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BY

S. K. GEORGE, M.A., B.D.

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THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS
OF
JESUS CHRIST

BY
S. K. GEORGE

Second Edition

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TO
THE NEW INDIA IN THE MAKING

To Whose Upbuilding Jesus Has
A Contribution To Make.

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

Jesus, not Christ

It is not too much to claim that as the result of more than a century of devoted scholarship applied to the origins of Christianity, we know more about the Jesus of history than any generation save his own. For the emphasis on the historic Jesus, as against the Christ of devotion, and dogma, is a modern emphasis. To the early Christians, even from the days of St. Paul, perhaps largely due to his dominating influence, Jesus, the Man of Nazareth, receded into the background and the Christ, ascended into the heavens and expected to return in glory, took his place. "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, now so we know him so no more," said St. Paul, early in Christian history, thus setting the trend for all later Christian development, which has been centred not on the teaching and example of the man Jesus, but on the significance of the divine Christ. Yet Christ after the flesh, the Man of Nazareth, is pivotal for the Christian faith. For everything connected with the Christian movement started with him, with Jesus, "a man approved of God, who went about doing good, for God was with him". To make him real to us as far as we can do so, to stand face to face with him across the centuries, sweeping aside the cobwebs of Christologies that have been spun round his strenuous personality, is a far more bracing experience than contemplating the innumerable portraits that have been painted of him and adorned and worshipped down the ages. It may be a disturbing, a challenging, experience not to the Christian only but to every one who comes across him. That is what has happened to a great extent as a result of our modern knowledge of him. As Mr. Bernard Shaw has said, in his preface to 'Androcles and the Lion': "The picture has come from its frame, the statue has descended from its pedestal, the story has become real, with all the incalculable consequences that may flow from this terrifying

miracle." And the world is not ready to receive him ; perhaps the Christian world least of all. Such a miracle, as Shaw himself has pictured in his Epilogue to St. Joan, will only confound those who claim to worship the Son of God and lead to a fresh rejection of the Son of Man. Says St. Joan, in her final appearance in vision to her judges, accusers and their accomplices, who all unite in singing her praises after her canonisation : " Shall I rise again from the dead and come back to you a living woman ? " And seeing their dismay at that prospect she cries out : " What ! must I burn again ? Are none of you ready to receive me ? " To that the devoted Bishop, who had in all conscience sent her to the stake, answers : " The heretic is always better dead. And mortal eyes cannot distinguish the saint from the heretic. Spare them. " And St. Joan disappears with the despairing cry : " O God, that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive Thy saints ? How long, O Lord, how long ? " Jesus himself with true insight had asked : " Shall the Son of Man find faith on earth when he cometh ? "

And yet the world is in dire need of a reappearance of the Son of Man. For empires and social systems that seemed deeply entrenched are crumbling before our eyes and men's hearts are failing them for fear of the things that are happening all around and in dread of what the morrow may bring forth. It may be that a world shattered to pieces by trusting in its own wisdom may yet in humility turn and seek to remake itself in the way indicated by Jesus of Nazareth. Said Bernard Shaw, twenty years ago, in the Preface already quoted : " I am ready to admit that after contemplating the world for nearly sixty years, I see no way out of the world's misery but the way which would have been found by Christ's will if he had undertaken the work of a modern practical statesman. "

It may be that we are witnessing in these days an effort at such an application of the spirit of Jesus, of the way of the Cross, to the conduct of the affairs of the world, in the politics of India's Statesman-Saint, Mahatma Gandhi. The present writer has long held that Gandhiji

has recaptured the spirit of Jesus and is demonstrating the possibility, as well as the way, of its application to life in the modern world. This is certainly not to advance any mystic claims for Gandhi. I am far indeed from affirming or denying any of the claims made for Jesus himself. My charge against the churches that deify Jesus is that in seeking to exalt they have failed to follow him and have removed the challenge, taken away the fire, out of his life and teachings. For the Jesus we see in the pages of the Gospels, or perhaps behind them, for they too were coloured to some extent by beliefs that soon developed round his person, is not the "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild" of Christian piety, nor the deified Christ, the Eternal Logos of Christian dogma, but a living, heroic, man, "a real person, who meant what he said, a fact, a force, like electricity, only needing the invention of suitable political machinery to be applied to the affairs of mankind with revolutionary effect."* That such an application should be made, that it may provide the only adequate solution of the problems of our distracted, war-racked, world, is the main concern of the present writer. If this feeble attempt at presenting afresh the life of Jesus should make him in any small measure more real than he has yet been to my countrymen, I shall be amply gratified. Jesus, as one of the World's Teachers, will certainly have an appeal to India and may find from her a response such as he has not yet met with in any other country.

My thanks are due to the Publishers for allowing me to attempt this sketch of the Life of Jesus, in their welcome series on "The World Teachers."

Trichur,
September, 1942. }

S. K. GEORGE.

* B. Shaw : "Preface to 'Androcles and the Lion'."

LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

CHAPTER I

The Jewish Heritage

No figure of history, however great, can be understood except against the background of his time and country. Even those who have changed the course of history, or those rare individuals who represent fresh advances in human evolution, stand rooted in the traditions of their race and age. The very best among them are rightly to be regarded as the flowerings of humanity, the outcome of the varied experiences of the past, as well as the promise, the earnest of the coming achievements of the race. Jesus is no exception to this. He was a Palestinian Jew of the first century of the era that has come to be called after him and was rooted in the traditions and history of that remarkable race.

The Jews are a remarkable people. There seems to be no other nation with such a tenacious sense of divine commission, of a mission to fulfil, a destiny to realize on earth. From the beginning of their history, they believed themselves to be the chosen people of God. This sense of divine election, dating from the call of their progenitor Abraham, was confirmed to them by their miraculous deliverance from Egyptian captivity under the leadership

of their great Law-Giver, Moses, and their successful occupation of their Promised Land, Palestine. But except for a brief spell of prosperity under the reign of King David, the Jews were never at ease in their Holy Land. This short-lived prosperity in the 10th century B.C. gathered legendary splendour in their thought and its restoration in God's good time became the dominant hope of the nation. But this hope was continually balked of realization in their chequered career, which, if it be an evidence of divine election, can only mean an election to suffering and not to glory.

For sufferance has been the badge of the Jew, not only individually but as a race. For very soon after the splendour of the Davidic reign, the Jewish Kingdom divided itself into the two petty kingdoms of Israel and Judah, constantly at war with each other and together forming the battle-ground for the successive, rival empires of Egypt and Mesopotamia, on either side of them. From that time on, the Jew has continually been under oppression, often in exile, and dispersed all over the face of the earth. The Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans held successive sway over them in Biblical times. In the days of Jesus, Palestine was an outpost of the Roman Empire, administered by third-rate Roman procurators or half-breed native kings. After their rejection of Jesus and the subsequent destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, the heart-centre of their national and religious life, the Jews became a homeless people, with almost everybody's hands against them. The revived persecution of them by the Nazis, in modern days, which seems almost unbelievable, is

only in keeping with the past experiences of this unhappy people, still clinging to their religion and their God, their distinctive nationalism and the hope of their vindication as God's chosen people.

This hope had taken two main forms. The first, the more prevalent, was that of their exaltation to earthly sovereignty, not only in their restored kingdom of Palestine, but as rulers of the whole world. God would give them the rule of the nations and the kings of the world would do them homage, some of their poets and prophets had dared to hope. To the majority of the people down the centuries, this was to be realized through a warrior-king of the line of David. So all through their history the people were ready to follow any imposter who claimed to be of the lineage of David and to lead them in revolt against foreign domination. Many false Messiahs had appeared before Jesus and others continued to appear after him, leading the people astray. The note of tragic disappointment on which all such futile efforts ended is well struck in the words which two of Jesus' own disciples used when speaking of their own disappointment at the apparent failure of Jesus' shameful death: "We trusted that it was he which should have redeemed Israel."

These repeated disappointments led to another kind of expectation to take root in the nation's mind. And that was the expectation of a supernatural kingdom of God to be established after the break-up of all earthly kingdoms. God was to intervene catastrophically in judgment upon the Gentile nations and establish His rule. This hope was born of despair about their own prowess, but at the same time of belief in God's almighty power

and His interest in Israel, His chosen nation. Many were the "Visions of the End" that were promulgated in the days of national humiliation and suffering. There is a whole class of literature current among the Jews and very popular in the days of Jesus, known as Apocalypses or Revelations, of coming events. Two of them, one pre-Christian, the Book of Daniel and the other post-Christian, the Book of Revelation, have found places within the Christian Bible. But there was a host of others, many of them put out under the names of ancient Jewish worthies—like the Book of Enoch, the Vision of Isaiah, or the Assumption of Moses—which must have been known to Jesus. They all agree in picturing God as intervening miraculously through His appointed agent, a Supernatural Son of Man, who is to appear on the clouds of heaven to judge the world. It is significant that the title that Jesus continually used to himself was "the Son of Man"; and it is obvious to all unbiassed readers of the New Testament in the light of contemporary Jewish literature that Jesus' thought regarding himself was deeply coloured by the apocalyptic beliefs of his people in those days. We shall have later to deal with this element in his Messianic consciousness.

But there was yet another stream of thought in the Jewish heritage into which Jesus had entered. That was a more spiritual conception of God and of Israel as His chosen people. This too was fashioned out of the tragic experiences of the nation. From the beginning of the Jewish story we observe a stream of remarkable people, calling themselves Prophets of God and claiming to speak

in his name. They were many of them queer individuals, given to ecstasies and dominated by a single devotion to their God. They regarded themselves as "God's remembrancers", reminding the nation of God's purposes for them and calling them to repentance. But it was the lot of most of them to be despised and rejected by their own generations. Fanatic and very tribal, to begin with, in their conception of Yahweh, their nation's God, the stream of God-consciousness that they represent deepens and broadens with the centuries till the noblest of them attained to a conception of God, universal, spiritual and holy, that is almost without parallel in any human thought about God, under that category. From Elisha, the Tishbite, calling down fire upon those who would disobey his God, down through Amos and Hosea, to Jeremiah and Isaiah, they form a goodly fellowship and a glorious succession. The mind of Jesus, as seen from his recorded utterances, was steeped in the writings of these prophets. He was constantly quoting them in controversies with the religious leaders of his day, in support of a spiritual as against an external conception of religious duty. "Go and learn what this means: I would have mercy and not sacrifice," he said once, quoting Hosea, the prophet of divine forgiveness. Addressing the people in his home-town of Nazareth, proclaiming there for the first time his programme of action, he read a famous passage from Isaiah and said: "This day this scripture is fulfilled in your ears." In the solemn moment of his Last Supper with his disciples, he spoke of the New Covenant in his blood, recalling Jeremiah's prediction about a New Covenant, that God

will enter into with His people, in which all external symbols of worship will be abrogated and God will be worshipped "in spirit and truth". Above all he made his own the Second Isaiah's conception of God's chosen Servant, triumphing through suffering and death—not conquering through violence, but through humiliation and death fulfilling God's purposes of redemption.

This spiritual conception of God and religion and of his own destiny was the deepest element in the make-up of Jesus. Of course, elements of the other hope, the supernaturalistic one, entered into his final conception of his mission; but that he regarded himself as standing in the line of succession of these prophets and as carrying forward their message is absolutely clear. Jesus can only be understood aright in the light of that succession and his message can only be carried forward in that spirit. The true succession from him is not that of any ecclesiastical corporation, however unbroken its historical links with his immediate followers, but of those who are moved by his spirit, who are on fire with God, like the Prophets of old, like Jesus himself, like the revolutionary saints of all time.

CHAPTER II

Initiation and Temptation

All the Gospel narratives agree in depicting the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist as the starting point of the public career of Jesus. The earliest and most authentic of them, the Gospel according to Mark, begins the story of Jesus at that point. Of

the life of Jesus before that we know next to nothing. The account of his miraculous birth from a Virgin Mother, differently recorded in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, have the beauty not of literal fact but of poetic fancy; and they are paralleled by kindred myths regarding the Buddha and other heroes of ancient times. The utmost that even conservative opinion would claim for these narratives is that they are consonant with what the Church has come later to believe about Jesus: but not as affording basis for such beliefs. The earliest gospel makes no mention of the Virgin Birth and there is no reference to it in the recorded teachings of St. Paul and the other apostles.

But the account of the Baptism has the ring of authenticity about it. The event, as recorded in the first three gospels, is crucial in the life of Jesus. With that he steps out into the light of history from having been an obscure village carpenter. It is in line with the call to service of the great Hebrew prophets who had gone before him. Going down into the river Jordan to submit to the baptism by John the Baptist for the remission of sins, Jesus saw a vision of God's spirit descending like a dove upon him and heard a voice saying unto him: "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." It was an inner, subjective experience to Jesus himself, clothed in the familiar symbolism of Hebrew mysticism—the words themselves are reminiscent of verses from the Psalms—but none the less intensely real. From that moment onwards Jesus felt himself called to his special vocation as God's chosen servant to declare his Father's purposes unto his people. The content of that vocation deepened and

altered by the experiences that came to him in its fulfilment, but to the call itself he remained faithful to the last, even unto death and unto, what perhaps to him was more trying than death itself, the sense of desolation and desertion by his God that seemed to overtake him on the cross. The efforts to make it an objective vision shared by others; or as meant mainly for John the Baptist, as the Fourth Evangelist depicts it, spoil the significance of that supreme experience of Jesus.

To John the Baptist himself, Jesus stood in the relation of a *chela* to his *guru*. The disciple, of course, went far beyond the master and in nothing is John's greatness revealed more than in his joyous acceptance of that development. "He must increase but I must decrease," he said about Jesus outstepping him. The gospels have represented John as mainly or even solely the fore-runner of Jesus, announcing the coming of a greater than himself. But though that is John's greatest title to glory in the context of history, yet in his own day he was a dynamic personage with a distinct message of his own to his people. He was essentially a preacher of righteousness, declaring the imminence of the Kingdom of God and the need of ethical preparation for entry into it. He created a stir in Israel at the time and even after his death. Jewish leaders dared not openly declare that his baptism "was from men; for they feared the people; for all verily held John to be a prophet". We have Jesus' own testimony to the greatness of John and of his own indebtedness to him. "Of those born of women there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist," said Jesus, remembering no doubt what he

himself owed to John. The two must have conversed long and deeply on the things of the Spirit and of God's imminent purposes for their nation. And as they talked, the fire must have kindled between them and Jesus must have felt called to his life's mission. Baptism at John's hands must have been to Jesus an act of initiation to God's service and proved to be the means whereby the sense of divine acceptance of his dedication was conveyed to him. Later on when he was challenged by Jewish authority to declare his credentials: "Tell us by what authority thou doest these things," they asked, Jesus referred them to the baptism of John, incidentally revealing what store he set by that. "The baptism of John, was it from heaven or from men?" he asked them, as if his own authority rested on that.

And yet he passed beyond the message of John and John's conception of God and His ways. After the glowing testimony to John's greatness already quoted, Jesus added: "Yet he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he." John was a stern prophet of judgment, of a righteous God, who will come like a winnowing wind and a burning fire to separate and to consume the chaff; but Jesus had seen the vision of a loving Father, seeking to save the sinner. When, after Jesus had started his work of seeking and saving the lost, John, paying the price of his uncompromising witness to truth in the prison of Machaerus, imprisoned there for his denunciation of King Herod's adulterous marriage with his brother's wife, sent his disciples to ask Jesus whether he was the expected Messiah or not, Jesus gently reminded John of the differences be-

tween their conceptions of God, with a gentle appeal to his former *Guru* to reach out to the larger truth. But John met with his end as a martyr to his message of righteousness, having set a greater than himself on his path. The words of John already quoted, expressing his reactions to Jesus' increasing success, "he must increase, I must decrease," represent the acme of self-abnegation.

After the experience at his baptism, Jesus felt the insistent need for retirement and communion with God. "The spirit drove him into the wilderness," says the old record. Long periods of lonely contemplation and fasting are common among mystics in the East. The account of the Temptation that followed on this period of vigil is given us in picture-language, undoubtedly in the form communicated by Jesus himself; for it had come to him in the secrecy of his inmost soul. It has its parallel in the temptation of the Buddha by Mara, the power of evil. Jesus had undoubtedly been thinking out his programme of action, the manner in which he could best fulfil his mission and inaugurate his kingdom. The temptations have no meaning apart from his consciousness of divine mission and of supernatural powers for its fulfilment. It is said that Indian yogis, when they reach a certain level of attainment through yogic practices, become conscious of extraordinary powers of body and mind and are tempted to display them for self-aggrandisement and self-glorification. It is only the few really spiritually-minded among them who resist this temptation and go forward, treading the steep and narrow path that leads to the very feet of God. Jesus was such a one. Throughout his life he was

conscious of great powers within himself, of the illimitable resources of God at his disposal, but steadily and consistently he refused to use them for himself. His mighty deeds, such as they were, were wrung out of him out of compassion for suffering humanity. "Thinkest thou not that I cannot even now pray to my Father in Heaven and He will not presently give me ten legions of angels to protect me?" he asked, restraining the impetuous disciple who would have fought to save him from his captors at the time of his arrest. It was this lifelong principle that he laid down at the outset of his ministry in answer to the temptation to convert stones into bread to relieve his hunger after his long fast. "Man does not live by bread alone," he said, "but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

The other two temptations concern the ways to be adopted in setting up his kingdom. Is it to be the way of the miracle-worker, dazzling people's minds by prodigies so as to compel belief in his mission? The suggestion came to him that he should throw himself from the pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem and land unscathed amidst an applauding crowd. Jesus was again and again challenged during his ministry to show a sign from heaven to vindicate his authority. But he stoutly refused so to force men's allegiance, knowing that belief on such grounds avails nothing in the realm of the spirit. Further, to his mind such an attempt to display his powers amounted to a putting to trial of God from whom those powers derived. Therefore he told the Tempter: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God."

Or was he to use the way of violence to establish his New Order, "bowing down to Satan" in the vivid imagery of the ancient account, in order to gain control over the kingdoms of the world? It is the perennial temptation of the man conscious of power to use the short-cut of violence to establish his rule. It is the more insidious in the case of the person with benevolent intentions, in the face of the crass stupidity and intractableness of man in the mass. But no dictatorship however benevolent can lead man into that "heaven of freedom, where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; —where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection—where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening realms of thought and action".* There has been, by the way, no better description of what Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God in its ethical aspect than this prayer of the poet Rabindranath Tagore. Jesus, therefore, swept aside for ever this temptation to use the way of violence and deliberately chose the way of love, the way of suffering that led to the cross, which is the way of God. "Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve," he told the Devil, who, we are told, "when he had completed, every temptation departed from him for a season."

* R. Tagore, *Gitanjali*.

CHAPTER III

The Preaching of the Kingdom

The gospel narratives are very indefinite about the chronology of the life of Jesus. The earliest of them, St. Mark, is according to tradition the record of Apostle Peter's reminiscences of his Master; and it bears the marks of being such reminiscences. Particular incidents that stood out in Peter's memory are described with vividness, with almost photographic exactitude of detail. There is general agreement among critics that in broad outline, Mark's account of the public career of Jesus is coherent in itself and consonant with what we know of the general course of events in Palestine at that time.

According to Mark, the public career of Jesus was swift and short. There was a period of popularity and of expectant enthusiasm on the part of the common people of Galilee, the home-province of Jesus and most of his apostles. This was a period of diffusive, extensive sowing of the word of the Gospel, Jesus going about all the towns and villages of Galilee and preaching with acceptance in the Jewish synagogues. But this was followed by a period of growing opposition, accredited leaders of the Jews, Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem, following him about to find flaws in his teaching. They had not long to search, for Jesus' teaching was radical and revolutionary in the extreme. It went beyond the externalities of Pharisaic teaching to the heart of real religion in the conscience of the individual. He set aside man-made customs and regulations, with which the Pharisees had hedged

round the Law of God, making its observance burdensome to the common man. Such were their insistence on Sabbath observance, their laws of ceremonial cleanliness, their self-righteous attitude towards "the Publicans and the Sinners". Jesus swept aside these smaller matters and with unswerving spiritual insight laid stress on the weightier matters of the Law, love to God and love to fellowman. His teaching he compared to new wine which must find new wine-skins or else will burst the old bottles. This was new teaching with authority which the guardians of the old found unpalatable. So we are told that they conspired with the political authority in Galilee, the government of the corrupt and crafty Herod, to get rid of him. Jesus was no more welcomed in the Jewish synagogues. So we find him preaching on mountain-tops and by the sea-side to still huge crowds. But soon the province of Galilee itself became unsafe for him and he had hastily to leave its borders and travel about in the country beyond Tyre and Sidon and in the region of the Decapolis, the Greek cities to the east of Galilee, obviously to avoid capture by Herod's minions. There in retreat and faced with rejection by his own people, Jesus rethought his message and arrived at a new conception of his mission and destiny. He came to believe that he was to be the Messiah of the Jewish people, but a Messiah according to his own original conception. At this time he underwent an experience crucial like that at his baptism, an experience that revealed to him the necessity of his death. After that we read that he set his face to go to Jerusalem, there to fulfil his destiny. He passed once again through

Galilee, but secretly, for he had determined to reach Jerusalem, "outside which," he said, "it is not meet that a prophet should perish".

Such in brief is Mark's story of Jesus' public ministry. Attempts to evolve a chronology of events out of this summary account in order to provide a sequence for his teachings, made by later evangelists, notably by Luke and John, are often wide of the mark. The latter especially spaces out Jesus' teachings with several visits to Jerusalem; but these efforts prove unconvincing. The purported visits of Jesus to Jerusalem in St. John's gospel only provide occasions for John to fit into the framework that he has imagined for them the innumerable discourses, often bearing on later Christian controversy with Judaism, that he attributes to Jesus.

Jesus, then, began his public ministry in Galilee soon after the imprisonment of John the Baptist by King Herod. The burden of Jesus' early preaching was the same as that of John, *viz.*, the imminence of the Kingdom of God and the need of repentance or a change of heart for entry thereinto. It was veritably a Gospel or good news to the common people. The kingdom of God, as we have seen, was the dream of Jewish poet and prophet as well as of the common man. Down their long and chequered career, this was the one hope that had sustained them, the hope of God visiting and redeeming His people, establishing His reign on earth. To many, the majority, it meant political sovereignty, freedom from the hated Roman yoke, the restoration of their ancient Davidic splendour. But to Jesus at this time it had mainly an ethical content. It was good tidings to the poor, healing to the diseased, the

recovering of sight to the blind, freedom to the captive. His mind had been moulded by the teachings of the great Jewish prophets, those stern advocates of social justice. Had not one of them, Isaiah, said that the only religious observances in which God delighted were feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and the breaking of every yoke? It is significant that Jesus in one of his latest parables, picturing the Last judgment, said that this Law of Love, of kindness and humanity towards fellow-beings is to be its sole criterion. No wonder the common people heard him gladly.

His message, moreover, was one specially soothing to the despised and the rejected among the people. The stricter Jews condemned as Publicans and Sinners, as outside the pale of salvation, all those who could not conform to the requirements of the elaborate regulations of the Jewish Law. They condemned not only offences against morality, the sins of the flesh, but failures in keeping the ceremonial law. The poor working man who could not afford to keep the detailed prescriptions regarding ceremonial washings of cups and plates and of hands on returning from polluting contact with the Gentiles in the market place, the hard-pressed middle-class man—comparable perhaps to our educated unemployed—who sold himself to the despised foreign government for employment as tax-gatherer or some other petty government officer, the harlot who sold herself to everybody, for all these the self-righteous Jew had nothing but the plagues of Hell. But Jesus welcomed them all on the simple condition of a change of heart, the achievement of which was easier for them than for the self-righteous reli-

gious man. "Truly I tell you the publicans and the harlots shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before you," he told the Pharisees; while to the despised and rejected of this world he issued the gracious invitation: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavyladen and I will give you rest"; and they came and continue to come to him eagerly finding rest and peace to their souls. A Publican, a tax-gatherer by profession, was among his chosen band of twelve. The closest of his women-followers was Mary Magdalene, out of whom he said to have cast out seven devils, which perhaps means that she was a notorious sinner. There is the beautiful story of "a woman which was in the city, a sinner", washing his feet with her tears, wiping them with her hair and anointing them with precious ointment, to the horror of his host, a Pharisee, while Jesus pronounced on her the gracious word of pardon "because she loved much". And there is the still more lovely story of his letting free a woman taken in adultery, in the very act, on whom the Pharisees wanted him to pronounce the Mosaic verdict of stoning unto death. But none of her accusers could stand the searching test of Jesus: "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone on her." One by one they all slunk out and Jesus, left alone with the woman, asked her: Woman where are they? Did no man condemn thee; And she said: "No man, Lord." And Jesus said: "Neither do I condemn thee; go thy way; from henceforth sin no more." No wonder the Pharisees burned with indignation against him and sought to destroy him.

But there was a specific issue which enraged them more than anything else and was to them the

symbol of all his violations of their sacred Law and that was the scant respect he showed to their regulations regarding the Sabbath. Sabbath observance has been and continues to be one of the most distinctive elements in Jewish religious practice. The strictest sect among them in the time of Jesus, the Pharisees, had carried this observance to the absurd extent of discussing as to whether it was permissible to tie a knot or break an egg on the Sabbath day. On one occasion the Pharisees, ever dogging Jesus' footsteps to find accusations against him, drew his attention to his disciples plucking the ears of corn and eating them as they went through a corn field on a Sabbath day. Jesus recalled to them the incident of their great King David on a certain occasion violating the letter of the Law to appease his hunger in eating "the shew bread which it is not lawful, save for the priests to eat"; and he laid down the great principle that ought to guide human conduct, not only with regard to Sabbath observance but all external regulations whatever: "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath; so that the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

This was certainly giving a handle to his enemies and straightway they proceeded to use it. On another Sabbath, we find him facing the Pharisees on the same issue in what was obviously a set scene. Jesus was teaching in a synagogue and there was a man with a withered hand, whom the Pharisees had produced to see whether Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath day. Jesus squarely faced them on the issue and having asked the man to stand forth in the midst, he put to the Pharisees the straight question, whether it was right to do good on the Sabbath

or to do evil. But they held their peace and looking on them with anger at the hardness of their hearts, Jesus pronounced the word of healing on the man. "Straightway," it is recorded, "the Pharisees went out and took counsel with the Herodians how they might destroy him".

Another cause of offence was the claim of Jesus in his human right, as the Son of Man, to mediate God's forgiveness. There is the story of a palsied man carried into the presence of Jesus, let down from the roof of the house where Jesus was, as all other access was blocked by the crowd that thronged round him. Jesus, deeply moved by the man's faith and perceiving with his divine insight that the root of the malady lay deeper in the man's moral depravity, assured him of God's forgiveness. Contrition, change of heart, was the only condition in Jesus' teaching for God's forgiveness of human sin. To the woman that was a sinner who in penitence washed his feet with tears, to the dying thief who turned to him on the cross, he mediated God's forgiveness. And that is the lesson of his immortal parable of the Prodigal Son, in which the son who had spurned the Father's love and wasted his patrimony in riotous living had but to return to the Father to be welcomed with open arms. "There is more joy in heaven," said Jesus, "over one sinner that repents than over ninety and nine righteous persons who need no repentance." But to the Jew and unfortunately to the Christian Church too, taking over Jewish legalism, there is no remission of sins without the shedding of blood. There was to the Jew the elaborate ritual of Temple sacrifices ordained for the forgiveness of sins and to the Chris-

tian there is the atoning sacrifice of Christ—the Blood of the Lamb—to make propitiation for sin. But in the simple teaching of Jesus, carrying on the best in the Jewish prophetic teaching, nothing more is required than a broken and a contrite heart to receive God's forgiveness. Jesus' word of pardon was, therefore, blasphemy to the Jews. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" they thought within themselves and Jesus divining their thoughts offered to demonstrate that the man was really forgiven by bidding him rise up and walk. And the man rose up and took his bed and walked.

This brings us to the consideration of the numerous miracles that are recorded of Jesus. They are mainly records of healing, the majority of them healings of disordered minds. Many diseases that would now be attributed to purely physical or psychological causes, like epilepsy or insanity, were in Jesus' days attributed to devil-possession. Jesus himself seems to have believed the theory, at least certainly to have acted on it, as in all his healings of such people he is said to have cast out the devils from them. There is one instance in which he is reported to have allowed the devils on coming out of a man's body to enter into a herd of swine, causing them to rush down a precipice and be drowned. Power over devils, the testimony of demoniacs whom he healed, who very often appealed to him as the Son of God, was one of the chief evidences that induced belief in Jesus' deity in the minds of the Apostles. The discrediting of the theory of devil possession by modern knowledge invalidates to a great extent this testimony and the claims based on it. Jesus no doubt possessed great powers to calm

disordered minds. The working of that power was essentially psychological, though psychology may not yet be able to account adequately for every single case. The miracles too of healing leprosy and paralysis, and blindness even, also belong to the category of mental or spiritual healings which are not unknown to medical science and have their parallels in happenings at modern shrines and in well attested healings by certain rare individuals that way gifted. Even miracles like stilling a raging storm as he was once crossing the Lake of Galilee with his disciples in a small boat, or walking on the sea to them when they were in similar danger on another occasion, may have naturalistic explanations. Great claims, for example, are made for Indian Yoga and the prodigies performed by some Indian Yogis still baffle modern science.

But one thing is clear about the miracles of Jesus and that is that they were not in the nature of prodigies. They failed to compel belief in his authority in the critically-minded Pharisees, who constantly challenged him to show them a sign from heaven that they might believe in him. And Jesus, we are told, consistently refused to give them a sign. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it," he had declared. He had rejected that way of compelling belief as a temptation of the Devil at the very outset of his ministry. His miracles of healing were all acts of mercy compelled out of him by human suffering, and we constantly read of his strict injunctions not to spread abroad news of them. They were his responses to acts of faith on the part of the diseased people whom he healed; and it is

significant that even the gospels record his failure to do any mighty acts where such faith was lacking, as in his home-town of Nazareth. Where faith is still active, healings like those of Jesus still take place. The judgment of Mr. Middleton Murry on this matter seems to be sound ;* "In an age of healers, Jesus was a great healer. That he had powers of healing which it might tax our modern medicine to explain we need not doubt. But his healings were not such as to impress the Pharisees with a sense of any divine power. Nor would Jesus have had it otherwise." The modern mind sees the evidence of his divinity, such as it is, not in his miracles but in the fragrance of his sacrificial living.

Opposition to Jesus soon reached the stage of his exclusion from the Jewish synagogues. Those centres of Jewish religious teaching were not open to him for long after his public ministry started. We read only of one later occasion on which he preached in a synagogue and that was in his home-town of Nazareth. Here he met with the proverbial disdain of the prophet in his own home. They taunted him with his lowly origin and challenged him to do any of his miracles there. And it was here that he failed to do even his works of healing "because of their unbelief". He too was unsparing in his condemnation of their imperviousness. He was cast out of the synagogue and they attempted even to throw him down a precipice, but he escaped out of their midst.

His own relatives shared the general unbelief. It is recorded that as he was teaching in another place, Capernaum, on the lake-side, which henceforth

* M. Murry: "Life of Jesus."

became his home, his brothers apparently with his mother with them came to take him by force; "for they said he is beside himself". It is not clear from the gospel records how far his mother understood and sympathised with him. Most probably she too failed to understand him and his opposition to constituted authority must have been a sore vexation to her, "the sword that pierced her heart". Christian piety honours her as the Mother of God and the Fourth Evangelist pictured her as weeping beside the cross. But there is little trace of such understanding sympathy from her while he lived. Certain it is that Jesus disclaimed the ordinary ties of human relationships. On the occasion referred to above, when he was told that his mother and brothers were standing without, calling him, he asked: "Who is my mother and my brethren?" And looking round on them which sat round about him, he saith: "Behold, my mother and my brethren, For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister, and mother."

The period of diffusive sowing of the word of the Kingdom and of joyous expectation of a speedy harvest was thus soon over. It became clear to Jesus that the field in which the word was to be sown was of various kinds—some hard-trodden, some rocky, some full of thorns, and some only good ground—and that little permanent result was to be expected of such scattered sowing. It was this conviction that led to his choosing a select band of disciples who might be with him, that he might train them and send them forth to carry forward his work. He, therefore, called unto him a band of Twelve Apostles, some of whom were among his

earliest adherents. Of these Peter, James and John formed an inner circle, the most intimate of Jesus' disciples. The number twelve may have had reference to the twelve tribes of Israel and the claims he came to make as the Messiah-to-be, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. They were all of them drawn from the common people, many of them fisher-folk and other working men of Galilee. Only one of the twelve, Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him, was drawn from the southern province of Judea, the seat of Jewish orthodoxy. Not all of them attained prominence in the church even. But they were Jesus' faithful companions during the rest of his ministry and though dull of understanding till the very end he was grateful to them for their comradeship with him. "Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations," he gratefully told them at the end of his ministry. Most of his teachings that have come down to us was originally imparted to them and handed down by them. It was to them that he communicated the secret of his developing consciousness of his mission; and he turned to them for sympathy to the very end. "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" he yearningly asked Peter during his last agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

From the time that his rejection by the people at large appeared certain, he adopted the parabolic method of teaching, clothing the mystery of the Kingdom in his inimitable parables that it might be perceived only by those alone who had ears to hear. But he privately expounded their inner meaning to his disciples, who provided the good ground that

would in time bring forth a rich harvest, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundredfold.

Practically all his parables are concerned with what he called "the mystery of the Kingdom of God." "Mystery" in New Testament language means an open secret, open to those who had willing hearts to receive the truth, but veiled to the un-receptive and the ununderstanding. The real difficulty about the teaching of Jesus is its simplicity. On one occasion he thanked his Heavenly Father that he "has hid these things from the wise and the prudent and revealed them unto babes."

The essential demand of Jesus was that people should turn and realize their sonship of God. "Unless you become as little children, you shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of God." A modern writer*, untainted with ecclesiasticism, whom perhaps no church would regard as Christian, seems to have caught the very core of Jesus' teaching when he says:

There were for Jesus three stages in the life of man: the unconscious life of the child, the conscious life of the man, and the new life of the member of the Kingdom. In the unconscious life of the child there was spontaneity and wholeness; in the conscious life of the man there was inhibition and division; in the new life of the member of the Kingdom there was spontaneity and wholeness once more. Jesus taught in the fullest sense of the word, the necessity and possibility of re-birth, not in the narrow and sectarian meaning, but with a new positiveness. The later Christian conception of unsleeping war between the soul and the body would have been abhorrent to him. Wholeness and spontaneity—these were the marks of the member of the Kingdom.

The characteristics of the members of the Kingdom set forth in the famous Beatitudes, which St.

* M. Murry: "Life of Jesus."

Matthew has collected together in the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of his gospel, perhaps from scattered discourses given at different times, follow naturally from such an attitude towards the Heavenly Father. They are so different from worldly standards that even the Christian Church has consistently sought to water down and belittle their demands. It is only when they are embodied in rare individuals, who here and there in later human history have caught the spirit of the Master, that their beauty and their practicability become revealed. Such rare souls, like St. Francis of Assissi in thirteenth-century Italy or like Mahatma Gandhi in India to-day, stand as inconvenient challenges to the world and the Christian Church that would fain regard the teachings of Jesus as unattainable idealism.

The following are the Beatitudes:—

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the sons of God.

Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

These are not so much moral precepts to be painfully lived up to, as the unforced, natural, character-

istics of the child of God. When Jesus says: "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also," he is describing the natural, inevitable behaviour of one who has realized his sonship of the Father in heaven, "who sends His rain on the just and the unjust and makes His sun rise on the evil and the good."

Impossible, impracticable, cries the world and even the Christian Church after nineteen centuries of Christianity. With God and to the child of God, all things are possible, answers Jesus. And the alternative to such practice of love, the alternative that the world has persisted in trying, is that of "taking the sword and perishing by the sword". Oh, when will this distracted world learn wisdom from its real Masters and perceive the things that pertain unto its peace?

Faith in God, an attitude of trust towards God, is central to the teaching of Jesus. He was a Jew who had inherited the ardent Jewish belief in a holy and transcendent God. Only this God became for Jesus a loving Father, an unfailing, intimate Companion. There is in his thought no belittling of God's holiness or of His moral demands. The God who sees in secret demands the utmost purity of heart—not mere external conformity to formal codes of conduct. The old law of the Jews, the Ten Commandments, are not abrogated but deepened and made more searching. Failure, evil, proceeds from the heart, consists in evil thoughts, wrong desires, unchaste looks; and it is there that they have to be resisted and overcome. And he knew that the cost of it would be great; but no one who had seen the beauty of that life of wholeness would count that

cost too much. "If thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out; for it is better for thee to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell." The Kingdom of God is like a pearl of great price which a merchant found, and for the joy of possessing it, went and sold all he had and bought it. Failure to attain unto it seemed to him a dread alternative. Using familiar Jewish allegory, most probably believing in it too, he pictured the fate of those who miss the goal of life as eternal damnation. But the emphasis in his teaching is mainly on the joy of achieving the worthwhile life and the utter worthlessness of everything else beside it. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul or what shall a man give in exchange of his soul?"

These and other aspects of the Kingdom of God were conveyed to his disciples in his parables, which are among the treasures of the world's literature. Readers should go to the original gospels for those marvellous stories, which seek to portray heavenly things in earthly symbolism. The God of Jesus is the God of seeking, saving love. He is like a shepherd that leaves his ninety and nine safe sheep and goes after the hundredth lost one till he finds it, and when he finds it, carries it home on his shoulders rejoicing; or like the Father, who patiently waits for and eagerly welcomes back his prodigal son, returning in rags but chastened and contrite. Sometimes he is a hard Task-master, demanding strict account of his servants and even expecting them to have traded with and increased the talents he had given them—"reaping where he has not sown and gathering

where he has not scattered". But more often he is like the Master who provides work for the unemployed even at the eleventh hour of the day and pays every one the same wages. Carrying forward the social message of his predecessors, the Jewish prophets, Jesus was insistent that love to God must manifest itself in love to man. It is by the things that men do or fail to do to their fellow-men in need, and not by their professions that they are to be judged at the last day. The little acts of unremembered kindness and love that we do to our brothers in need are all done unto God. "In as much as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me."

All these and more in the parabolic teaching of Jesus are summed up in the brief and beautiful prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray and which is the great prayer of Christendom. If only, instead of quarrelling about their creeds, Christian people had agreed in translating that prayer into action, the Kingdom of God would have descended on this distracted world long ere this. "After this manner pray ye," said Jesus:

Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be Thy name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

"For," he added, "if we forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

CHAPTER IV

Teacher turns Messiah

We have seen how, after the first phase of his public preaching and the growing opposition it provoked, Jesus began to concentrate upon a chosen band of disciples, instructing them through parables. When apparently he felt that such instruction had progressed sufficiently he sent them out on a preaching mission, while he himself stayed behind. We are told that they were sent out two by two to wander about the towns and villages of Galilee, without provisions for the journey, but with instructions to accept whatever hospitality they could get. They were definitely told to go to the Jews only and to declare to them the same message that Jesus himself had proclaimed: "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." They were also given power to cast out devils and to heal all manner of sickness. Their mission proved a success. It whipped up the flagging enthusiasm of the people; but it also seems to have roused the suspicions of Herod, the ruler of Galilee, who had about this time yielded to his wife's truculence in beheading John the Baptist. The expectations that were raised may not have been all that Jesus would have welcomed; for the Apostles were excited because "the devils were subject to them", while the people seem to have had their political hopes revived. According to the vivid Marcan narrative, following upon the Apostles' return "there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." Jesus, therefore, felt the need for retirement and so he departed with his disciples by boat to a desert

place. But such was the enthusiasm of the people that they "ran together on foot from all the cities and outwent them. And he came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things". It is on this occasion that Jesus is recorded to have performed that one of his miracles which comes nearest to being a prodigy, the Feeding of the Five thousand with five loaves and two fishes. As to what exactly happened it is difficult to say. It may have been an act of mutual sharing by the multitude of the scanty provisions that most of them had brought with them, miraculous in that the spirit of sharing provided sufficient for all. Or more probably it was not a full feast, as the accounts depict it with twelve baskets left over of broken fragments, but a symbolic feeding on fragments of the few broken loaves, the type of the later sacrament of the Eucharist practised by the Christian Church. Some ceremony of breaking of bread in common seems to have been initiated by Jesus, as in one of the accounts of the vision of the risen Jesus, he is recognised by the disciples in the act of breaking the bread. Any way this act of feeding the multitude seems to have stirred the imagination and the enthusiasm of the people,—to their minds it seems to have recalled Moses giving the people Manna to eat in the wilderness—and we read of an attempt by them to take Jesus and make him king. Jesus felt that he had to escape from this misguided enthusiasm and therefore he constrained his disciples to enter into a boat and go before him to Bethsaida, on the eastern shore of the Lake, while he himself tarried behind to send

away the people. The hurried departure and the destination chosen—it was outside the territory of Herod—indicate that Jesus was escaping from apparent danger.

But the journey itself seems to have miscarried. There was a storm at sea and though Jesus is recorded to have walked on the sea and stilled the storm, he and his disciples found themselves in the morning, not in Bethsaida but on the western coast, at Genesaret in Herod's territory.

And we read that Pharisees from Jerusalem at once gathered round him. The discussion, this time about ceremonial cleanliness, again proved controversial. Jesus did not mince matters but lashed out against the externalities of their worship. "These people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me," said he quoting Scripture against them. On the question of ceremonial purity, he said that what matters is inner purity. "There is nothing from without a man that going into him can defile him; but the things that proceed out of the man are those that defile him." This he said, adds the Evangelist, "making all meats clean".

Jesus now clearly perceived that he was up against unrelenting opposition in Galilee. He had sought to avoid it by crossing over to the other side of the Lake, but contrary winds had wafted him back. So he departed by land unto the borders of Tyre and Sidon, for a long detour through territory outside Herod's jurisdiction. But even there "he could not be hid". An incident takes place here which reveals the inner working of Jesus' mind at this time. There came to him a woman of Syro-Phoenicia, a Greek by race, with a prayer that he

should "cast forth the devil out of her daughter". Ordinarily Jesus responded to human faith wherever found, in Jew or Gentile. On more than one occasion he commended the faith of non-Jews, holding them out as examples, putting to shame the members of the chosen race. "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," said he once, readily responding to the faith of a Roman centurion. In his home-town of Nazareth he had referred his countrymen to instances in Jewish history of the ancient prophets coming to the help of the despised heathen, particularly to that of Elijah, being sent to a woman of Zarephath, in the land of Sidon. Yet Jesus harshly spurned the request of this Syro-Phoenician woman: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs," he told her. Even the disciples' prayers availed not to move his heart, on this occasion. He ultimately yielded only to the woman's clever repartee: "Yes, Lord, even the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter," said Jesus. The reason for this unusual harshness to "the Gentile dogs" is most probably to be found in the inner tension in the mind of Jesus at this time. He had been rejected by his own people and was fleeing for safety from his own land, and here was a call from the Gentile world to go over and help them. Jesus must have wrestled with it as with a temptation of the Evil One to abandon his own mission and seek an easier field. And he rejected it with the same vehemence with which he repudiated the temptation of the devil in the wilderness, and Peter's later sug-

gestion that he should avoid the cross. This explanation by J. A. Robertson in his "Spiritual Pilgrimage of Jesus" seems adequately to account for Jesus' aberration in despising a woman in need for the sole offence of her not being a Jew.

But his determination to seek safety in retirement still held. He proceeded further north of Tyre and Sidon and skirted round Galilee to reach Bethsaida, the town on the eastern shore of the lake in Tetrach Philip's territory, that he had attempted to reach earlier by boat. The journey must have taken months; and must have been occupied in teaching the apostles. Jesus' conceptions about himself and his future mission were being profoundly modified at this time by the experience of his rejection. From Bethsaida he led the disciples up to Cesaerea Philippi and there he disclosed to them the secret of his Messianic consciousness as he had come to grasp it afresh. A new conception of the Messiah and of his own destiny had come to him. Grappling with the fact of his rejection by his own people, which was in line with their reaction to all God's prophets—"which of the prophets have your fathers not persecuted"? he asked the Pharisees once—he came to believe that God's chosen servant to redeem his people must be a suffering servant, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy regarding it. That destiny Jesus felt was laid upon him. It was a destiny not merely to suffering, but to victory through suffering. "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied," the prophet had predicted. Later Apocalypses had conjured up visions of the Messiah as the supernatural Son of Man appearing on the clouds of heaven to execute God's judgment on earth. By a

daring act of imagination and faith, Jesus combined the two hitherto unrelated pictures and pictured himself as the Messiah-to-be through suffering and humiliation. It was a daring and an original conception which his disciples found difficult to grasp till the very end. But they were eager to encourage one aspect of this difficult hope, that of the glorified Messiah. That is what Peter affirmed in reply to Jesus' question: "Who do you say that I am?" Peter, speaking on behalf of the Twelve, expressed their fervent expectation that he was "the Christ, the Son of the Living God". Jesus on his part enthusiastically welcomed this glimmering insight; but no sooner did he tell them of the rest of his vision of the Messiah than Peter took upon himself to correct that notion, "Let not that—suffering and death—happen unto you," said Peter. Jesus turned savagely on Peter: "Get thee behind me, Satan," the very vehemence of his repudiation testifying that it was a subtle temptation ever present with him, the temptation to avoid the cross.

The climax of this new apprehension was reached soon after this confession of Peter, in what has been called the Transfiguration of Jesus. With his three most intimate followers, Jesus went up into a mountain and there remained intent in prayer. "And as he was praying," says one of the Evangelists, "the fashion of his countenance was changed and his raiment became white and dazzling. And behold there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elijah: who appeared in glory and spoke of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." It may have been that the new insight that he had attained to regarding his function

and destiny was confirmed to him by a vision of the representatives of the ancient Law and the Prophets. It is significant that a voice similar to that at the Baptism repeated itself at this second crisis in his mission, and assured him of his being acceptable to God. This time, unlike at the baptism, the experience seems to have been shared by the select band with him. They saw the vision and heard the voice as well as Jesus. To their eyes, Jesus appeared transfigured, with a heavenly light irradiating his features. It may have been the light of the stern and solemn resolution he had taken that lit up his features with a light that never was on sea or land. To the disciples it was a vision of the glory of their incarnate Lord, similar to the vision granted to Arjuna by Sri Krishna, the Divine Charioteer.

The Gospels record one or two other instances also on which the sense of the divine, of "the Numinous", was pronouncedly felt by the disciples in the presence of Jesus. One such was the scene of Jesus setting his face to go to Jerusalem on his last journey thither, and the disciples we read "were afraid as they followed after". The late Prof. Rudolf Otto was, perhaps, building too much on such scattered instances to prove "the numinous" in Jesus. But it is evident that the disciples did feel a sense of awe in his presence. From this time on especially the loneliness of Jesus deepened and he stood further apart from his disciples in the grandeur of the destiny that he felt was laid upon him.

The Gospels, with convincing veracity, represent the apostles as dull of understanding till the very end. Jesus is recorded to have sought to communicate to them the burden of the Messianic conscious-

ness that he felt within himself, of his rejection and suffering as the necessary and the divinely appointed means to his exaltation as the Messiah to be. He is recorded to have predicted, not less than three times, his death at the hands of the Jewish authorities and his resurrection on the third day. These accounts must certainly have been coloured by later events; for if there is one thing clear about the apostles after the crucifixion, it was their utter despondency, their utter unpreparedness for the experience of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Even on the way going up to Jerusalem, they were found disputing about their precedence in the coming Kingdom. There is the very telling story of two of his most intimate disciples, James and John, coming to him with their mother, with the request that they should be allowed "to sit one on his right hand and the other on his left in his glory". This request naturally roused the envy of the other apostles, who themselves cherished such hopes. In his reply, Jesus reiterated to them the eternal law of God's Kingdom, that he is greatest in it who is the servant of all. But such things were hard for flesh and blood to understand, and remained beyond the comprehension of the apostles till they themselves, following their Master's example, learned to drink the cup that he drank and to be baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with.

CHAPTER V

Journey to Jerusalem and death as Messiah

Having arrived at his new and original conception of his Messianic Mission—that he was to become God's Messiah through suffering and death—Jesus, we are told, set his face to go to Jerusalem—for he had said no prophet can perish outside Jerusalem. During this last phase of his life, Jesus stands out as the man of destiny, as one of the few who have stamped the impress of their personality on the whole course of human history. If, when faced with rejection by his people, Jesus had avoided opposition by going out to the Gentiles, or tamely submitted to inevitable failure and suppression, he would have been remembered as but another of the World's dreamers and visionaries, who had vainly piped unto their generation and they did not dance and wailed and they did not mourn. But instead he resolutely decided to challenge entrenched authority in its very citadel and to break it or perish in the attempt. That decision meant for him ignominious death on the cross; but that cross has become for ever the symbol of suffering, conquering love, and is drawing all men unto it.

Leaving Cesaerea Philippi, Jesus passed once again through Galilee with his disciples, but this time secretly;—"he would not that any man should know it". He speaks out openly only when he has escaped from Herod's territory and is within the confines of Judea; and it is significant that his first utterance there is a specific condemnation of Herod and his wife. The question is asked him whether

it is lawful for a man to put away his wife and marry another. Jesus revises even the Mosaic injunction that permitted divorce in certain cases and upholds the principle that the marriage-tie is inviolable—"what God hath joined together let no man put asunder". And in conversation with his disciples, he added the condemnation of a woman who puts away her husband and marries another, a practice unheard of among the Jews, but actually perpetrated by Herodias.

The events of the last week of Jesus' life, of which we have very full accounts in the Gospels, seem to have been carefully planned by Jesus. He was openly and deliberately putting forward his claim to be the Messiah of Jewish expectation, but a Messiah according to his own conception. There was an ancient prophecy which pictured the Messiah King as entering Jerusalem, riding upon an ass, the traditional vehicle of Jewish kings. Jesus, therefore, sent two of his disciples to a village near Jerusalem to fetch an ass's colt that he had evidently pre-arranged for the purpose. He rode on that, making what has been called his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Popular enthusiasm and expectations were roused by this symbolic act and people shouted welcome to the Messiah: "Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the Kingdom of our father David: Hosanna in the highest." It is significant that Jesus who had so consistently shunned popular enthusiasm all along did not restrain it on this occasion, even when asked to do so by the offended Pharisees. He accepted the honour as due to him.

The next day he did another symbolic, even a challenging act. And that was the cleansing of the Temple courts. The outer courts of the Temple were specially set apart as a place of worship for the Gentiles, who were not allowed within the inner sanctuary. But these courts were filled, as the precincts of many Hindu shrines are today, with booths of merchandise, stalls for the sale of animals for sacrifice, tables of money-changers, etc., a business from which some of the priestly families drew large incomes. Jesus was infuriated by this sacriligious practice and we read that "he began to cast out them that sold and them that bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and he would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple. And he taught and said unto them: "Is it not written: My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers." It was his moral and spiritual authority, rather than any show of force, that carried through this bold act; and the Temple authorities had for the time being to bow before it.

But they could not let it go unchallenged. So they came to him in force the next day and questioned him as to his credentials. The clarity and the sharpness of Jesus' mind are seen in the replies that he gave to these tricky questions that were put to him during these days by his enemies, that they might catch him in his talk. We are told that even they marvelled at him. As for evidence regarding the nature of his authority, he referred them to the baptism of John: "Was it from heaven or from men? answer me, and I will tell you by what

authority I do these things." They couldn't give him a straight answer: for they dared not, for fear of the people, deny the divine sanction for John's baptism. This linking up of his own authority with that of John, at the very end of his ministry, takes us back to the springs of Jesus' consciousness of his mission in the initiation he received from his earthly Guru.

Another question by which they sought to trap him was concerning the payment of taxes to Cæsar—should they or should they not give tribute to Cæsar? Involved in it was the whole question of submission or revolt to Roman authority. If he advocated paying the tribute, they could hold him up as an enemy of the people; if not he could be reported as a traitor to the crown. Jesus cleverly got out of the trap by asking for a coin wherewith they paid the tribute. They brought him a coin. And he asked them: "Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsar's. And Jesus said unto them: Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and unto God the things that are God's". This reply, which while enunciating a great principle was mainly a clever escape from a wily trap, has often been quoted to justify unquestioning submission on the part of the Christian to established authority. But the whole attitude of Jesus, especially during his last week, was one of resolute opposition to unjust, immoral authority, whatever sanction it had, in the strength of whole-hearted surrender to God of what belongs to God, which is the whole of life, temporal as well as spiritual.

Many other questions were asked of Jesus during that last eventful week so that his enemies might find charges against him. One of them was about the resurrection from the dead. The Sadducees, who disbelieved in life after death, posed before him their crack problem of a woman becoming in turn the wife of seven brothers who all die childless. "In the resurrection whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife," asked they. Jesus corrected the gross physical conception of the life after death which they sought to ridicule by this problem and affirmed that the life to come was of a different order from life on this earth. "For when they shall rise from the dead they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels in heaven," said he. "The resurrection was for Jesus," comments Middleton Murry,* "an ineffable condition in which all bodily limitation was transcended; it was a condition of being perpetually in the presence of God. Strange, yet inevitable, that on the death of this man should have been built the dogma of the bodily resurrection."

It was in answer to another question this week that Jesus gave the famous summary of the commandments. "What commandment is the first of all"? he was asked. "The first is," he said, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and all thy mind and all thy strength. The second is this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." Abraham Lincoln once said:

* M. Murry: "Life of Jesus."

"I will enter that church and none other over whose altar is inscribed these two commandments and nothing else." What a gain it would have been if the Christian Church had kept to the simplicity of its Master!

Jesus was now approaching the climax of his life. He had accepted the necessity of his death. His repeated instructions to his disciples regarding the nature, necessity, and the expected sequel to that death—his rising again in glory—left them still unconvinced and uncomprehending. Till the very end they were disputing about their own precedence in the kingdom of God. Jesus had repeatedly to tell them that in the Kingdom he is greatest who is the servant of all. More than once he enforced this by the object lesson of setting a child in their midst. The Fourth Evangelist tells the beautiful story of his driving home the same lesson by himself washing the apostles' feet, the most menial of all duties in a Jewish household, on the occasion of his last supper with them. And he told them: "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." But even at that table we read that there arose a quarrel among them as to who should be the greatest.

Perhaps only one among the apostles grasped something of the meaning and the necessity of Jesus' death and that was Judas Iscariot, who is never mentioned in the Gospels except with the opprobrious addition that he betrayed his Master. Yet the betrayal may have been an act of bending himself to the Master's purposes. Certain it is that Jesus had deliberately planned to die at Jerusalem at the time of the Passover feast. His enemies had

wanted to avoid that time—"not on the feast day", they had said. Yet, if we are to believe the testimony of the Fourth Gospel, which seems to correct the other three on this point, Jesus so planned matters as to die on the eve of the Passover, at the very time that the Paschal lamb was slain. This seems to have been as deliberately planned as the details of his triumphal entry and of his last supper with the disciples. And Judas may have been the agent, conscious or unconscious, through whom Jesus achieved his great purpose. Such is the judgment on the Judas story by one of the most penetrating of Jesus' biographers in recent times. Says Middleton Murry*:

The man who betrayed Jesus and hanged himself in sorrow, judged by the commonest measure was a man, and perhaps more a man than the disciples who left their master and fled, or than Peter who denied him thrice. I prefer to confess my own belief in a secret understanding between Jesus and Judas, and also to confess that there is nothing whatever shocking in this belief. Far from it: it satisfies my demand that Jesus should have worked out his great purpose like a great man. May it not be that when Jesus first spoke of the necessity of his betrayal on the road to Capernaum, and his disciples "did not understand his saying and were afraid to ask him", one of them did understand and bowed himself to the necessity of his great Master? His name has been darkened by Christian piety. How were men who could not understand Jesus' purpose to understand the nature of him who served it? And if this plea for Judas seems too strange for sufferance, let it be forgotten as the vagary of one man's imagination; but let it be remembered that Judas was more *necessary* to the great drama than any other of the Master's disciples.

If Jesus died, as the Fourth Evangelist represents and as is more probable, on the eve of the Passover, then the Last Supper that he ate with his

* M. Murry: "Life of Jesus."

disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem was not the Jewish Passover meal, but a solemn farewell supper that he specially arranged for his apostles. The arrangements for the meal were secretly carried through by a certain sign that had been agreed on between Jesus and the owner of the house. It was at this meal that he instituted the rite that has become the central act of worship of the historic church and is variously known as the Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist or the Mass. The meaning and significance attached to this rite vary widely—from being regarded as a simple memorial of the self-giving of the Master, to believing it to be a repetition of the sacrifice on Calvary, the elements used in the sacrament being transformed miraculously into the very body and blood of the incarnate God. Controversies regarding this have divided and kept Christian churches asunder as nothing else in Christian doctrine, and still provide the bone of contention between the major churches. But all such controversies are certainly far removed from the spirit of him who is recorded to have washed his disciples' feet on the very occasion of instituting this rite and who laid down the great principle that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth". The last supper was certainly a solemn moment in Jesus' life, when he was taking leave of his disciples, and if ever he meant this rite to be repeated, he meant it to be a symbol and a bond of union between them, a new covenant uniting them in the bond of fellowship by the memory of his life freely given for them. Strange that this very rite should become the bitterest bone of contention

among his followers and the greatest stumbling-block to unity among them.

After the supper, Jesus went out with his disciples to a garden, where he intended to spend the night. His hiding in the garden may be the secret that Judas betrayed, perhaps what Jesus wanted him to betray, that he might be arrested that night in fulfilment of his determination to die as the Paschal Lamb the following day. Any way the Garden of Gethsemane has become famous in history as the scene of the agony of this great man of destiny ere he finally embraced his self-chosen way of death as the path to victory. We read that Jesus taking his three most intimate disciples, Peter, James and John, who had shared his other crucial experiences, began to be sore amazed and distressed. "My heart is sorrowful unto death. Tarry here and watch," he told them and going apart from them a few yards he fell to the ground and prayed saying: "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt." This prayer, thrice repeated ere he regained his equanimity and poise, bears every mark of authenticity and sends a shaft of light into the very heart of Jesus at this time. Here was Jesus facing the fact of death—death at the hands of his own people, which he had deliberately chosen as the way to become God's Messiah to his people, in fulfilment of the role of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh—yet assailed by a final doubt as to its rightness and necessity. To the believers in the deity of Jesus, this prayer constitutes a stumbling-block against which their theories break down. There can be no sting in

death, no shrinking from it, when the victim is a God, who is going through a pre ordained plan of salvation, who knows that death can have no dominion over him. What beats, what baffles, a man, even the greatest of men, is the uncertainty about the purposes of death, its rightness and efficacy, especially when it is self-chosen. The great man, the martyr and the saint, discover these purposes by their faith; and it is when that faith itself is assailed, as every human effort is assailed, that man endures his greatest agony. That Jesus was so assailed is left in no doubt by this authentic account of his experience in the Garden of Gathsemane. But the great thing, the heartening thing for man is that he endured and conquered. His faith in God, the unfailing Companion, held; and he triumphed as man and for man. This experience of Jesus has left for mankind one of the greatest of all human prayers: "Thy will, not mine be done." "The historical Jesus moves us deeply by his subordination to God," says the great German scholar Schweitzer. "In this," he adds, "he stands out as greater than the Christ-personality of dogma, which in compliance with the claims of Greek metaphysics is conceived as omniscient and incapable of error."*

Having recovered his poise and received strength from his God—the ancient record poetically pictures him as being ministered to by angels—he faced his captors, who had arrived by this time, led by Judas, with courage and calmness. The dignity and sublimity of the trial and death of Jesus are unsurpassed in human history and equalled by few other

* Schweitzer: "My Life And Thought".

happenings, the last scenes of Socrates' life being the nearest parallel to them. Indian attention was inevitably drawn to them a few years ago by the historic trial and conviction of Mahatma Gandhi by a British Judge, for what in law constituted a crime, but "what to me", said Gandhiji, "was the highest duty of a citizen".

Jesus was first tried before the Jewish Sanhedrin, presided over by the High-Priest of the year, Caiaphas. False witnesses were suborned to prove the charge of blasphemy against him, but the ancient record says that their witnesses did not agree. Jesus maintained a silence which meant an indictment, far more scathing than anything he could have said, of their sinning against the light, calling good evil. Finally, foiled in their attempt to frame charges against him, the High-Priest asked him the straight question: "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" To that Jesus replied: "I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." This reply reveals the hopes that were sustaining him at this crucial hour, hopes of his Messianic exaltation through the gates of death by divine intervention. But this was blasphemy to the Jews, the charge for which the Sanhedrin was waiting. The High-Priest rent his clothes in horror, and cried out: "What further need have we of witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy. What think ye?" And they all condemned him.

But it was necessary that a death sentence passed by the Sanhedrin should be confirmed by the Roman procurator. So they hurried Jesus to the

Procurator. Pontius Pilate was one of the most tactless of Roman procurators that had ruled in Palestine, and was known for his contempt of the Jews and their religious scruples. The charge, therefore, that was preferred against Jesus in his presence was that of treason, of his advising the people against paying tributes to Cæsar and his setting up to be the King of the Jews. Pilate was used to similar impostors among the Jews and does not seem to have taken the charge seriously. Jesus would defend himself before this flippant Roman no more than before the corrupt judges of his own nation. "The silence of Jesus in the presence of Pilate," says a great modern writer,* "is the silence of one for whom the day of speech is over and the day of battle begun, the ultimatum delivered, and the trumpet sounding for the attack. Where are his followers now? They have all run away, as verbal Christianity always runs away when it comes to the critical point." Pilate, perplexed by the silence of Jesus and bored by the charges of his accusers, and perhaps wanting to insult the Jews, offered to release this their "King", as the prisoner whom it was customary to release on the feast day. But the wily priests, perhaps retorting against Pilate, incited the people to ask for a violent rebel against Rome, Barabbas, who had then recently been arrested for murder during an insurrection. "The cry: Not this man, but Barabbas, is still ringing," says Bernard Shaw, "after two thousand years, whenever Jesus and his way of life are brought for trial before man. "Yet," continues

* L. P. Jacks: "Religious Perplexities."

Shaw, "it is beginning to look as if Barabbas was a failure, in spite of his strong right hand, his victories, his empires, his millions of money and his moralities and political institutions. This man has not yet been a failure, for nobody has ever been sane enough to try his way." For him and for those who like to go his way the cross still seems to be the inevitable end.

"So," we read, "as Pilate wanted to satisfy the crowd, he released Barabbas for them. Jesus he handed over to be crucified after he had scourged him."

It is painful, it is shameful for the race, to read of the atrocities heaped on Jesus at his tortured death by the brutal Roman soldiers, the unfeeling crowd and the revengeful priests. Christian piety sees in those sufferings of the innocent a revelation of the mystery of God's agony over human sinfulness; and a contemplation of Christ's sufferings has been a powerful and abiding stimulus to human penitence. But it is pathological and emotionally unhealthy to dwell too much on those sufferings, as so much of Christian piety delights in doing, finding in them a vicarious punishment for their own sins. But the great thing for mankind is that Jesus went through those experiences unflinchingly, loving and forgiving until the end, setting man an example to follow of overcoming evil by good. The Buddha, in the famous parable of the Saw, had set forth the noble way of overcoming hatred by love. Jesus himself had enunciated the great principle of turning the other cheek to him that would smite you on one cheek. But here we see precept put into practice, in a classic illustration that has captured

the imagination of the world. The cross of Jesus will remain for all time the supreme example of Love, suffering unto the uttermost and conquering, without returning evil for evil, or railing for railing, but committing itself to God, who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men and can make the suffering of the just change the heart of the unjust.

It was this faith in his God that sustained Jesus through it all. Supernatural expectations of divine intervention, of his own vindication as God's Messiah, no doubt coloured his faith in God at this supreme moment in his life. He seems to have expected that God would intervene ere death swallowed him up, and would declare him to be the Messiah, lifting him up to God's own right hand. One of the Psalms that he had quoted in controversy with the Jews during the last week had said: "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death. Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will enter into them and give thanks unto the Lord." The glorious music of these songs of victory out of defeat echoed in Jesus' soul as he hung upon the cross, nailed between two malefactors.

But in his actual hopes of supernatural triumph, of God's immediate intervention, Jesus seems to have been disappointed. Supreme as he was in his understanding of God's nature and purposes, even he was limited by his age and country; and in his case too the words of the prophet remain true: "God's ways are not our ways, neither are His thoughts ours." The supernatural intervention, that

Jesus expected would save him from the cross, did not happen and Jesus died with a loud cry of despair: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But his God had not forsaken him. What seemed dereliction to him was none such. His self-giving was wholly accepted by God, and he has been vindicated as God's Servant and Man's Saviour, in a measure far excelling that of his own expectations as a supernatural Jewish Messiah.

Unlike the ordinary victims of crucifixion, Jesus did not linger long on the cross. There was no need to break his bones to hasten death, as in the case of the two robbers crucified along with him. His natural frailty,—he was unable to carry his cross on the way to Calvary, the mount of the Crucifixion,—and the intense mental agony he had endured—his blood had come out as sweat in the Garden, we read—had brought on early death.

The accounts of his burial and rising again are meagre and conflicting. He seems to have been hastily buried in a newly-prepared grave belonging to one Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin and probably a secret follower of Jesus. The ancient story has it that very early on the day following the Sabbath, that is on the third day of the crucifixion, certain women went to the grave to anoint the body of Jesus with spices; but they found the stone that covered the mouth of the grave removed and the body missing. Details regarding this empty tomb and the resurrection appearances of Jesus in the different narratives are divergent and highly tinged with the supernaturalism of the day. Many naturalistic explanations have been offered

to account for the belief in the empty tomb and the resurrection-appearances, but none is wholly convincing. Certain it is that the apostles and the early church believed that Jesus rose from the dead, appeared to a few privileged among them and then ascended into heaven. It was this miracle that attested to them the deity of Jesus and assured them of his return in glory. But this belief was inevitably coloured and controlled by kindred beliefs in supernatural happenings which have failed to materialize and so invalidate this belief itself. For in the Acts of the Apostles, we read that when Jesus was being taken up into heaven, an angel appeared to the disciples and assured them that this same Jesus who was being taken up from them would in like manner return. The Acts of the Apostles and other early Christian literature make it abundantly clear that this return of the ascended Jesus was expected early, even within the lifetime of the Apostles. Belief in Jesus' bodily resurrection stands or falls with the belief in his supernatural Messiahship and his return on the clouds in glory. Though falsified by history—the expectation of it has time and again proved false—belief in Jesus' second advent still finds a place in the Christian scheme of things, though in an attenuated form. Belief in his bodily resurrection also survives in like manner. It certainly was the keystone of the traditional faith. For many centuries the resurrection of Jesus meant the resurrection of his physical body, and this was accepted as evidence first for the belief that Jesus was God and second that a like physical resurrection awaited all men. But as an effective faith this has now disappeared. And it is time that

Christian churches and thinkers faced up to this crucial question and stated what exactly they believe on this vital topic. To practice equivocation on this point is to let in the canker of dishonesty into the very core of one's beliefs. "There is no excuse," says Middleton Murry,* "for this crude belief being part of the Christian faith." St. Paul himself at the very beginning of the Christian movement—and his is the best and earliest evidence for the resurrection of Jesus—had understood that resurrection in a spiritual sense. He makes no distinction between Jesus appearance to him in vision on the road to Damascus and the other recorded appearances of the risen Jesus. St. Paul is very explicit that "what rises is a spiritual body." What then is the point of the empty tomb? The resurrection and posthumous appearances of Jesus must be understood in the light of other well-attested psychic phenomena of all times and our increased modern knowledge of them. The Church must have the courage to examine and restate, in the light of this knowledge, the belief it has inherited from the first century. What is indispensable in accounting for the rise of the Christian movement and what really matters for modern living in the power of Christ, is the belief that the spirit of Jesus has triumphed over physical death and that "though dead he still speaketh." That faith is independent of the legend of the empty tomb.

* M. Murry : " The Betrayal of Christ by the Churches."

CHAPTER VI

Christianity—A way of life, not a creed

Christianity, in its orthodox forms, has been presented to the world as a creed, a system of beliefs, acceptance of which decides one's destiny in a future existence. But Christianity, as it was lived and taught by its Founder, was essentially a way of life, a way of victorious living in this world, not by escaping or evading its many sorrows and trials, but by cheerfully overcoming them. Says a writer of rare spiritual insight *:

Christianity, in the official, or authorized presentation of it, is a smothered religion; smothered almost to the point of total asphyxiation and collapse, but not quite; smothered by the vested interests of great institutions, and by the ambitions, fears and self-seekings that such interests breed; smothered by the elaborate theological defences that Christians have built, not against Anti-Christ, but against each other; smothered by anxieties, not unnatural in these embroilments, for its own future. If you take Christianity along with its entanglements, encumbrances and unnatural alliances: if you present it with all the secular baggage which the ages have fastened upon it, you will then find it a hopelessly perplexing thing, a thing which neither Reason nor Faith, whether acting singly or in combination, can accept. But alongside the authorized version, and sometimes hidden within it as an inextinguishable spark of life, Christianity has an unauthorized version, which the former has often repressed, persecuted and condemned to the hangman or to the eternal flames. Of this unauthorized version a fair copy exists in the hearts of men, a fairer copy in the hearts of women, and the fairest copy of all in the hearts of children—for Christianity is pre-eminently a religion of the young. It is the unauthorized version which has kept Christianity alive through the ages and defied the smotherers even to this day.

* L. P. Jacks: "Religious Perplexities."

It is the rediscovery of this radiant way of life that is needed by the times. But let no one imagine that it is an easy way of life. It is a way that leads to the cross; and the cross symbolises a great principle of life. The cross of Jesus is the classic instance of love resisting evil and overcoming it. There is no virtue in suffering, however patiently endured, when it is the consequence of one's own wrong doing. It is unmerited suffering, voluntarily endured, out of love for the wrong doer, that is effective in redemption. The vocation to such suffering, such Satyagraha, to give it its modern name, is one to which all those who dare to follow in the footsteps of the Man of Nazareth are called, in these days when wickedness is so rampant. For real Christianity can never come to terms with the forces of evil, as official Christianity has so often done. "Christianity," says Dr. Jacks,* "is not an accommodating religion. It is a challenge. The willingness to encounter opposition is the very breath of the Christian life. If the Cross means anything it surely means that. It is the paradox of Christianity that while, in one aspect, it is the most pacific of all religions, in another it is the most warlike. It follows a Prince of Peace, but it follows him with a sword in its hand, practising sweet reasonableness to its utmost limits, but ready also for the moment, which is sure to come, when persuasiveness takes the form of disciplined courage and the Church becomes an army "marching as to war", every saint a potential warrior "girded with all the armour of God".

* L. P. Jacks : "Elemental Religion."

How much one is reminded by all this of the technique of Satyagraha as developed by Gandhiji, its resolute resistance to evil, its willingness to negotiate, as well as its determination to resist, if resistance there must be, but always by the way of love and truth. Gandhiji to-day has recaptured the spirit of Jesus, exhibiting the same joyous trust in God, the same faith in man, the same love that suffers long and is kind, that overcomes evil with good. He is an invaluable commentary on the life of Jesus, throwing a flood of light on many of the difficult sayings of Jesus, and demonstrating the soundness and the practicability of Jesus' way of life. Christian thinkers can ill-afford to ignore the light that is thus thrown on the life of their Master.

Another element in Jesus' life and teaching, in fact the most important that still makes it a Gospel or Good News to man, especially the common man, is the hope of a Kingdom of God, of a New World Order, to use modern phraseology. We have seen how in Jesus' mind, as a first century Jew, it was linked up with many supernatural beliefs. Purged of these the hope of a new and juster order of society belongs to the very heart of Jesus' gospel. It is a hope that rises ever green in the human heart, however often it may be baulked. Today in the midst of a world at war it is the one hope that sustains the common man, as well as the choice souls in whom the longing for it is like a fire hidden within their hearts which will not let them rest.* To all such, to the weary and the heavy-laden, as well as to the Suffering Servants of God, under

* "I Will Not Rest" is the title of a recent book by Romain Rolland.

whatever name they may follow Him, nay even to those who deny Him because of false associations that have gathered round that hoary word, Jesus stands as a leader. Jesus has to be seen as a leader* of men against every yoke, religious or secular, that would stifle human life, in order to be truly loved and followed. The theologies and Christologies that have been built round his person have obscured this heroic Son of Man. What is needed is that the man Jesus of Nazareth should be set forth, in the simplicity as well as the grandeur of his heroic manhood. We must try and see him as he came to those disciples of old by the sea side, and hear him calling to us "Follow me", as he sets us to the tasks he has to fulfil for our generation. And it is in the measure of our faithfulness in following him that we come to understand the full significance of his personality. That significance has to be grasped afresh and interpreted freely by every age and country. Such reinterpretations will, of course, take into account former ways of belief, orthodox as well as heterodox, indeed every avenue of faith by which men have drawn inspiration from him, but will not be bound by any of them. The attempt so far made by highly organized Christian missions and churches to present for India's acceptance unchanged ancient orthodoxies, formulated in entire ignorance of India's heritage, and in the light of a world-view that Science has long ago discarded, was doomed to failure. The individual successes it has had, and the struggling little community it has called into being, are not

* Frank Lenwood, sometime, Missionary in India, wrote a book called "Jesus, Lord or Leader."

commensurate with the expenditure in men and money involved in the enterprise. Jesus has yet to be presented to India as a Leader, and Christianity as a way of life. But that presentation requires a different approach from that of the existing missions and churches. It would mean a more complete identification of the Christian movement in India with the life and struggles of the Motherland. Jesus might demand of the churches that claim to worship him to sell all that they have, even their cherished Christologies, and find him afresh in the toils, the struggles and the privations of real life. A Christian community that follows Jesus in that sense will be the salt of the earth.

But even if the salt loses its savour, and is fit only to be cast out, if the churches and the Christian community cling to their vested interests and their ancient orthodoxies and are fit only to be suppressed, the message of Jesus will survive and will continue to appeal to man. India with her rare spiritual insight has the right and the duty to assess and to assign the right value to Jesus and his message. It is regrettable that so few attempts have yet been made by non-Christian Indians to make Jesus real to themselves and to present him to their countrymen. That such attempts will be made with real knowledge and insight is my fervent hope. If this feeble attempt should provoke such efforts, I shall be amply gratified and this book would have served its purpose. Meanwhile let me set forth my own understanding of Jesus and his message for our modern world, in the words of a fellow-follower* of

* Will Hayes : "After the Great Companions."

the great Leaders and Saviours, the Great Companions, of mankind, of whom Jesus is undoubtedly one of the greatest :

“ I am a Christian—

A disciple I, of Jesus, lover of mankind, brother of all,
I share with him the dream of bliss that led unto the Cross ;
A Kingdom here on earth ! A Reign of Love !

In hearts and lives a Kingdom—God's and man's !

My task is plain, my duty clear ;

In my own heart and life the love must rule that I would
see in others ;

Only thus shall I like Jesus, act my part in building
Kingdom ;

Only thus shall I, like Jesus, do my Father's will.

To raise the fallen and to lead the blind,

- To free the captive, and to the broken-hearted bring
soothing touch of pure affection,

These are my aims ;

Not creeds but deeds, service not sacrifice,

These my ideals,

My watchword Love, my goal the Brotherhood
Mankind.

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