

## Chapter XX

THE version of the scene in the Temple in Mark differs very little from that in Matthew. In Luke it is dismissed with a few words. Matthew and Mark use practically the same words to describe what Jesus did. Now, many authors seem to think that it was Jesus's objection to the Temple being used for the purposes of money-changing and the sale of doves that brought him into collision with the high priests and scribes and elders. Klausner makes much of this; indeed, he imagines it was a plan deliberately worked out by Jesus and his followers to attract attention. He says:

To bring men to repentance, to draw all eyes to the Messiah and to the kingdom of Heaven which was bound up with the manifestation of the Messiah, Jesus must achieve some great deed, some great *public* deed, performed with the utmost display and gaining the utmost renown. It must be a public-religious deed; it might not be a political action since Jesus was neither willing nor competent to declare war against Rome: he had seen the fate of John the Baptist and the end of many political rebels. And what public religious deed could better secure publicity than some great deed in the Temple, the most sacred of places, which now, in the days immediately before the Passover, was crammed with Jews from every part of the world.

This is scarcely up to the level Dr. Klausner maintains in most of his indispensable work. It was not necessary for Jesus to plan a cleansing of the Temple to bring him to the notice of the high priests, the elders, and the pilgrims who had come to the festival. Indeed, it is very difficult to see, on close examination, where in the gospels there is material on which

to build such a theory of a planned disturbance in the Temple for the purpose of attracting attention. In Matthew, the wonderment of the chief priests and scribes is ascribed to Jesus healing the blind and the lame in the Temple. There is nothing in Matthew about the attention of the Jewish authorities being drawn to him because of the overthrown tables and the thrusting of the money-changers out of the place. When they asked him by what authority he did these things, they referred to the miracles. In Mark, when the scribes and chief priests heard of this scene in the Temple, it is said: "They sought how they might destroy him; for they feared him, because all of the people was astonished at his doctrine." It may be assumed that not even a town Jew, a Jew bred and born in Jerusalem, would object very much to Jesus reminding them all that the Temple was not a place to hold markets, even though a festival was in progress. Even the Jews of Jerusalem would know enough for that. So that would not be sufficient to fill the people with amazement and wonder and make numbers of them believe that Jesus was a prophet, and a prophet of whom the high priests and scribes were afraid. It was the doctrine that he preached in the Temple that caused the sensation, and no mere spasm of indignation on seeing the use to which the authorities permitted the Temple to be put. It was the doctrine.

Strangely enough, few have asked why the doctrine which disturbed the Jewish authorities is not reported. Mark gives some of the parables, but in Matthew xxiii there is a report of the speech he made to the multitude in the Temple or in the precincts of the Temple. Matthew says that after the speech or sermon, "Jesus went out and departed from the Temple." Now in this speech there is much religious dynamite; it is criticism from beginning to end; there is very little of the positive

constructive doctrine preached in Galilee; yet here and there the stamp of Jesus is upon it. It differs from the great denunciations of the prophets in this respect, that it is more pointed, it singles out the sin and the sinner directly. It differs from the diatribes of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in that it was the outcome of the revulsion of feeling of an outraged man, one who saw defeat no matter where he looked. It is the speech of a broken, hopeless man. Klausner says of it: "The powerful arraignment of Matthew xxiii is no more than a collection of isolated sayings gathered together in the same way as the Sermon on the Mount." Take out the additions of Christian editors, and it may be assumed that it was spoken by Jesus, but the one thing which bound with tremendous force all the sayings of the Sermon on the Mount together as the complete whole of a doctrine, as the complete manifesto of a mission, is missing; and it is this missing part, presumably expunged by Christian editors, that must have been the doctrine which brought amazement to the Jewish authorities. Luke says that he taught daily in the Temple. All three versions say that the chief priests, scribes, and elders were offended, alarmed, and that they would have arrested him or had him put to death, but they dared not. The reason given is that the crowd looked upon Jesus as a prophet. Now, there is nothing in any of the recorded speeches and parables of Jesus that laid him open to arrest by the Jewish authorities. The blasphemy idea does not arise until Jesus is examined by the Sanhedrin. In neither speech nor parable is there anything which should bring him into conflict with the high priests, scribes, and elders as such, but there is much that would bring him into conflict with the family of Hannan. Dr. Emil Hirsch says:

The Talmud preserves the fact that the sale of the pigeons and the changing of money for sacrificial purposes was a monopoly of

the family of Hannan. That this Hannan is identical with the Annas of the New Testament and the Annanos of Josephus admits of no doubt. Caiaphas was the son-in-law of the proprietor of this bazaar. The practices in vogue there are the object of comment by the rabbis (J. Pea, I, 6.). To break the exorbitant prices no less a man than R. Shimean b. Gamliel interfered (Kerithoth I, 7.). Jesus was thus brought into direct contact with the most powerful friends of Rome. They were stung to the quick; they felt the lash as though it had fallen upon their own back. They lost no time to remove all possibility of this further meddling with their affairs.

This, then, must have been the reason why the chief priest and his supporters took action against Jesus, not because he had offended against the rabbinical law, but because he had made a direct assault upon the purse of the chief priest. There is, too, the question of doctrine, and, if the doctrine which is missing in the gospel's account of what took place in the Temple is that which he preached in Galilee, the one of non-resistance, it would affect the Jewish authorities only so far as they were supporters of the Romans. They might, it is true, have tried to prove that he was a false prophet; failing this, they would seek to catch him in some statement that would bring him into direct conflict with Pilate. In that way, they would settle the grievance they had against him for interfering with their traffic in the markets of the Temple, and save themselves the trouble of building up a case against him which would have to be dealt with by the Sanhedrin. And this is clearly what they did.

There is no incident in the life of Jesus which has caused so much confused and loose thinking as that of the trap laid by the Herodians when Jesus was asked the question about the tribute money. This has been the stumbling-block of the church for centuries; it is one of the most amazing things in the life of Jesus, that it has been left in the gospels just as it

must have happened; and this can only be explained by assuming that the early Christian editors had not the faintest conception of what was meant by it. Few have realized its importance. The first to grasp its significance was Ibsen, who, in *Emperor and Galilean*, deals with it in a most dramatic manner. Edward Holden Jones, in *The Trial before Pilate*, referring to the words, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's," says: "These words have been the stumbling-block of those who wish to reform or to abolish the wrongs of human society. They have been a rock of defence for the unjust ruler. They have been so interpreted and twisted as to make Jesus the active apologist of nearly every form of wrong or wickedness which man can commit." To anyone who has read widely the commentators on this incident, the statement of Jones cannot appear to be overdrawn. Out of quite one hundred fairly well-known works, some of them considered to be works of great authority, not one gives the faintest indication of understanding this command. In looking through sermons and essays by divines of various denominations, very few indeed touch the question, and those in which it is mentioned give the stereotyped explanation. Take the four works referred to in this examination, because they are recent and from the pens of scholarly writers, and glance at the way this question is treated. Eisler says:

"Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," really means: "Throw Cæsar's, i.e. Satan's money down his throat, so that you may then be free to devote yourselves wholly to the service of God." "For no man can serve two masters, either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon," *mammon* being the whole system of money and credit which, like some rival God and

the author of all evil, is the real temporal "lord of this world." Far from sanctioning the payment of tribute to Cæsar, Jesus is wholly on the side of Judas of Galilee, but goes far beyond him in that he requires his disciples, the citizens of the coming kingdom of God, to renounce not only their service of Cæsar, but also, and above all, their service of mammon. He who no longer possesses money, uses money, or wishes to use money, need pay no more taxes to Cæsar. He who continues and wishes to continue in the service of that enemy of God, the demon mammon, must also bear Cæsar's yoke; he is unworthy of the kingdom of freedom, of the new Israel which acknowledges no master but God.

Klausner, in *Jesus of Nazareth*, says:

So far he had proved that he feared nothing, neither the Temple authorities when he drove out the money-changers and the traffickers, nor the most honoured of the nation when he attacked the Scribes and Pharisees; therefore, let him now declare, without any fear or respect of persons whether they should pay tribute to Cæsar.

Jesus saw that it would be dangerous to say that tribute should not be paid; he would have been promptly arrested as a rebel. He asks them to bring him a dinar. The dinar was a Roman silver coin, stamped with the figure of Cæsar and inscribed with Latin characters telling the name of the Emperor.

Jesus asks: "Whose image and superscription are these?"

They answer: "Cæsar's."

So Jesus replies: "Give unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's."

It was a clever rejoinder; he did not oppose the payment of tribute and so was no rebel against the government; and he distinguished "the things which are Cæsar's" from "the things which are God's," thereby hinting that, for him, the foreign Emperor was the antithesis of God.

But the answer convinced the people that Jesus was not their redeemer, and that he was not come to free them from the Roman Edomite yoke. He thus lost some of his popularity. All that the gospels say, is, that his examiners "were amazed at him."

Grant says:

The question of tribute was a burning issue for the hearers of our Lord. The scribes, in asking him whether it was lawful or not to pay the tax to Cæsar, were handing him a live bomb. His dexterity in returning it proves him just as keenly practical in mind as he was idealistic and spiritual: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are His"—there is no use in trying to avoid payment, as there is in truth no need; God's requirements may be met at the same time; it is not a contradiction in terms to pay tribute to both!

Spengler says:

It is the late, city periods, that, no longer capable of seeing into depths, have turned the remnants of religiousness upon the external world and replaced religion by humanities, and metaphysic by moralization and social ethics.

In Jesus we have the direct opposite. "Give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," means: "Fit yourselves to the power of the fact-world, be patient, suffer, and ask it not whether they are 'just.'" What alone matters is the salvation of the soul. "Consider the lilies," means: "Give no heed to riches *and poverty*, for both fetter the soul to cares of this world." "Man cannot serve both God and Mammon"—by Mammon is meant the *whole* of actuality. It is shallow, and it is cowardly, to argue away the grand significance of this demand. Between working for the increase of one's own riches, and working for the social ease of everyone, he would have felt no difference whatever. When wealth affrighted him, when the primitive community in Jerusalem—which was a strict order and not a socialist club—rejected ownership, it was the most direct opposite of a "social" sentiment that moved them. Their conviction was, not that the visible state of things was all, but that it was nothing: that it rested not on appreciation of comfort in this world, but on unreserved contempt of it.

It is strange that a dramatist should have been the one to appreciate the significance of the reply. Undoubtedly, Ibsen

had made a profound study of the gospels. It is impossible to read *Brand* without realizing that this is so. He knew what was meant by the phrase: "The kingdom of God is within you," and, so far as the spiritual realization of that kingdom is concerned, that it was really a question of "all or nothing"; there were no two ways about it with Ibsen. He describes in *Emperor and Galilean*, in two extraordinary scenes, how the reply of Jesus to the Herodians affected Julian; in one, when he was a student, in the other, when he was Emperor. Julian the Emperor says:

Yes, this Jesus Christ is the greatest rebel that ever lived. What was Brutus—what was Cassius, compared with him? They murdered only the man Julius Cæsar; but he murders all that is called Cæsar or Augustus. Is peace conceivable between the Galilean and the Emperor? Is there room for the two of them together upon the earth? For he lives on the earth, Maximus—the Galilean lives, I say, however thoroughly both Jews and Romans imagined that they had killed him; he lives in the rebellious minds of men; he lives in their scorn and defiance of all visible authority.

"Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's—and to God the things that are God's!" Never has mouth of man uttered a craftier saying than that. What lies behind it? What, and how much, belongs to the Emperor? That saying is nothing but a bludgeon wherewith to strike the crown from off the Emperor's head.

Curiously enough, Renan came very near to it. He was the first important writer to give economic significance to the agitation of Judas of Gaulon. He says: "God being the sole master whom men ought to recognize, to pay tithe to a secular sovereign was, in a manner, to put him in the place of God. Completely ignorant of the idea of the state, the Jewish theocracy only acted up to its logical induction—the negation of civil society and of all government. The money in the public

treasury was accounted stolen money." But in the next chapter he says: "To avoid the error (of Judas) Jesus pronounced the axiom upon the penny. Jesus, more wise, and far removed from all sedition, profited by the fault of his predecessor and dreamt of another kingdom and of another deliverance." So the money in the public treasury was, according to the Talmud, accounted stolen money; taxation was an impiety; to pay tribute to Cæsar was to put him in the place of God. Yet Jesus acquiesced in the payment of tribute to the Emperor. But this is impossible. Jesus would never have reached Jordan and John the Baptist if he had shown the slightest leaning towards Rome. If these commentators had kept in mind the Sermon on the Mount and its exposition of the theory of non-resistance, the difficulties concerning what Jesus meant by his reply to the Herodians would never have arisen. It is the non-resistance theory, and its logical outcome, that bothers them. If Eisler had taken to heart the quotation he takes from the speech of King Agrippa II to the Jews determined to revolt from Rome, he would have saved himself much trouble. In the king's speech, which he quotes, it is said: "Nothing so checks blows as submission to them, and the resignation of the wronged victim puts the wrong-doer to confusion." Non-resistance is the only logical reply to violence. Had Eisler considered the question from that standpoint he would not have written:

The opening words, which may well be proverbial, strikingly recall the saying of Jesus on turning the other cheek (to the smiter) though the difference is plainly perceptible. At all events, it is clear that this aspect of Jesus's preaching, with its recommendation of patient quietism, cannot have been unwelcome either to the Romans, or to those opportunists, the Herodians, and the priestly aristocracy in Jerusalem, who worked for tolerable relations with

Rome. Similarly, his words on the tribute money, i.e. his injunction to dispense with money altogether or quietly pay the tribute, must have been judged as a relatively harmless extravagance. This sufficiently explains why he was continually watched and spied upon, while otherwise left in peace for a considerable time.

Why he should be spied upon and continually watched if his saying about the tribute money had been "judged as a relatively harmless extravagance," is beyond comprehension.

Why Christian and Hebrew scholars should persist in writing of Jesus as if he were like any other ordinary prophet is very strange. Surely the fame of Jesus has not lasted two thousand years, and is today perhaps a matter of deeper and wider interest than at any time, because he was, in character and expression, not unlike, say, Hillel. On what, then, is his fame based? Leaving out of consideration for the time being the figure of the prophecies and the Apocalypse, does his fame rest on the miracles he performed? Surely not, because the Hebrew scholars and other Oriental investigators have produced from the ancient literature volumes of data concerning the practice of miracles, so-called; it is now generally accepted that there was nothing unusual in what Jesus really did. Numbers of writers recently have shown how the imagination of the Oriental can be stirred at the sight of one reviving from a swoon. The Oriental who imagines a dear one dead when only in a swoon can recount the story of the resuscitation in such a way as to make the happening as miraculous as his powers of imagination can carry it. The Oriental is not satisfied with a miracle; he wants a big miracle. If the fame of Jesus is to rest upon the miracles, it will not be able to sustain the shocks of science which become more and more miraculous every day. What else is there? The sermons and parables cannot account for the life of the fame, for such scholars as Klaus-

ner and others hold that the sayings of Jesus are taken from the literature of the day and contain nothing original. What next can be? The betrayal and trial? Scarcely one or the other, both have been reconsidered, and the evidence concerning each incident sifted and re-examined. There seems to be a great change in the opinion of many scholars during the last twenty years. The whole question of the betrayal and trial has been raised in numbers of works which have appeared since the turn of the century. There remains the crucifixion. Does the fame of Jesus depend upon Calvary? Every incident connected with the life of Jesus seems to be challenged now. It is possible to take, almost at random, a dozen works on Jesus, published in this generation, and find as many points of disagreement concerning the events of his life as there are authors. Yet, the interest grows apace; the wider the points of disagreement, the surer the fact becomes that the figure of commanding interest for thoughtful men is Jesus and none other. The fame of Jesus rests not upon any one incident or on the originality of any of the sayings.

The name of Jesus lives today in the minds of men, because it has always found a refuge in the souls of the meek and lowly. It is impossible to look at the Gothic cathedrals of England and the continent without realizing the truth of Émile Mâle's expression: "The cathedral is the Bible of the poor." The poor of all countries, all the way down to the end of the seventeenth century, kept the memory of Jesus alive. The precious bond of kinship—coming from the same stock, labouring at the primitive tasks, being near to the soil, to the hills, and to the lake, and knowing these things as only the people that use them daily know them; feeling that he was one of them, that he spoke to them and for them, that the sermons and sayings applied directly to their own trials—all

these ties of folk-relationship bore safely the name of Jesus through the terrible periods of strife and bloodshed, in which warring factors wellnigh made his name something to be feared. This sympathy of the folk is revealed by Émile Mâle in his master-works on the religious art of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. These works of Mâle are a revelation; nothing so much lights up the so-called dark ages as these extraordinary interpretations of the iconography of the early centuries of the Gothic. He says: "An instinct turned me to the thirteenth century, where all is order and light." To find just what was the relationship of the poor to the church, and to find what the spiritual and artistic contribution was that the poor gave to the cathedrals, as brought to light by Mâle, makes it possible to view five hundred years of religious activity from a totally different standpoint; not that taken by the rationalists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but that of a historian viewing the growth of institutions from an economic standpoint.

Klausner finds it difficult to understand "why the followers of Jesus supported him when he entered Jerusalem as the Messiah and purified the Temple, but did nothing to save him three days later when he was crucified." He assumes the great change was brought about by the answer Jesus made to the Herodians about the tribute money; and he says, it may be assumed that this "proved to the people that not from this Galilean Messiah could they hope for national freedom and political redemption."

When Dr. Grant says: "It is not a contradiction in terms to pay tribute to both," he forgets all he has written about the fearful burden of taxation which reduced the people to penury. He admits that the imperial tribute was thoroughly disliked, and he admits that it maintained a heathen Empire, "whose

very existence was a blasphemous denial of the sovereignty of God." If it is not a contradiction in terms to pay tribute to God and Cæsar, then what is it? For how can the kingdom come on earth while Cæsar reigns? No one has performed the necessary work of presenting an *Economic Background of the Gospels* with greater care than Dr. Grant. He is at great pains to emphasize the terrible consequences of spoliation by the Romans, and, side by side with it, the other, not less iniquitous, system of tithe, "which combined to crush initiative and to destroy every incentive to accumulate property." Just so. Jesus said: "Lay not up treasures for yourselves." Why? Because, if the Romans do not take the treasure, the priests will, and yet Jesus who gave the advice saw no harm in paying tribute to both. It is amazing how a man of Spengler's powers can interpret the reply of Jesus as, "fit yourselves to the power of the fact-world, be patient, suffer, and ask it not, whether they are 'just.'" Here Spengler is confusing Jesus with Christ, the figure created by Christian editors of the gospels. Now, either there is Jesus of Nazareth, or there is not. Spengler is so carried away by the Apocalyptic idea that he seems to ignore all that is recorded of Jesus before he entered Jerusalem. It is impossible for him to substantiate what he says is the interpretation of "render unto Cæsar, etc.," unless he is prepared to prove that Jesus was a Christian and not a Jew.

Consider the essential facts which lead up to the trick planned by the Herodians. Jesus, born and bred in Galilee at the time of Judas of Gaulon, starts a non-resistance mission and preaches the coming of the kingdom of God on earth to the victims of Roman spoliation and tyranny. For his disciples he selects some of his brothers and others who were known to be in sympathy with the militant crusade of Judas. The authorities show that a perfect system of spies was maintained

all through the regions where supporters and sympathizers of Judas lived. Although the mission of Jesus was entirely different from that of Judas, the one being supported by robust men, the other by the meek and lowly, the spies were not likely to overlook any of the movements, military or otherwise, in Galilee, the hotbed of insurrectionists. From what is known of modern spy systems, it may be taken that the Roman authorities in the districts were kept informed of the movements of Jesus and of the nature of his mission. Undoubtedly, the Roman authorities knew he had advised the people to "resist not evil," and not to lay up treasures. For these reasons it can be accepted that Jesus and his disciples realized that enemies had marked them, and that it were better they should avoid being haled before the magistrates. These simple facts must be kept in mind when the reply to the Herodians is to be considered.

It has already been shown that this is the one incident in the first three gospels that is described almost without variation. But, strangely enough, it does not appear in John. Take the narrative as it appears in Luke XX:

And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly:

Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no?

But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Cæsar's.

And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God, the things which be God's.

And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

It is clear from this description of what happened, that the Jewish authorities had been unable to make a case against him. If he had violated the Jewish law, it would not have been necessary for this trick to have been planned. Mark says: "They sent unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words." "They" stands for the chief priests, scribes, and elders. Matthew says: "The Pharisees took council how they might entangle him in his talk, and they sent out unto him their disciples and the Herodians." The Herodians being undoubtedly the Jewish authorities. The three gospels agree that those who heard the reply marvelled, and Luke adds: "They were not able to take hold of the sayings before the people." Why should they marvel? It is perfectly clear that they marvelled at the Galilean Jew turned renegade to the theocratic idea. The Jewish authorities imagined that the reply meant, what Eisler, Klausner, Grant, and Spengler imagine it meant. And they were content to hold their peace, for, as so many writers of the day point out, it was from this time that the disciples lost faith in him. Indeed, Klausner attributes the desertion of Judas Iscariot to this very reason. He says: "Judas became convinced that here was a false Messiah or a false prophet . . . no mighty deeds, no one is subdued by him; the mighty Messiah escapes nightly to Bethany; except for bold remarks against the tradition of the elders and vain arrogance, Jesus reveals no plan by which he will effect the redemption." So it may be possible, on Klausner's theory, to assume that the real reason why the Sanhedrin

took action and had Jesus brought before it, was that Judas had accused him of being a false prophet. It is strange that Klausner himself should overlook this very important notion. It may be possible that the men who laid the trap thought that the common people had not divined the true importance of his reply, and rather than awaken in their minds thoughts of such campaigns as those of the "practical" reformer, Judas, it were better to hold their peace. Consider it from the practical standpoint.

Renan is quite right in saying that Jesus did not take the way of Judas, but Renan is wrong in the interpretation. Jesus knew perfectly well (had he not the whole history of the Jews behind him in this?) that financial reform, social reform, political reform, were utterly futile ways of attempting to bring the kingdom of God on earth.

There had been strife and violence for centuries. Reformers had come and gone; prophets had come and gone; Judas Maccabeus had come and gone, but no advance was made. Cæsar was there, the people were despoiled, deluded, betrayed, and enslaved; all the abominable systems, according to Jewish law, were in vogue. Tax, tribute, and subjection; yes, Jesus was wise (and so, indeed, for a time, were his followers). They must have known that violence would beget violence, and Jesus from the first had taught them not to resist evil. Judas was all for resisting evil. He was a militant mystic of the type of Cromwell.

It would have been impossible to divide the Galileans into two separate parties if Jesus had been merely a political and social reformer. If it had been a question of the policy of one political and social reformer or that of another, the vast majority would have followed Judas; but Jesus held out no hope of amelioration under the system of Cæsar, not until the coming

of the kingdom. Over and over again this idea was drilled into their minds by him, and here is the distinctive difference between any messianic idea held by the Gaulonites and Jesus. The Messiah of the old idea would restore the law and testimony and rule over his people. He was to be a Jewish Messiah. But Jesus never gave them the slightest idea that he was inclined, or even fitted, to play such a role; that idea arose in the minds of his followers, who were busy with the imaginative work of the fulfilment of the prophecies.

Jesus up to this time evidently had said nothing of a seditious character. That must have been obvious from the way the tribute story is told by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Therefore, it was necessary to trick him into saying something that would bring him into the clutches of the law, and, as Luke says: "They sent forth spies feigning to be just men so that they might take hold of his words." For what purpose? So that they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the government; not unto the chief priest, but the governor, the head of the bureaucracy.

Another important point overlooked by all the commentators is that Jesus knew the full significance of the question put by the spies. "Why tempt ye me?" What does this mean? Tempt! in what way? If the spies thought for a moment that he would say "yes" to the paying of tribute, would they have taken the trouble to put the question? Certainly not. For it cannot be imagined that they put the tribute question to him hoping his answer "yes" would cause dissension in the ranks of his followers, for such a reply would defeat their set purpose. The imperial authorities knew much more than the Sanhedrin; Pilate, or his officers, knew the quality of the opponent who stood for the kingdom of God. The carefully planned trick was to be the final attempt to catch him. They

declared outright: "Thou carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men . . ." Indeed, they had a far higher opinion of his faith and courage than any of his followers had. "Why tempt ye me?" Did Jesus for a moment underestimate the value the Herodians held of him? Did he think they might imagine he would be tempted to escape the ordeal by saying "yes"? Perhaps, for he assuredly knew what the answer "no" would mean to him. Yet, look at the incident as one will, there seems to be no valid reason for supposing the trick to be planned with any notion of the reply to the question being other than "no." They knew he could not be tempted to say "yes." Jesus was a Jew who knew the laws so well that he was convinced that no kingdom of God could be established on earth so long as tribute was paid to Cæsar.

Moreover, who but the Herodians would think of asking such a question; who else was vitally interested in it? His followers would never dream of asking, for each could answer it for himself. No true Jew would hesitate for a moment; paying tribute was a violation of the law and testament. Although it is told that he was taken first before the chief priest, it is shown from what follows that the chief priest passed him on almost immediately to Pilate. And what was the charge against Jesus? Luke states very clearly, and this seems to have been overlooked by many writers: "We found this man perverting our nation and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar." There it is! It is all as plain as day, if only a little trouble is taken to fit this event into the long chain of the history of the Jews.

The grand climacteric was reached; the greatest crisis in the history of mankind was juxtaposed. Jesus or Pilate, the kingdom of God or the Empire of Cæsar.

This incident, perhaps the most important in the drama

which ended in the crucifixion, has been treated very lightly by the commentators. Whether Jewish or Christian, whether theologian, historian, or sociologist, one and all fail when they reach the question of the tribute money. The importance of the scene itself in the life of Jesus cannot be overestimated; the importance of finding the real meaning of the words used by Jesus is vital to the whole question of purpose and mission. As the scene stands in the first three gospels, it has certainly deserved as close a study as has been given to the crucifixion. Indeed, it is not possible to understand the crucifixion if the reply to the Herodians is not understood. There was no doubt in the minds of the authorities, whether they were Roman or Jewish, that a decisive stage had been reached in his career. Evidently it was all-important to them, for they had planned a trick; they had sent spies feigning to be just men. The very preface to the question, given in practically the same words in all three versions, shows that they had gone to work deliberately and craftily to catch him. For what purpose? "So that they might deliver him unto the power of the authorities and the governor." Not to the Sanhedrin, but to the governor. The reason why this scene is treated by the commentators as though it were of little or no importance is that they have failed to understand the meaning of the words spoken by Jesus. The one example in the gospels which reveals what was in the minds of the authorities, the one scene, the outcome of which is so important to the authorities that a carefully laid plan is made to catch Jesus before witnesses in a seditious saying, is not given anything like the importance in many scholarly works that is given to a date, the name of a place, the origin of a saying. The fact is, they have not known what to make of it, and they have not had the courage to say so.

Take the words as they are given in the three gospels:

“Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” The statements are clear, there is no reservation, no modification, no proviso; there is no legal twist to it, it soars above positive law and lies in the realms of justice. It is the basis of justice, the point from which the ownership of the thing produced can be determined. Without it, there can be no law of ownership but a political or legal one for the determination of the courts. Jesus says: “Give to Cæsar what is his,” not “what is legally his.” Well, what is Cæsar’s? Only that which he produces. Here lies the very heart of the whole question. Jesus preached non-resistance: lay not up treasures, food enough only for the day, non-cooperation, abandonment of homes, of fields, flight into the mountains, the wilderness, anywhere away from the curse, Cæsar, the heathen ruler who robbed, jailed, and murdered God’s chosen people. Tribute was a thing unlawful, unholy, a thing accursed and abhorred from old time. Had not all the true prophets shown how tribute arose out of the removal of the landmarks? Josephus, in *Antiquities*, says: “Have a care you do not take those landmarks away which are a divine and unshakable limitation of rights made by God himself to last for ever, since this going beyond limits and gaining ground upon others is the occasion of wars and seditions.” Jesus knew his history and he must have known the difference between that of the old law and that of the priests’ law. The prophets knew, and, as Jesus knew the prophets, there is no sound reason for thinking Jesus did not know. Give to Cæsar what is his, and Cæsar, like any other of God’s children, will have to work if he wants to eat. Cæsar has as much right to equality of opportunity as any other labourer in God’s vineyard, but Cæsar, the tribute-gatherer, the parasite, the human ruler, has no place at all in the kingdom of God on earth. So “Render

unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," means nothing more, nothing less, than render unto Cæsar what he, in the name of divine justice, can call his own. Let him take the property that he has produced or has inherited from someone who has produced it, where the absolute title is clear, according to the law of justice.

The second part of the injunction, "render unto God the things which be God's," is the most consistent piece of economic reasoning which Jesus, the perfect example of a wise man, gave to mankind. This means, give to God all things he has created. Why? Because it is impossible for the kingdom to come, so long as men own parts of God's kingdom. There can be no private ownership of land in the kingdom of God, because land is created, and man can own nothing but what he produces. The law is very simple and very clear, once it is interpreted by Jesus. The mission was, to bring the kingdom of God on earth; the time was ripe for a change, indeed, many thought the time was at hand. All that was required was for people to want it, for the idea to spread like lightning, to be grasped by everybody overnight, and the thing would be done. Alas, Cæsar's world is no place for the rapid spread of ideas about an economic paradise. Cæsar is there to see that such ideas do not spread.

The reply of Jesus to the Herodians is directly connected with the justice campaigns of the son of Amoz, Ezra, and Immanuel. It is possible to compile from Amos, Hosea, Micah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel a short history of the promises of the restoration of God's justice. Jesus solved the problem which confronted the prophets. The reply to the Herodians meets all the difficulties which faced the prophets, and it does as much for the difficulties which faced Plato and his friends when they thought of making a state. The reply of Jesus to

the Herodians is what is required to make perfectly clear the beauty of the definition of Socrates: "Justice will be admitted to be the having and doing what is a man's own and belongs to him."

Is there any other fundamental which could be taken for a religious basis? Lactantius says: "Religion is that which seeks to bind man to an invisible God." When Jesus realized that everything in nature shows that God's intention was for man to be happy, and that his material happiness depended upon the economic conditions affecting his daily life, he saw in every direction man-made laws thwarting the will of God.

To what extent such a nature as that of Jesus would be stirred by reading Immanuel can only be imagined when the book called Isaiah is studied closely. He must have pondered long the great problems it contains. Take two of the promises of Immanuel:

*Is. LVIII:* And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

*Is. LXV:* For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. . . .

And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

They shall not labour in vain nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.

And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

To what extent these verses shaped his ideas and made him missionary of the kingdom of God on earth is a question which the Jews themselves are better able to answer than the Christians. But the Jews have failed signally to understand the mission of Jesus, failed to recognize in him the champion of their cause, failed to see in him the great symbol of restoration and redemption.