

A RECONSTRUCTION OF EARLY CHRISTIAN HISTORY

THE lengthy description which Dr Eisler gives of the book¹ which is the subject of this note is needed to explain the provocative title—'Jesus a king who never reigned'. A preliminary notice (of the first three *Lieferungen*) appeared in the *J. T. S.*, vol. xxx pp. 65–68, dealing chiefly with Dr Eisler's views on the well-known *Testimonium Flavianum* contained in the *Antiquities of the Jews*, xviii §§ 63, 64. But the completed book (pp. 542 + 884) has a great historical aim: it attempts to effect a radical reconstruction of some sixty years of early Christian history. It contains indeed many critical discussions, but the main purpose of the author is to rewrite some very important pages of history with the help chiefly of a work attributed to Josephus, but made accessible to the scholars of the West only a few years ago (1925–1927). This Josephan tractate is a work both defective and interpolated, and so to be used with great caution.

Is it indeed a case of *Hinc lucem*? Dr Eisler's main authority for his reconstruction is preserved in some ten or fourteen MSS written in Old Russian, a work whose title he believes to be 'Ἰωσήπου περὶ ἀλώσεως Ἱερουσαλήμ. It may be described as a recension of Josephus, *Bellum*, books i–iv, made for non-Roman readers, while the common Greek recension of the *Bellum* was certainly (as it is called in one MS) a *ἱστορία . . . πρὸς Ρωμαίους*. It may be granted that these Old Russian MSS, in that they supply a text written for other than Roman readers, are more likely to give us the real thoughts of Josephus. So far good, but Dr Eisler himself seriously weakens this conclusion by pointing to a number of 'Christian interpolations' in this text also. Such a text needs to be cited as an authority with more caution than perhaps Dr Eisler has shown. The original of the Old Russian recension was no doubt in Greek, and Dr Eisler usually quotes his favourite authority as the *Halosis*, using the Greek title.

The author begins his reconstruction of the history with the story of John the Baptist. The *Halosis* supplies him with a new version of the preaching of John.

¹ Ἰησοῦς βασιλεὺς οὐ βασιλευσας. *Die Messianische Unabhängigkeitsbewegung vom Auftreten Johannes des Täufers bis zum Untergang Jacobs des Gerechten nach der neuerschlossenen Eroberung von Jerusalem des Flavius Josephus und den christlichen Quellen*. Dargestellt von ROBERT EISLER. Zwei Bände. Heidelberg 1929, 1930. Carl Winters Universitäts-buchhandlung.

'God hath sent me to show you the path of the Law, on which if ye walk ye shall free yourselves from your many tyrants: and a mortal shall not reign over you, but the most High who hath sent me.'

For such words as these John was arrested, and being brought as a prisoner before 'Archelaus' and ordered to give some account of himself, he answered, according to the Old Russian, *želovèk esmi*, 'I am a man'. By this answer he was supposed by his followers to claim to be the 'one like unto a son of man' (*kè-bar-ènāsh*) spoken of in Dan. vii 13. Here Eisler is still following the Old Russian text of the *Halosis*. In continuing the story he turns next to *Antiq.* xviii § 118 (Greek), and accepts the reason alleged there for the execution of John. John was beheaded (not for the reason given in the Gospels, but) because his preaching aroused the greatest excitement among the people, which ended in an insurrectionary movement in favour of independence. The Josephan text as corrected by Dr Eisler differs somewhat from Niese: τῶν πολλῶν (not ἄλλων) συστρεφόμενων, καὶ γὰρ ἤρθησαν (so Bekker and Eisler; not ἤσθησαν as Niese) ἐπὶ πλείστον τῆ ἀκρόασει τῶν λόγων, δέισας Ἡρώδης κ.τ.λ. Eisler accepts the evidence of the Old Russian that John came forward in the beginning of the reign of Archelaus, and so in the time of a great insurrectionary movement. To John came armed rebels (*στρατευόμενοι*, 'soldiers on service', Luke iii 14, R V margin), enquiring what they should do. And (so Dr Eisler holds) the Baptist's instructions to publicans, civilians, or soldiers are banal, if they are taken as general teaching meant for all occasions. They are surely meant as interim instructions suitable for the case of ill-provisioned revolutionary forces: think of the charge given to the man who possessed 'two coats' (Luke iii 11).

Dr Eisler further believes that John was chosen *High Priest* by these revolutionaries. For this fact (if it be a fact) he appeals to that strange document the Hebrew Josippon, a book which seems to borrow largely from the *Bellum* of the true Josephus. This borrower is dated by scholars in the ninth or tenth century A.D.—rather late to be admitted as an authority for events of the first century. Josippon is in fact full of chronological and other historical mistakes.

In *Antiq.* xvii xiii 1 (§ 339) Josephus tells us that Archelaus deprived Joazar the son of Boethus of the high priesthood and established his brother Eleazar in his place. But Eleazar in turn was soon deposed, and replaced by Jesus the son of Sēé. It was on the fall of Joazar, according to Dr Eisler, that the insurgent Jews took upon them to appoint 'John the son of Zechariah', i.e. the Baptist, to be high priest. No narrative of the appointment is preserved, but the title 'high priest' is given to John in Josippon V. xlv p. 533, Breithaupt's edition, Gotha,

1707. The words are יהונן את הרג הוא ונם ישראל מחכמי רבנים אשר גדול על אשר דבר ואמר לו אסור לך לקחת אשת אחיך פוליוס לאשה ויהרגהו הוא יוחנן אשר נמבל:

'And he (Herod Antipas) slew many of the wise men of Israel; also it was he who slew John the high priest, because he spake and said unto him, It is unlawful for thee to take to wife thy brother Philip's wife. So he slew him, i.e. John who baptized.'

The 'Baptism of John' as described in the Synoptic Gospels was a purely moral and religious rite, but Dr Eisler ascribes to it a political significance. Three classes of persons are noticed in Luke iii 10-14 as asking John, What shall we do?—*οἱ ὄχλοι—τελῶναι—στρατευόμενοι*. Dr Eisler singling out the 'soldiers on service' pronounces that the Baptist was administering a lustral rite to revolutionary Jews. (Warriors were 'prepared' or 'sanctified' before going out to war: Joel iii 9.)

Of chronology our author has much to say. Luke i 5, he maintains, does *not* show that St Luke assigned the birth of the Baptist and of our Lord to the reign of Herod the Great, and Luke ii 1 places their birth in 6-7 A.D., i.e. under Herod Antipas. The central date with St Luke is of course the 15th year of Tiberius, i.e. 28-29 A.D., when John began to baptize at the age of 21, 22, or 23 years. But since Jesus his contemporary 'began to teach' when he was 'about thirty years of age' (Luke iii 23) an interval of 7-10 years seems to have separated his baptism from the beginning of his ministry. Such is Dr Eisler's account of St Luke's chronology. His own chronology is different.

Dr Eisler makes much of a few passages in the Gospels in which it is said that contemporaries actually identified Jesus with John the Baptist. In the *Halosis* (Eisler ii 6 ff) John is anonymously introduced as 'a wild man clothed in hair': challenged to give an account of himself he answers simply 'I am a *man*'. Anonymous he remains until the time suggested by the words of Mark vi 14, 'And king Herod heard thereof, for his *name* had become known' (*φανερὸν γὰρ ἐγένετο τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ*). This is surely to put too narrow a meaning on *ὄνομα*.

On the rest of the verse, 'And they said' (or 'people said')—Eisler reads *ἔλεγον* with B[D] and Augustine), 'John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore do these powers work in him', Eisler suggests that the saying in its original form contained no reference to resurrection, but was simply, 'This is John the Baptist'. The meaning was, 'John has come forth from his jungle beside the Jordan'.

Interpolation again is Dr Eisler's resource in the case of Luke iii 20. He transfers the second *ὁ Ἡρώδης* of *v.* 19 into *v.* 20, thus turning *v.* 20 into an independent sentence, which might well be taken for a reader's

note. By so reading, Dr Eisler leaves *v.* 19 as an unfinished sentence. but he gets rid of the statement that Herod (apparently early in the Gospel history) shut up John in prison (*ἐν φυλακῇ*). So again he corrects the statement of Matt. xi 2 that John heard in the prison (*ἐν τῷ δεσμοτηρίῳ*) of the works of the Christ by appealing to the parallel in Luke vii 18, 19, where no mention of 'prison' occurs. The disciples of John and the disciples of Jesus each claimed that their Master was the Messiah, but (according to Dr Eisler) the interpolated text of the Gospels answered the Johannine claim by asserting that John lay helpless and idle (*hilflos und untätig*) in prison, while Jesus went about performing 'the works of the Messiah'.

Once more, Matt. xvii 12 f. as it stands represents Jesus as himself referring to the execution of the Baptist as having already taken place. But Dr Eisler points out that the parallel in Mark ix 13 runs thus: 'Elias is come, and they have also done unto him whatsoever they listed, *even as it is written of him*'. Where, asks Dr Eisler, is it *written* that Elias must come and *suffer*? Not in Malachi iv 5, 6, but in an Apocryphon, the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* of Pseudo-Philo. But this Apocryphon contains a reference to the destruction of the temple, and could not have been quoted as Scripture by Jesus, nor can one suppose it to have been received into Mark's Gospel very soon after the destruction of Jerusalem. This 'saying of the Lord' cannot therefore be relied on as proof that Jesus survived John. According to a story told in the *Halosis* the Baptist survived Herod Philip, who died in 34 A.D. spring or summer. On the other hand the *Acts of Pilate* (published by Maximin Daza in A.D. 311 for the confusion of the Christians) is dated in the year of the fourth consulate of Tiberius, i.e. in the year August A.D. 21–August A.D. 22. If the date be correct the Crucifixion must have taken place not later than the spring of A.D. 22. One suggestion is that Jesus resembled John in outward appearance and that the Resurrection story may be explained as due to the error of men who were not acquainted with the appearance of John the recluse. So it was John (not Jesus) whom the disciples saw as it were 'risen from the dead'.

Dr Eisler holds that the followers of the Baptist broke loose from his peaceful exhortations. He reads our Lord's words given in Matt. xi 12, ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν ἡμερῶν Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ ἕως ἄρτι ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν βιάζεται, καὶ βιασται ἀρπάζουσιν αὐτήν, as evidence for the fact, though not evidence from the lips of Jesus. Dr Eisler, owing to his views on the chronology of the period and because he assigns the ministry of John to the reign of Archelaus, is able to connect the insurrection of Judas the Galilean with the preaching of John the Baptist.

So deeply coloured with the doctrine of non-resistance are the discourses of our Lord recorded in the Synoptic gospels that it is

difficult to believe that he ever encouraged revolt from Rome, yet Dr Eisler believes that it was so. He confronts the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount with a few isolated sayings such as Matt. x 34, *μη νομισητε οτι ηλθον βαλειν ειρηνην επι την γην· οκ ηλθον βαλειν ειρηνην αλλα μαχαιραν*: and Luke xxii 36, *'Αλλα νυν ο εχων βαλλαντιον αρατω, ομοιως και πηραν, και ο μη εχων πωλησατω το ιματιον αυτου και αγορασατω μαχαιραν*. The last saying (spoken at the Last Supper, according to St Luke) is assigned by Dr Eisler to an earlier occasion. He explains such contradictions by the theory that Jesus went through more than one stage of feeling (or opinion) on the fundamental question of resistance or non-resistance.

At first he represents Jesus as looking with hope to the preaching of John and to the insurrection of Judas of Galilee, which drew strength from it. The 'Kingdom of Heaven' was even for Jesus a political ideal; it meant for him as for his contemporaries deliverance from foreign rule. But when the effort of Judas failed, Jesus revised his thoughts concerning the means necessary for bringing in the Kingdom of God. He began to teach, as in the Sermon on the Mount, that the way to secure Divine interposition and the freedom of Israel was 'quietistic'. Let Israel only show a righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and the Kingdom will come. Such according to Dr Eisler was the second stage of the thought of Jesus. To this stage belongs the Mission of the Seventy, who were charged to announce, *Ηγγικεν εφ' υμας η βασιλεια του θεου* (Luke x 9).

The third stage was marked by 'impatience'. No Divine interposition had happened. Insurrection under Judas the Galilean had failed; so had Quietism. But a middle policy remained of non-co-operation, i. e. of withdrawal from settled life. The great Maccabean struggle for freedom had begun in this way (1 Macc. ii 27, 28). So Jesus proclaimed aloud, *πας εξ υμων δε οκ αποτασσειται πασιν τοις εαντου υπαρχουσιν οδ δυναται ειναι μον μαθητης* (Luke xiv 33), and again, *Πωλησατε τα υπαρχοντα υμων και δοτε ελεημοσυνην* (Luke xii 33 a). If the final and decisive words, 'And follow me into the desert into freedom', are wanting, it is only because later Christians who desired 'compromise with the world' blotted them out. 'In fact', writes Dr Eisler, 'some of the most enigmatic sayings and actions of Jesus are interpreted most simply and illuminatingly, if a demand of Jesus (no longer preserved in express terms in the Gospel tradition)—*to follow him into the wilderness, into freedom*—be taken as the basis for understanding them.' How else interpret *μη μεριμνατε τη ψυχη υμων τι φαγητε κτλ.*? So the third stage of the thought of Jesus brings him to a step which the Romans would certainly understand as an act of rebellion.

So on internal grounds Dr Eisler emends the passage of the *Halosis*

which records the sentence of Pilate. Striking out the negatives he makes the sentence run, 'He is a malefactor, an insurgent, ambitious of ruling.' See below, where the full passage (c) is appended.

Much of Dr Eisler's reconstruction is of course not new, but he makes many new suggestions. His learning is great, his acquaintance with relevant literature is wide, but his judgement is perhaps inferior to his learning. Several of his authorities seem unworthy of the trust he gives them. Besides Josippon he appeals to the *Tol'doth Jesu*, a book of legends of Jesus, which 'originated in the Middle Ages' (Sam. Krauss, *Jewish Encyclopædia* vii 170 a). It is a controversial pamphlet of twenty-four pages, full of fanciful matter, and not a historical work in any sense. Dr Eisler's use of the Gospels is arbitrary: he has no hesitation in taking a Gospel-saying out of its context in the Gospel, and putting it into a new context in which it fits in with one of his theories.

Thus he is not content to take Luke xxii 36 metaphorically as a warning to the disciples that danger was now close at hand, but taking it literally he gives it a new setting. The followers of Jesus must now go armed, but the occasion is not that of the night journey to Gethsemane after the last supper. The words were spoken some time before. Jesus is sending forth his messengers to announce the Kingdom for the second (or the third) time; and experience tells him that they must this time be able to defend themselves. When the disciples answered, 'Behold, here are two swords', *each* of them showed two swords! And when the Master applied to himself the words of Isa. liii 12, 'And he was numbered with the transgressors', he was sorrowfully confessing that he was now withdrawing the exhortation to non-resistance of evil which he had once delivered as expressing the will of God. This is an ingenious explanation, and it fits in with Dr Eisler's view, i. e. that Pilate himself condemned Jesus as a 'malefactor' and an 'insurgent'.

Characteristic, as I think, of Dr Eisler's hardihood in avoiding the obvious in his treatment of the surname of St Peter. In the Gospels it is *Βαριθᾶ* (Matt. xvi 17) or *ὁ υἱὸς Ἰωάννου* (John i 42), but Dr Eisler would make him *Barāyā* (Syriac), 'the outside man, the outcast'. 'Simon Barjona,' says Dr Eisler, 'ist wahrscheinlich nichts anderes als "Simon der Extremist", der zu den radikalen Zeloten Judahs des Galiläers Gehörige.'

The work as a whole is formless, a collection of essays rather than a book. It is not easy to find one's way about in it. But there are two full and good indices, one of Scripture passages, the other of subjects. The pages have been revised with care, and a number of corrections are recorded at the end of vol ii. The number of errors seems to be small. The style is heavy and disfigured with parenthesis, or even *parentheses*. On the other hand, the author has presented us with an

important collection of facts taken from a very wide reading. His book is valuable, even when (or especially when) he is straying away from his immediate subject.

It may be useful to conclude this notice with translations from the German version given in this book of the crucial passages of the *Halosis*: (a) The preaching of 'the Wild Man'; (b) The 'Wild Man' and Herod Antipas; (c) The story of the Worker of wonders, Jesus. I have adhered to the literal meaning of the German in Dr Eisler's book.

(a) At that time there lived among the Jews a man clothed in strange clothing, having beast's hair fixt on his body, wherever it was not covered with his own. Moreover, in face he was as a wild man. He came to the Jews and allured them with the lure of Freedom (*lockte sie zur Freiheit*), saying, 'God hath sent me to show you the path of the Law, on which if ye walk ye shall free yourselves from your many tyrants: and a mortal shall not reign over you, but the most High who hath sent me'. And when the people heard that, they rejoiced (or 'they rose tumultuously'; reading ἤρθη for ἤσθη, Eisler). And there followed him all Judaea and the region round about Jerusalem. And all that he did to them was to dip them (*er . . . einlauchte*) in the stream of the Jordan and to let them go, warning them that they should desist from evil works. Then there would be given to them a king who would free them and subdue all the disobedient. But he himself would be subject to no one. Some laughed at his words, but the rest believed him. And when he was brought to Archelaus, and the Lawyers were assembled together, they asked him who he was, and where he had hitherto been. And he answered and said, 'I am a man', and the spirit of God hath called me hither, and I feed on cane and roots and chips (*Holzspänen*: but 'buds of trees', *Baumknospen*, Eisler). But when they threatened to put him to torture, if he would not desist from these speeches and actions, he retorted (*sprach er jedoch*), 'It is for you to desist from your deeds of shame and to surrender yourselves to the Lord your God.'

[He then threatened them with unutterable calamity.]

And after he had thus spoken he went away to the other side of Jordan. And as no man dared to hinder him, he did the same as he had done before (Eisler ii 6 ff).

A later passage of the *Halosis* presents the Baptist as an interpreter of dreams:

(b) While [Herod] Philip was (still) ruling he saw in a dream that an eagle tore out both his eyes. And he called all his wise men together. While some interpreted the dream in this manner and others in that manner, there came suddenly to him without being summoned that man of whom we have written above that he walked clad in beast's

hair. And he said, Hear the word of the Lord . . . Thy sin (venality) will take away thy [two eyes], which are thy Power and thy Wife. And when he had thus spoken Philip died before evening, and his power was given to Agrippa. And his wife Herod his brother took. Because of her all that were faithful to the Law abhorred him, but they dared not charge him with the deed to his face. Only this man whom we have called a 'wild man' came to him with wrath, and said, 'Because thou hast taken thy brother's wife, thou breaker of the Law, thou also like thy brother wilt die an unlamented death, and be cut off just so by the heavenly sickle . . . because thou dost not raise up seed to thy brother, but . . . committest adultery, since there exist [already] children begotten by him'. But Herod when he heard it was wroth and commanded to smite him and drive him away. But he unceasingly wherever he found Herod accused him, until Herod was moved to fury and commanded to cut him down (*ihn niederzuhauen*).

But his habit (or 'his manner') was wonderful, and his conduct unlike man's. For as a disembodied spirit, so lived this man. His mouth knew no bread; not even at the Passover as a memorial of God who had delivered the people from slavery did he taste the unleavened loaf, saying, that this was allowed (*gegeben*) to be eaten only to (expedite) the Flight (from Egypt), for the journey was 'in haste'. Moreover he never allowed wine and strong drink to be brought near (him). And he abhorred (the thought of eating) any animal. And every deed of unrighteousness he exposed. And chips (buds of trees) served him for his needful food (Eisler ii 14 ff).

(c) At that time appeared a man, if it be allowed to call him a man. His nature and form were human, but his countenance (or 'appearance') more than that of men, [yet his works divine (or 'and he performed divine works')]. He performed spectacular acts wonderful [and powerful]. [Therefore it is impossible for me to call him a man.] But again if I consider Nature as one sees her (*die gewöhnliche Natur*), I shall not call him an angel.

And all as much as he did by unseen power, he did by word and by command. Some said of him, Our first Lawgiver is risen from the dead, and has exhibited many cures and acts of skill. But others thought that he was sent by God. But in much he set himself against the Law, and he did not keep the Sabbath according to the custom of our fathers. Yet again he did no shameful deed, nor did he work with the help of his hands, but by word only he set forth (*bereitete*) all. And many of the populace followed him and listened to his teaching. And many souls were stirred, thinking that thereby the Jewish tribes (*Stämme*) could deliver themselves out of the hands of the Romans. Moreover it was his custom to take up his abode opposite the city on

the Mount of Olives. And there he dispensed his cures to the people. And there were gathered unto him of attendants (in the Roumanian version, 'disciples') one hundred and fifty and of the people a multitude. But when they saw his power, that he accomplishes all, as much as he will, by a word, and when they made known to him their will that he should enter the city and overthrow the Roman troops and Pilate, and rule over us, he did not disdain us (or, 'but he paid no regard to it', i. e. the suggestion). And when in the sequel knowledge of him (or 'of it') came to the Jewish leaders, they gathered themselves together with the high priest, and said, We are powerless and weak to withstand the Romans. Further because the bow is stretched, we will go and inform Pilate of what we have heard, and we shall be undisturbed (or 'safe'): lest he hear of it from others, and we be robbed of our goods, and be slaughtered and our children scattered. And they went and informed Pilate. And he sent and destroyed many of the people.¹ And he had that Worker of wonders brought, and after he had enquired concerning him, he gave sentence: He is a doer [of good and not] of evil, [neither] an insurgent, [nor] ambitious of ruling. [And he let him go, for he had healed his dying wife. And when he had come to his usual place he performed (again) his usual works. And when again more people gathered round him, he gained glory by performing more than all.² But the Lawyers were overcome by envy, and gave Pilate 30 talents to put him to death. And he took (the money) and left them free to carry out their will themselves.] And they seized him and crucified him contrary to the Law of their fathers (Eisler ii 297 ff).

W. EMERY BARNES.

ADOPTION AND INHERITANCE IN GALATIA

THE legal metaphor used by St Paul in his *Epistle to the Galatians*, iv 1-7, has been much discussed, and the question of the legal system implied in the metaphor has called forth considerable diversity of opinion. I assume that the *Epistle* was addressed to the South Galatian churches, whose members were not Celtic Galatai but mainly graecized Phrygians and Lycaonians, with an admixture of Greeks and Jews in all the cities, and of Roman colonists in Antioch and Lystra. I also regard it as self-evident that the only legal system with which the vast majority of the inhabitants of South Galatia were familiar in St Paul's time was the Graeco-Seleucid law, doubtless modified in this or that

¹ This sentence is wanting in the Roumanian.

² Some fault in the text.