

Chapter XVII

THE question of who educated Jesus was a problem which engaged the minds of many of the students of the last century. The pedants passed lightly over it. Many of the atheists imagined Jesus was an ignorant peasant who used the sayings current in Hebrew literature that would be taught, as it were, in Sunday schools. Even today it is not unusual to hear the phrases, "Jesus added nothing to the sum of human knowledge," and, "What, after all, did Jesus do to increase the happiness of mankind?" Even Klausner seems to think that the sayings of Jesus are not original. But Klausner does show quite clearly that education, even in Galilee, was not so backward, not so primitive a matter as many Christian writers have imagined. In the first place, Torah lays it down strictly that children should be taught to read and write, that they should know the laws, be told the deeds of their forefathers, so that "they might follow in their ways and, having been brought up on the laws, become accustomed to observing them and have no excuse for not knowing them." These injunctions were traditional and hark back to the time of Moses, when it was commanded that the children should be taught first of all the laws, the most seemly knowledge, and the source of happiness. Enough, surely, to provide a fairly liberal education. Few, nowadays, are taught the laws, and fewer the source of happiness. Josephus says: "Most of all we are mindful of the education of children; so that, if anyone ask us concerning the laws, we can tell them all more easily than our own name; having learned them straightway with our earliest perception,

they become engraven in our souls." Klausner says that, though Josephus may be guilty of exaggeration, these words indicate that a schooling system was in vogue at the time of Jesus which was open to most of the people. The Hebrew literature of his time which was not only taught, but could be read by youths, was extensive. Klausner mentions many of the works then current and the great number of subjects dealt with in them. There is no valid reason for thinking Jesus had not great mentors. It is quite possible his father was an unusual man, perhaps a seer. To infer Jesus was at a disadvantage because his parents were poor, his father a carpenter in a humble village, is strange, when in the light of so much biography it is shown that numbers of men of attainment have paid tribute to humble parents who have given them the basis of their education and intellectual start in life. Why should it be different in Galilee? In any case, even today it is not always the man who has had the advantages of a university education who succeeds in intellectual endeavour, who achieves distinction in the world of thought. Klausner says: "Besides the elementary schools, there was a more advanced school or college. Such colleges, intended for the expounding of the Torah to specially selected students, certainly existed in the time of the scribes, previous to the Maccabean period, and from the Maccabean period, especially from the time of Hillel and Shammai, the colleges assumed the more popular guise." Although it is shown by many of the authors that Galilee differed from Judea in many respects, particularly with regard to the priestly observances, and that it was more independent than the country to the south, it is not to be inferred that there was less opportunity in the way of education and acquiring general knowledge. It may very well be that the independent Galilean enjoyed a freedom from conven-

tional or stereotyped systems which prevailed round about Jerusalem. Even Edersheim, whom Klausner regards as a fair critic, says: "Now Nazareth was one of these priests' centres, and that, although it may well have been that comparatively few in distant Galilee conformed to the priestly regulations, some must have assembled there in preparation for the sacred functions or appeared in its synagogues." Moreover, the fact that the Zealot movement originated in and near Galilee proves conclusively that the Galileans were an entirely different people from those of Judea. The patriots were bred north of Samaria, not round about Jerusalem, and this fact surely indicates not only a different system of education but an entirely different system of thought. Klausner, referring to the Zealots, says: "Their one crime was that they acted according to their conscience. They were ready to lay down their lives for natural freedom, and with such a goal they never hesitated to measure their own forces against those of the Herods or the Roman Emperors." He also says that thousands and tens of thousands followed Judas and joined the Zealots. Only an enlightened people could be as brave as the Zealots. Even Josephus, who has written bitterly of their cruelty, says: "They possess unbounded love for liberty and look upon God as their only leader and ruler; it is a light thing for them to go forth to meet death, nor do they regard the death of their companions and kinsfolk if only they might save themselves from the burden of human rulers."

To what extent the work of Hillel was known in Galilee is not mentioned by the commentators, but as several of them seem to recognize in the sayings of Jesus the ideas which have been associated with the teachings of Hillel, it is quite possible his influence and his works were known so far away from Jerusalem. No doubt, Joseph visited Jerusalem at the time

Hillel was famous. Such a man must have had a powerful influence on the Galileans. Klausner says:

. . . the popular and delicate impression of his entire mental and intellectual outlook: a moral optimism which became the main support of Judaism in bitter exile, a deep faith in divine justice and a complete trust in divine providence, an amiability to his fellow-creatures, an affinity with his nation and a belief in it, humility, un-failing kind-heartedness, a joy in life, a confidence in the power of the individual, and, above all things, tenderness, simplicity, and love of mankind—these constitute a crown of noble qualities not often paralleled among the highest specimens of mankind, among the greatest preachers and reformers.

Jesus must have had the same opportunities of education as Hillel, who, it is said, lived for years in abject poverty while he was studying. If Hillel could achieve distinction in learning, there is no reason for thinking Jesus could not do so. It will be shown that Jesus must have possessed a very unusual mind to have thought out the idea of the kingdom of God on earth. It is difficult to understand how the notion that Jesus was a simple-minded peasant, reared in somewhat primitive conditions where there were no schools or teachers, arose to confuse so many rationalists; and yet this is not so strange when the great differences of opinion on other points concerning Jesus and his environment are shown in many of the authorities. Take Edersheim: according to him, "Nazareth was near the great highways running from Egypt, Babylon, and north to Antioch"—and Klausner, who believes "the town was cut off from the rest of the world, far removed from the 'great highways to the sea,' and the caravan routes." But Klausner himself gives, in page after page of his book, instances of disagreement among the authorities on pretty nearly every question concerning Jesus. These differences of

opinion in many cases are so wide that reconciliation seems to be impossible. Strangely enough, Klausner does not make much of the educational opportunities to be found in Galilean villages. Although he says the system of schools and colleges had existed since before the Maccabean period, he, in another part, writing on the childhood and youth of Jesus, says that it was not till thirty years after the crucifixion that the system of schools in every town was organized by the high priest Johoshua ben Gamala. He thinks the father of Jesus was "perhaps one of those 'deficient in the Torah' and unable to teach his son," and that Jesus learned from the minister of the synagogue, whose incidental duty it was, even before the organization set up by Johoshua ben Gamala, to teach children. Klausner admits Jesus knew the law and the prophets, that he had some knowledge of the Book of Daniel and, perhaps, of the Book of Enoch, and that the law read in Hebrew would be translated into Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke.

Some beautiful pages are devoted to his description of Jesus the dreamer, wandering away from the little town into the hills, there to meditate. The idea of seeking the solitude of the hills, there to dream and to weave fancies, sometimes is regarded as the vagary of a truant, and sometimes as the resort of a good-for-nothing to escape work. It depends very much on the connotation of the term "dreamer." Certain men of action are not supposed to know what a dreamer is; there is no room for him in their world. Others, not given entirely to an active life, imagine a dreamer is one occupied with poetic fancies and little concerned with the routine of life. There are as many notions of what a dreamer is as there are sections of a society that for many generations has had little contact with dreamers of any importance. There have been dreamers who have had to work very hard for a living; some, indeed,

have had many dependants to look after; and Klausner seems to think that Joseph passed away early and left Mary with a large family. If that be so, Jesus would have to work very hard, and no doubt the time spent in the quiet of the hills would be a refreshing balm to a dreamer who had to master the hard, practical facts of labour for many hours each day.

Surely it is permissible to imagine what could have taken place in thirty years. The ministry is supposed to have lasted not longer than three years; some say it lasted only a year and a few months. Jesus was nearly thirty years old when his public mission began. Now there was plenty of time for Jesus to become a man of essential learning, for he had the same sources of knowledge as were open to Hillel. Klausner says that in the villages the law would be read in Hebrew and then translated into Aramaic. But if Hillel could master Hebrew, why could Jesus not do so? All the authorities admit that Jesus was thoroughly versed in the law and the prophets, and surely this indicates familiarity with the original sources, and not merely oral translations into a familiar tongue. In a period of thirty years it was possible for Jesus, living in such a land as Galilee, imbued with its extraordinary history and witnessing perhaps on every hand the effects of imperial rule, to work out a system of revolt and reformation quite different from those that had wrought ruin and despair on the Zealot leaders and their supporters. Jesus must have known what had taken place at Sepphoris; not far from Nazareth; he would be less than human if he did not ponder the great question of those times, of how to be rid of Roman rule, for the disastrous effects must have been ever-present to him, and this must have been the dominant theme of all discussions among the victims. Now, it is just this very point that the commentators have missed completely, and in missing this point

they have become confused as to the meaning of the two phrases: "My kingdom is not of this world," and "The kingdom of God is within you." Jesus was not a Messiah of despair. He was not a religious pessimist, believing there was no hope for man on earth, and that God had left his creatures helpless. Jesus was the one supreme optimist that has ever walked this earth. He discovered the one perfect system, and it was his thorough knowledge of the law which enabled him to divine the secret of the first covenant, the purpose and aim of the Mosaic code. When he said, "I come to fulfil the law, not to destroy it," he surely meant that he came to fulfil the law of the first covenant that had been destroyed by the priests. When he said, "My kingdom is not of this world," he surely meant, "My kingdom is not of this *Roman* world." His mission was to destroy the Roman world and re-establish God's world. When he asked, "Whom do people say I am?" he wondered if his disciples had the slightest idea of what he was chosen to do. There had been numbers of Messiahs, many of them false Messiahs, who had failed utterly and had often left the people in a worse plight than before their advent. It cannot be imagined that Jesus, after so many ignominious failures, would come forward as a Messiah in the Apocalyptic sense. As Matthew Arnold says: "Jesus was over the heads of his reporters. What, therefore, in their reports of him, is Jesus and what is the reporters?"