet God is the God of the living, and, according to Jesus, when the kingdom comes on earth, men shall receive a hundredfold.

To think of what it meant to Jesus, the pastoral genius of

Galilee, to be in the midst of a city of nothing but stark, ugly facts, is necessary before the attempt is made to piece together the disconnected stories of his brief life in Jerusalem. Taking the happenings, about the details of which the synoptics are in agreement, a straightforward story can be made out from the entrance into Jerusalem until the crucifixion. The scene in the Temple, when, according to Matthew, he cast out them that made the place a den of thieves, must have struck Jesus to the soul. It did not take long for him to realize the Jerusalem he saw was beyond redemption. The knowledge that his message was for the individual alone must have filled his soul with despair. He knew no way of remitting congregational sin. What seemed to him a simple matter in Galilee, teaching the crowds that followed him the gospel of the coming of the kingdom of God on earth, and that faith and love of God and neighbour were enough, and all the Creator asked, was now an impossible feat. Jesus did not know that mass redemption was purely a city affair, not one of the open fields. What he must have thought when he came in contact with the high priests, and the scribes, and the elders, is not hard to guess: these people who had permitted the Temple to be used as a market or a counting-house, these people who accepted the rule of Rome, these people who paid tribute and tax to human rulers, these people who were the very opposite of all the Galilean Jew had hoped to find in authority in Jerusalem! His gentle nature must have been torn with sorrow.

Taking the march of events in sequence, there are, first, the visit to the Temple, and the scene with the money-changers; then, second, the meeting with the chief priests, scribes, and elders; next, the trick laid by the Herodians with regard to the tribute money. These are the three great episodes

which must be understood before an attempt is made to grasp the facts concerning the trial and crucifixion. Eisler, in his *The Messiah Jesus*, treats the entry into Jerusalem in the most dramatic manner. Jesus is welcomed as the leader of insurrection, the rightful heir to the House of David come to take the throne. Eisler says:

Jesus had set out from Galilee with a small band of secretly armed followers to issue in Jerusalem a summons to freedom, to an exodus into the wilderness. Since this was to begin on the anniversary of the exodus from Egypt, it is clear that he and his company must have reached the Mount of Olives some days earlier. On the road and at this spot, a multitude of pilgrims, attracted by the fame of former miracles and the spectacles of others more recent, had joined the band. Around a nucleus of one hundred and fifty closer associates, some hundreds more—perhaps, according to the highest estimate of later tradition, amounting in all to some two thousand people—may have assembled. Over against these there was the Roman garrison of Jerusalem, a cohort of five or six hundred men, with a corresponding number of camp-followers and the usual auxiliary troops, and in addition a Levitical guard in the Temple of unknown but probably quite inconsiderable strength.

In an examination of Eisler's findings several important points arise which he does not deal with satisfactorily. The first is: how the authorities permitted Jesus and his followers to create such a demonstration on entering Jerusalem. Surely, if Jesus was hailed as the king of the Jews, it was sufficient for the Roman authorities to disperse the crowd at once, for it was undoubtedly a seditious gathering. What further evidence was required before the authorities could act, to learn the definite purpose of the followers of Jesus? It is not sufficient to say that the authorities did not wish to act then, because of the festival which brought pilgrims from all parts,

and that they had no desire to bring about a conflict and the shedding of blood. Such an excuse will not do, for Eisler shows over and over again that the Roman authorities were not so particular about the Jewish festivals. And why should they be particular about this festival, when one had entered Jerusalem with acclamation and cries of fealty to a new king? There was an insurrection, but it must have been an insurrection of the Zealots. If Jesus had been connected with it, why was he permitted to go freely to the Temple? He was there at least twice; once, when he objected to the presence of the money-lenders, and again, when he met the high priests, scribes, and elders. Certain persons had been arrested when the insurrection took place, but neither Jesus nor one of his known followers, his disciples, was arrested. This is one of the most curious lapses in Eisler's dramatic story. In attempting to combine the insurrection and the triumphal procession in which Jesus figured, he has overlooked the important fact that some people were arrested, blood was spilled, and yet Jesus, who was supposed to be the head and front of the offending, was permitted to go to such a public place at the time of festivals as the Temple, and not one of his disciples was hurt or arrested. It is quite possible that the insurrection had been in progress before Jesus entered Jerusalem, and that the authorities knew there was no danger of riot to be considered from Jesus and his followers, not having understood the situation in Galilee; that they knew Judas was in arms against Rome, and that Jesus had said it was futile to attempt to take the kingdom of Heaven by storm.

Strangely enough, Klausner says little or nothing about these events. In the chapter entitled "Jesus in Jerusalem," he is more concerned about the cleansing of the Temple than the triumphal procession or the insurrection. Klausner says:

There is no reason to suppose that, like contemporary false Messiahs, he wished to arouse a revolt against Rome. Had such been the case, he would have met the same fate as they, and with his execution by the Romans his ideal would have perished. Yet we cannot suppose that he expected to be recognized as Messiah without achieving something great. Most Christian scholars conclude that Jesus deliberately went up to Jerusalem to die, and that this premeditated death was "his greatest work." This, however, is quite improbable. His prayer in Gethsemane and the behaviour of his disciples at his arrest and crucifixion are proof positive that the calamity was not expected.

Klausner does think that the sight of Jerusalem was so great a disappointment to Jesus that it seriously affected his nature. The condition of the Temple, and the uses to which it was put, were so great a shock to him that he suffered a grave change of disposition. Klausner says: "Here, too, and here most of all, do we miss, Jesus 'the gentle,' 'the meek,' which Christianity has endeavoured to portray. What Jesus does, he does by sheer force; the Fourth Gospel records that, on this occasion, he wielded 'a scourge of cords.' In contradiction to his familiar law which Tolstoy made the foundation of his teaching, Jesus 'resisted evil' in active and violent fashion." But it is only in John that the words "a scourge of cords" are used, and why the version of John is accepted and that of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, where the words do not appear, is rejected, is hard to tell. For Jesus to object to the Temple being used for money-changing purposes, for him to overturn the tables and denounce the practice is one thing, but to scourge the offenders with cords is quite another thing. There is nothing incompatible with the non-resistance theory in denunciation, in censure, in putting the offenders outside the sacred precincts. The very fact of denouncing such practices might quickly bring home to the culprits the enormity of

their offence. But to denounce and scourge might bring retaliation and cause a conflict. It is highly improbable that Jesus used a scourge of cords. To supplement or corroborate from other sources the doings and sayings of Jesus as recorded in Mark and Matthew is proper only when the former are consistent with his accepted utterances and their definite implications. There is far too much straining both by Christian and by Jewish authors for corroborative purposes and far-fetched thesis-building. It is quite unnecessary for Klausner, of all writers, to introduce the idea of a militant Jesus. It in no way adds to the strength of a character he has so sympathetically portrayed and, indeed, it does not further the aim he has in view.

This matter of determining the nature of the gathering which welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem, or accompanied him, is of great importance. There may be three reasons why the authorities permitted Jesus to go freely about the city, to leave it at night, and to enter it at dawn for three days. The first is that the spy system had reported from Galilee what it knew of Jesus and his mission. The second is that the authorities, having an insurrection on their hands, did not wish to add to the numbers of discontents. The third is, they wished to keep Jesus as far away from the revolutionary Zealots as possible. If the information from Galilee had satisfied Pilate that Jesus was a far more dangerous rebel than any of the Zealots, it is quite possible that the wily governor, having learned that the followers of Jesus had not grasped his meaning and intention, decided to leave him alone. Such strategy on the part of Pilate is understandable. How often has it happened since that time that history has supplied instances of such wisdom coming suddenly to statesmen and rulers? Unfortunately, disciples are prone to accept the superficial objects of

a crusade and completely miss the subtleties of the essential purpose. At any rate, whatever the reasons were that actuated the authorities, Jesus was left free, even after he had been hailed as king of the Jews, to go freely about Jerusalem by day. As Rabbi Emil Hirsch says in his story of *The Crucifixion, from the Jewish Point of View*, it was not necessary even for Judas to betray his master, for the authorities had every opportunity under a perfect spy system of knowing when and where they could arrest Jesus when they wanted him. It is inconceivable how authors like Eisler and Klausner could support the theory that Jesus could move freely about Jerusalem by day, but that he had to stay without the walls of the city at night, because of his enemies. It is the festival theory that seems to cause so much confusion in their minds. Did the authorities wait to arrest those concerned in the insurrection until nightfall? Surely not. They would not give the insurrectionists the opportunity to escape under the cloak of night. Moreover, for the purpose of evidence, it simplifies the question of arraignment to catch the culprits in the act or as part of the body of rioters. There is no evidence that any of the people who accompanied Jesus and his disciples into Jerusalem were molested. And the excuse that Pilate had not reached the city is insufficient to explain away the inconsistencies advanced by Eisler. There were deputies on the spot, surely with power to act in his absence. Therefore, it is wiser to assume that the insurrection of the Zealots was not in any way connected with the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.