and would be regained only by spiritual revival. In the latter, Rome had no interest (although the priesthood found their anathema of ritualism annoying), but the "zealots" were given short shrift when caught.

In the eyes of Rome, Jesus could not have been anything but a religious dissenter, of whom there were many among this peculiar sect, and hardly worthy of notice. But the priesthood found him disturbing, not so much because he questioned their authority but because he had gained a considerable and devoted following. To many of the people he was the long-hoped-for, the promised messiah. The miracles he performed and the wisdom he dispensed as he traveled from town to town were attracting large crowds, and the thought that here was indeed the Son of God was gaining acceptance. His denunciation of the religious hierarchy, of the scribes and Pharisees, fanned the already widespread spirit of discontent. Something had to be done to stop him.

But what? The most the priesthood could do was to denounce him as a heretic, which hardly went well with the multitude who had listened to him, and Rome would take no interest in a religious controversy. It was necessary to pin the label of "zealot" on this disturber of their position. If that could be done, Rome would put him out of their way.

The Malicious Hecklers

It is within the context of this historical situation that the reference to the coin must be considered. Let us take the account of the incident as given in St. Luke (20:19-26):

> And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable [of the vineyard] against them.
>
> And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and the authority of the governor.
>
> And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly:
>
> Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?
>
> But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?
>
> Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's.
>
> And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.
>
> And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

So, then, it is clear that Jesus was being heckled by his enemies, whose obvious intent was to trick him into a statement that could be used against him with the authorities. Were he to say anything derogatory of Caesar (as, for instance, that man's first fealty is to God), he could have been denounced as a "zealot," with capital punishment the probable consequence. That he "perceived their craftiness" and confounded them with an enigmatic answer is evidence of a quick wit; perhaps that is all there is to the story of the coin. It was an on-the-spot remark called forth by special circumstance and cannot be classed with freely given lessons, such as the Sermon on the Mount.

But, what did Jesus mean? What are the things due Caesar? Are they due as a matter of right or of might? Can one infer from this story that tribute to Caesar is included in God's scheme of things? Taken by itself, the analogy can be made to mean even that absurdity. Seeing how he stressed man's duty to God, it might well be rephrased: the more of yourself you render Caesar, the less you have for God.

Our modern scribes and Pharisees, bent on redeeming man through the offices of the State, extract from the coin story a mandate from God, and sometimes suggest in their usage that it might be an eleventh commandment. Either by design or from ignorance, they overlook a bit of significant history. The coin that Jesus asked to be shown was the *denarius,* the legal specie for the payment of taxes. On one side of this coin was a bas-relief of the Emperor Tiberius, which would be a violation of the second commandment against graven images; on the other side was the inscription "Tiberius Caesar, the son of the deified Augustus," which was blasphemy. It is unthinkable that Jesus would endorse such sacrilege. It is blasphemy to suggest that he did.

All the evidence, then, gives the incident of the coin no moral weight. It was not a divine endorsement of Statism. It was nothing but a quick retort intended to confound his malicious hecklers. Only sheer casuistry can make anything else of it.

Mr. President

THE REGRETTABLE ILLNESS of Mr. Eisenhower has incidentally brought into focus the true nature of the office he holds and the kind of government under which we live.

Within a few weeks after his heart attack, when the doctors were supervising his daily regimen and even his sitting up in bed was regulated, news dispatches bearing the Denver dateline spoke of decisions he was making on important matters. There was a pronouncement on his stand on international affairs, a statement that he had approved an intricate matter of federal insurance of some sort, a message on the Administration's atomic policy, a release that he had started working on his State of the Union message and so on. Each of these news items appeared after the President had been allowed so many minutes for a conference with one of his aides.

One wondered whether these conferees had been so heartless as to press matters requiring careful consideration and mental strain on the sick man, whether in fact he had the vitality necessary for delving into these matters and whether the doctors would have permitted the bringing up of subjects requiring more energy than he could spare during his convalescence. It must be remembered that these medically supervised conferences were hardly long enough to permit more than the sick room amenities.

The newspapers did not print falsehoods. "The President" did in fact apply himself to these affairs of state, but it was not Mr. Eisenhower. It was not the sick man who was called upon to make decisions; the decisions were made for him by "the President," and about all the patient knew about them is that they were going to be made. It could not have been otherwise under the circumstances. The best he could have done was to nod acquiescence when he was assured by "Jim" or "Sherman" that this department or that commission had thoroughly gone over every detail and that political exigencies demanded the announcement.

It is time we realized that "the President" of the United States is not a person; it is an institution. It is an institution of such vast proportions that the titular head is hardly more than that. No human being is endowed with the mental capacity or possessed of the energy necessary for its management. Its accumulation of functions is beyond the comprehension of any man, and a Samson would hardly be able to perform the duties heaped upon it by legislation.

What it all comes to is that the man we elect to the presidency is in fact the mouthpiece of the thousands of functionaries who carry on the multitudinous departments that make up the office. Presumably his judgment determines the general policies. But his judgment is in turn determined by departmental reports and opinions presented to him, as well as by the advice of his political advisors, so that in effect he is the captive of his office.

Thus it has come to pass that the man who "hired himself out" to the people, as Andrew Jackson put it, has become a bureaucracy, a mass of experts and clerks who carry on the affairs of government under all circumstances, whether the elected incumbent is incapacitated or is on vacation. Except that under the law he is required to sign certain papers, which the bureaucracy prepares for him, and laws, which the bureaucracy is instrumental in having Congress pass, the government could carry on without the titular head. Of course, he must be elected, so that he will have the authority to appoint the bureaucracy.

This is what many people today like to call a "democracy."

Traveling Solons

SOME TWO HUNDRED congressmen took advantage of the recess to "study" in foreign lands. Let's hope they enjoyed their trips, and nobody should begrudge them the tax-money that paid for their tuition. There are some, in fact, who would have them continue their "studies" abroad for an indefinite time, regardless of expense, because their absence from Washington would assure us that Congress, lacking a quorum, would be unable to pass multibillion-dollar appropriations; that is, it would be cheaper to keep them out of the country.

Their return, indeed, is ominous. During the coming session a number of bills authorizing the expenditure of our money for the improvement of conditions in Europe, South America, Africa and Asia will be introduced in Congress, and these traveling solons will support the bills with authority: they will assert that they have seen the conditions and know whereof they speak. Nobody will question their ability to have observed and absorbed so much during a few weeks' jaunt—interlarded with social activities—in strange and vast lands. That would not be courteous. So, the bills will be passed on the say-so of "experts."

Our Congress seems to have drifted a long way from its constitutional moorings. It was originally presumed that a senator or a representative was sent to Washington to look after the interests of his constituency; this was particularly true of the representative, who was not even given a voice in the foreign affairs of the nation; only a senator may vote on treaties. It has come to pass, however, that the spending of our money on foreign ventures has become a major occupation of our legislators, sometimes more important, in terms of dollars, than domestic matters. The scope of a congressman now is not his state or his district, but the whole wide world.

That is why they have to travel and "study." They should do more of it.

May the New Year
bring to all the world
the Prosperity of Freedom.