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whosoever has learned to see in suffering a proof of God's love, and beyond the darkness of death a land of light, in which all wrongs shall be redressed and all virtue meet its due reward—a land, in fine, in which the varied discipline of this world shall issue in a life conformed to its fair and high ideal, and cherished by all happy and auspicious conditions—he has a solution of the great Problem in which he may rest and rejoice.

As we look back, then, on all the way in which we have been led by our great Poet, on Jehovah's appeal to his creative acts and Job's controversy with his Friends, we may well sum up the impressions it has left upon us in the ascription which Blake engraved above the final plate of his noble "Inventions of Job:" "GREAT AND MARVELLOUS ARE THY WORKS, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY; JUST AND TRUE ARE THY WAYS, O THOU KING OF SAINTS."

S. COX.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

XVI.—THE CHIEF PRIESTS—THE TRIAL.

IT is remarkable that "the chief priests" have at first no place in the evangelical history; they begin to appear only when it begins to be tragic. Their presence is as the shadow of death. While the Pharisees and scribes, like men zealous for the law and careful of the people, anxiously examine every act and criticise every word of Jesus, the priests seem while He is most active to be entirely unconcerned, leave Him untroubled with questions, undisturbed by opposition or argument. The men who are shocked at the good deeds done on the Sabbath,[1] who murmur

[1] Mark iii. 1–6; Luke vi. 1–11.

at the Rabbi that teaches "publicans and sinners," and "eateth with them,"[1] who persistently interrogate Christ and attempt to silence Him with legal maxims and puzzle Him with exegetical difficulties,[2] who even dare to measure his sanctity by their legalism and his truth by their traditions,[3] are the Pharisees and scribes. But while they are the invariable background of the picture, the priests are conspicuous by their absence. They neither resist nor befriend Christ; they simply do not appear. This absence cannot be explained by any gentleness of speech or spirit of conciliation on his part. The Good Samaritan[4] was as severe a satire on the priest as the two men praying in the temple[5] was on the Pharisee. But priestly silence did not mean priestly tenderness, as is evident from the first and most significant synoptic reference to "the chief priests." This is made by Christ Himself. He declares, before ever they have appeared on the scene, that He is to suffer many things at their hands, is to be delivered unto them and to be by them condemned to death.[6] If we confine ourselves to the Synoptists,

[1] Luke xv. 2; vii. 39; Matt. ix. 10, 11; Mark ii. 16.

[2] Matt. xix. 3; xxii. 35–40; Mark x. 2.

[3] Matt. xv. 1, 2; Mark vii. 1–5; Luke xi. 37, 38.

[4] Luke x. 31, 32. [5] Luke xviii. 10–14.

[6] Matt. xvi. 21; xx. 18; Mark viii. 31; x. 33; Luke ix. 22. It is an extraordinary and instructive fact that no allusion to the "chief priests" in connection with Christ should be made in the Synoptic Gospels till He begins to anticipate his passion and foretell his death. It is a fact of equal critical and historical importance; critical, inasmuch as it shews how the Fourth Gospel can explain otherwise inexplicable references in the Synoptic Gospels (comp. with the above texts John vii. 32, 45, 46); historical, inasmuch as it brings out the essential character of the great Jewish parties, defines and determines their relation both to Judaism and Christ. The mere figures are suggestive and significant. Thus ἀρχιερεῖς occurs (Matt. ii. 4; Mark ii. 16; and Luke iii. 2 having no relevance to the history) first in Matt. in xvi. 21, then in xx. once, xxi. thrice, xxvi. eleven times, xxvii. seven times, xxviii. once; first in Mark in viii. 31, x. once, xi. twice, xiv. twelve times, xv. five times; first in Luke in ix. 22, xix. once, xx. twice, xxii. six times, xxiii. four times, xxiv. once; first in John in vii. 32, 45, xi. four times, xii.

this reference to men who have never either spoken or acted against Him is surprising; but if we turn to the Fourth Gospel it ceases to surprise. There the action and allusions in the synoptic histories are explained. Christ knew the priests to be absolute enemies; his prophecy but expressed his experience. Their antagonism was too deep to condescend to words; deeds alone could declare it. The Pharisees might aim at victory by argument, but the priests did not mean to waste words on one doomed to death. So the moment Jesus came within their reach their fatal activity began. They took offence at his presence and conduct in the temple, demanded the authority by which He acted, and abstained from seizing Him only because "they feared the multitude." [1] Their purpose was one and inflexible; their only point of uncertainty how best and most safely to work his death.[2]

once, xviii. eleven times, xix. thrice. The earlier references, with the exception of those in John vii., are to Christ's predictions of their action; the later describe that action, which belongs entirely to the history of the passion. As to the Pharisees, the order is entirely reversed. The references are, in Matt. iii. once, v. once, vii. once, ix. thrice, xii. four times, xv. twice, xvi. four times, xix. once (?), xxi. once, xxii. three times, xxiii. (the woes) nine times, xxvii. once; in Mark ii. four times, iii. once, vii. thrice, viii. twice, ix. once, xii. once; in Luke v. four times, vi. twice, vii. five times, xi. seven times, xii. once, xiii. once, xiv. twice, xv. once, xvi. once, xvii. once, xviii. twice, xix. once; in John i. once, iii. once, iv. once, vii. five times, viii. twice, ix. four times, xi. thrice, xii. twice, xviii. once. By comparing these references we see that the Pharisaic activity was greatest during the ministry, the priestly during the passion. So far as the Synoptics are concerned, the Pharisees may be said to have been as completely absent from the passion as the priests from the ministry. The Fourth Gospel shews them, in the earlier stages of the passion, associated with the priests, but never active as they were, disappearing finally at the capture, taking no part whatever in the trial and crucifixion. The synoptists indeed often associate the scribes with the chief priests in the processes that resulted in the death on the cross; but it is evident they did not regard this as equal to the participation of the Pharisees as a party or a body. "Chief priests and scribes" (Luke xxii. 2, 66; xxiii. 10; Mark xiv. 1) was but a phrase denotive of the Sanhedrim, which, though it contained Pharisees, was essentially priestly in its constitution.

[1] Matt. xxi. 15, 23, 46. [2] Matt. xxvi. 3, 4; Luke xxii. 2; John xi. 50.

Now, how is this extraordinary difference in attitude and action of the Pharisees and priests to be explained? Without the former, Christ the Teacher would have been without contradiction and criticism; without the latter, Christ the Sufferer would not have known the mockery of the trial or the shame and agony of the cross. The men who most strenuously argued against Him appear to have shrunk from the national infidelity and crime needed to work his death; while the men who compassed it were the men who had seemed to stand carelessly aloof from Him in the period of his mightiest activity and influence. Yet there was no decrease of antagonism on the one hand, or increase of it on the other. The Pharisees did not cease to be opposed to Christ, or the priests then begin their opposition. They had always hated and always been ready to express their hatred, but ever in deadly forms, and only when they promised to be effectual, never in the way of remonstrance or argument. The Pharisees were wishful to controvert that they might convert. We can well believe that the men who would have compassed heaven and earth to make one proselyte would feel an almost boundless desire to bring to their side the young Rabbi of Nazareth. But the priests had no such desire, had no need or room for Him, had only the conviction that his life was a standing menace to their authority, and his death a politic expedient.

In seeking the reason of these differences we must clearly conceive the historical character and relations of the parties concerned. The Pharisees in their relation to Jesus have already been discussed and described.[1] They were the party of national principle and patriotism,

[1] Art. *Jesus and the Jews*, THE EXPOSITOR, vol. viii. p. 431, ff.

who believed in the absolute kinghood of Jahveh, the continuous and progressive character of his revelation, the supremacy of his law, the obligation of his people to obey Him in all things—the minutest as well as the mightiest. The chief priests, on the other hand, belonged to the Sadducees,[1] the party of expediency and official policy. This association of the chief priests, the highest representatives of Jewish religion, with the Sadducees, the poorest representatives of Jewish faith, may seem curious and almost unreal. But it is as eminently natural as it is undoubtedly historical. In ideal Judaism the priest is as the foremost, also the noblest man. He is the representative of God before men, of man before God, approved and trusted of both. With man he is able to sympathize, with God he is qualified to plead, a mediator the weak can love and the strong can respect.[2] Into his ear man can confess his sin, into his hands commit his soul, certain that he will be gracious to the one and obtain forgiveness for the other. God makes him the vehicle of his mercy, the interpreter of his authority for men, certain that he will not weaken the authority or deprave the mercy. But the ideal priest finds a tragic contrast in the actual. In Judaism he was as often a mischievous as a beneficent power. The prophets before the captivity found sacerdotal worship sensuous, unspiritual, and unethical, strove to repress it by representing Jahveh as "full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts," as One not to be "pleased with thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil," as not desiring sacrifice or delighting in burnt offering, but only in the

[1] Acts v. 17; iv. 1. Josephus, *Antt.* xx. 9, 1.
[2] Heb. ii. 17,18; v. 1-4; vii. 25-28.

broken and contrite heart.[1] At and after the captivity the priests seemed to become a nobler race, possessed of the prophetic beliefs, the organs of the prophetic ideals, living to realize in and through Israel the reign of the one God.[2] Into their worship another spirit had been breathed, its sensuous forms were ruled by an ethical purpose and purified by holier and more transcendent ideas. In the completed Mosaic legislation the theocratic faith was articulated, and every part of the Levitical ritual penetrated and illumined by the mind which lives and speaks in Deuteronomy. But the period of exaltation was short-lived, form and routine proved stronger than spirit, and God and his people were made to exist for the priest rather than the priest for them.[3] The sacerdotal Judaism and the prophetic Hebraism were distinctly incompatible—a universal monotheism could not be incorporated in a worship that was at once inflexibly sensuous and fanatically national. So there grew up within Judaism a tendency opposed to the priestly, more akin to the spiritual and prophetic. This was embodied in the Sopherim, the wise, the men learned in the law, the written and spoken word of God.[4] These scribes, interpreters of the Scriptures and conservers of tradition, represented the belief in the living God who continued to speak to his people and to act on their behalf. They and the priests were in their fundamental ideas radically opposed. The scribes emphasized the ideas of law and precept, and so believed that man's best service of God was by obedience; but the priests emphasized the idea of

[1] Isaiah i. 11; Micah vi. 7; Psa. li. 17, 18.

[2] Haggai ii. 1–9; Zech. iii. iv.; vi. 9–15. [3] Mal. i. 5–14; ii. 7–10, 17.

[4] Ewald, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, iv. 162, ff. (2nd ed.) Kuenen, *Godsdienst van Israel*, ii. 237, ff.

worship, and so held that man could best please God by sacrifice and offering. The scribes had a keen sense for the ethical, but the priests for the ritual, elements in Mosaism; the former held the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures sacred, but for the latter sanctity and authority mainly belonged to the books which embodied the Mosaic legislation. The scribes were the interpreters of an ever-living Will, but the priests the ministers and administrators of a constituted system, which invested them with all the rights and authority they possessed. It necessarily followed that these orders, representative of so different ideas, stood in very different relations to the people and their history and hopes. The priests were conservative, the scribes progressive. The priests were zealous for everything that concerned the worship, could allow the intrusion of no alien god or rite, and had proved themselves, as in the case of the Maccabees, capable of the most splendid heroism both in resistance and defence. The scribes were zealous for everything that concerned the law, *i.e.*, the living revelation of the living God, and were ambitious, not simply that the theocratic worship might be performed, but that the theocratic polity might be realized in society and the State. And so the highest idea of the priest was expressed in the temple, and his best hope for Israel was the maintenance of a clear and well-ordered worship; but the highest idea of the scribe was a people free to obey the law and entirely obedient to it, and his great hope the Messiah who was to come, who was to be no priest, but a prince, able victoriously, not to sacrifice, but to deliver Israel from the alien and leave him the willing subject of Jahveh alone.

It ought to be more possible now to understand

the relations of the Pharisaic scribes and Sadducean priests to Jesus.[1] The scribes were essentially teachers, and the scene of their activity was the school and the synagogue,[2] but the priests were essentially officiants, performers of a worship mainly ritual, and their proper and peculiar sphere was the temple. These two places, indeed—the synagogue and the temple—represented the two great forces in Judaism, the one didactic and rational, the other sensuous and sacerdotal; the one diffused and expansive, seeking to instruct and guide the people, the other concentrated and conservative, seeking to maintain its place in the nation and prevent the various disintegrating agencies from breaking up the system it crowned and completed. In the very nature of things the teachers would be the first to be jealous of Jesus. He was a Teacher; his great themes were the very themes the scribes were accustomed to handle. The purpose and end of the Law and the Prophets, their meaning and range, the kind of service God required, the interpretation and value of the different commandments, the nature of prayer, the character of God and his relation to man in general and the Jews in particular, the kingdom of God, what it was, when it was to come, and who were to be its citizens—these, and such-like, were the questions discussed in the Jewish schools and discoursed on by Christ. He was to the scribes one who

[1] While in the Synoptic Gospels the scribes and Pharisees are so associated as to be now and then almost identified, yet it is necessary to keep them distinct. All scribes were not Pharisees, nor all Pharisees scribes. The Pharisees were a politico-religious party, the scribes a learned corporation. The Sadducees had their scribes as well as the Pharisees; but while the former reposed on the hereditary and family principle, the latter built on Scripture and tradition, and so had much more affinity with the scribes. See Lightfoot's *Horæ Heb. et Talm.*, Works, vol. ii. p. 433 (ed. 1684).

[2] Ezra vii. 10.

had invaded their province and defied their authority, who denied the traditions of the fathers, ridiculed and reversed all the interpretations of the schools. And so they resisted Him at every step, opposed Him in every possible way, exhausted the resources of their scholastic subtlety to refute and discredit Him. All this the priests might greatly enjoy. They did not love the scribes, disbelieved their traditions, feared their fundamental ideas, disliked their power with the people. And so they might well be pleased when they heard that a new Teacher had arisen who was confounding their ancient foes. But the matter was entirely changed when He touched their order, threatened their city and system. Once they comprehended his position, saw the action of his ideas and aims, they at once became inimical and vigilant. They did not argue or reason—that was not in their way; they acted. And the reality and design of their action are seen in Christ's anticipations and predictions. To go to Jerusalem is to go into suffering; to fall into their hands is to fall into the jaws of death. In Galilee, where the priests did not reign, He was safe, but He could "not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him." [1] Where He was most active, where He had by his words and acts given deepest and most deadly offence, He was not threatened; but He could not touch Judea without, as it were, feeling the cold shadow of the cross.

It is here where the Fourth Gospel becomes so significant and, in the highest sense, historical; by shewing the attitude of Jerusalem to Jesus it explains his attitude to Jerusalem. The Synoptists, who are

[1] John vii. 1.

mainly concerned with Galilee, have no premonition of the cross till almost, like a bolt out of a blue sky, it breaks on us from the mouth of Jesus; but John, who is mainly concerned with Judea, shews us Jesus forced on each visit to retire from it in danger of death.[1] The scribes alone would reason, but would not kill; the priests would not reason, but would crucify. From the hands of his great antagonists Christ anticipates no evil, but at the hands of the "chief priests and rulers" He knows He is to die.

But the whole case is not yet before us. The "chief priests" of the New Testament can become fully intelligible only when their peculiar historical and political position is comprehended. What may be termed the Sadducean ideal was a hierocracy, while that of their rivals was a theocracy. The very conditions that made the theocracy impossible favoured the growth of the hierocracy. The first could not live in the presence of foreign domination, but the second was easily reconciled to it, and even developed by it. In the high priest the Jewish state culminated; he was its highest authority, its living representative. It knew no native king, but had to bear a foreign rule. During the Persian and Greek dominion the people had to appeal to their conquerors through the priest, and through the priest the conquerors had to speak to the people. He was thus, on the one hand, a sort of sacerdotal monarch, and, on the other, a civil ethnarch. This position was at once defined and strengthened by the achievements of the Maccabees. They were in the fullest sense king-priests, possessed both of regal and

[1] Chaps. iv. 3; v. 16; vii. 1, 19, 25, 30, 32, 44; viii. 59. Jesus significantly escapes from this attempt to stone Him by escaping out of the temple (Chaps. x. 31, 39; xi. 8, 50–53, 57).

sacerdotal functions. But the events that ended their dynasty separated these functions. The Idumean Herod might be king, but he could not be priest. The Jew might bear a foreign ruler, but his priest must be of pure blood and belong to the priestly stock. So while Herod usurped the regal, he had to leave untouched the sacerdotal functions. But what he could not take, he did his best to deprave. He made the priest his own creature, instituted and deposed at will. An office that had hitherto been inalienable he made to depend on his pleasure. And it was his pleasure to offend the tenderest susceptibilities of the Jews. It was not in the Idumean to be gracious to what his people loved; he had joy in being insolent to the office they most revered. He shewed his savage insolence both by the kind of men he selected and his modes of displacement. He first appointed Ananel, a Babylonian Jew, of priestly descent, but unimportant family.[1] Him he deposed to make way for Aristobulus, the last of the Maccabees, who was instituted to please the Jews, but drowned to please Herod.[2] He was succeeded by Ananel again, he by Jesus the son of Phabes,[3] who had to make way for Simon, the son of Boethus, an Alexandrian Jew, raised to the high priesthood because Herod wished to marry his daughter, the second Mariamne.[4] From this family of Boethus sprang probably the Baithusin of the Talmud,[5] the despised enemies of the scribes, and their counterpart in the evangelical history, the Herodians.[6] The custom of Herod was followed both by the Herodian family and

[1] Jos., *Antt.* xv. 2, 4; 3, 1. [2] Ibid. xv. 2, 5–7; 3, 1.
[3] Ibid. xv. 9, 3. [4] Ibid. xv. 9, 3; xvii. 4, 2; xviii. 5, 1.
[5] Kuenen, *Godsdienst van Israel*, vol. ii. pp. 456, 457.
[6] Matt. xxii. 16; Mark iii. 6; xii. 13.

the Romans — the ruler for the time being, king or procurator, instituted or deposed for reasons of personal pleasure or political expediency; and so frequent were the changes that in the course of little more than a century, from 37 B.C., to 70 A.D., no fewer than twenty-eight high priests can be reckoned.[1] And so it happened that the office which was the holiest and the most significant in Israel, the peak by which the pyramid touched heaven, where man immediately in one point and at one moment met Jahveh,[2] became the tool or plaything of lustful or Gentile tyrants.

Now these changes in the terms and tenure of the office had varied disastrous consequences, personal, religious, and historical. The office was depraved in the view of the people; they could not respect the creature of the alien even when invested with the name and dignity of God's high priest. He was an offence to their faith, an insult to their holiest hopes. He did not represent trust in Jahveh, but the power of the Gentile, the last and worst captivity of Zion. So patriotic zeal was not, as in the period of the return, sacerdotal; the national party was strongly opposed to the priesthood. The scribes laboured to make Israel independent of the temple, to substitute for it the synagogue, to develope the elements of individual observance and obedience in the law as distinguished from those collective, hieratic, and hierarchic. Then the men chosen to the office were not of the noblest sort. The motives that determined the choice were not religious, but either personal or political. The man appointed was not he who had, by blood or character,

[1] Schürer, *Die ἀρχιερεῖς im Neuen Testaments, Studien u. Krit.* pp. 593, ff. 1872. See also his *N. Testamentliche Zeitgeschichte*, pp. 418, ff.

[2] Wellhausen, *Geschichte Israels*, vol. i. p. 154.

the best claim to the office, but he who had made himself most agreeable to the ruler or could best serve his purpose. The men that most please tyrants and conquerors are not the most pleasant to men; their promotion has no promise of good in it for land or people. The son of Boethus is made priest that he may be ennobled and Herod enabled with dignity to wed his daughter. Joazar[1] and Eleazar[2] are appointed to the priesthood because brothers-in-law of Herod. Annas,[3] the most fortunate man of his time, sees five sons and a son-in-law raised to the sacred office because he has wealth, and Roman procurators know how to rule provinces so as to enrich themselves. And these were not the only evils. The frequent changes created two classes —one privileged, the men who had held office, another ambitious and time-serving, those who hoped to hold it. A man who had been chief priest did not lose the name with the dignity. He continued to bear it, and with it many of its privileges. He had a seat in the Sanhedrim, with the authority and influence that belong to one who has held the highest place. He could exercise both with a view to his own or family ends. He might hope, like Ananel and Joazar, to be appointed a second time, or he might wish to secure the elevation of a son or brother. "The kindred of the high priest"[4] were potent forces in Jewish politics, constituted the circle to which those ambitious of office belonged. In the period now before us, many as were the chief priests they were selected from only a few families—three were of the family of Phabi, three of the family of Kamith,

[1] Jos., *Antt.* xvii. 6. [2] Ibid. xvii. 13, 1. [3] Ibid. xx. 9, 1, 2.

[4] Acts iv. 6. The New Testament in its mode of speaking of "the chief priests" and describing their action is entirely in harmony with Josephus. Cf. *Vita*, 38; *B. J.* ii. 12, 6; 20, 4; iv. 3, 7; 4, 3; 9, 11; 3, 6, 9.

six of the family of Boethus, eight of the family of Annas.[1] These, then, may be said to have been the ruling families, each possessing influence in the council in proportion to the number of past chief priests it could count. As the acting priest was the creature of an arbitrary will, no one could tell how long he might reign. Each family would live watchful of change and anxious to profit by it, yet all united in the common purpose and endeavour not to offend Rome or furnish her with an occasion or excuse for taking away their office or nation.

Let us now see how men like these "chief priests" would act in an emergency such as Christ had created. The family in power was that of Annas. His son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas, was high priest, the thirteenth in order from Ananel. A crafty man this Caiaphas must have been, for he held office much longer than any other man in this century of change, viz., from 18 to 36 A.D. He and his associates knew at once the rulers and the ruled; knew how easy it was to exasperate Rome and how merciless she was in her exasperation; and knew how turbulent the Jews were, and how susceptible in all things touching their religion. The procurator had proved himself fierce and irascible, was capable alike of utmost contempt for Jewish superstitions and coldest cruelty to Jewish citizens, as the introduction of the imperial eagles into the holy city and the massacre of the Galileans shewed.[2] And the priests, as the men who best knew and most feared him, would be sure to dread and seek to repress every sign of discontent or

[1] The violence and craft of these families is specially lamented in the Talmud. See text in Derenbourg, *Essai sur l'Histoire et la Géographie de la Palestine*, pp. 232, 233. See also Geiger, *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen der Bibel*, p. 110.

[2] Jos., *Antt.* xviii. 3, 1; *B. J.* ii. 9, 2, 3; Luke xiii. 1.

incipient disturbance. They would judge as men whose seats were insecure and whose security depended on the prompt severity of their judgments. And this is one of the features of their sect Josephus specially emphasizes: the Sadducees were much severer as judges than the Pharisees. And this is no less apparent in the New Testament. It is a man of the Pharisees who speaks in the council in defence of Jesus, and on these grounds: "Doth our law judge any man unless it first hear him?"[1] It is a man of the same sect who pleads that it is better to leave the Apostles alone, and to the judgment of God.[2] It is to the Pharisees that Paul appeals as against the Sadducees, and not in vain.[3] If the Pharisees could not persuade they would not persecute; it is the priests and Sadducees alone that harass and distress the Church in Jerusalem. And the reason is obvious; the sincerity of the Pharisees made them mild, the policy of the priests made them severe. The former could not invoke Cæsar without denying their faith; the latter must please Cæsar or lose office and influence. The man faithful to principle is never cruel; the victim of expediency always is.

These men then find themselves suddenly confronted by Christ, forced to judge as to his claims, and decide how to act in relation to Him. The situation is complex and critical. He has entered the city amid exulting and expectant enthusiasm. He speaks and acts like one having authority, not now simply against the hated Pharisees, but also against the priests. He invades the temple, deals sharply with their vested

[1] John vii. 51. And to the same sect the one dissentient in the Sanhedrim that condemned Jesus (Luke xxiii. 51). [2] Acts v. 34–40. [3] Ibid. xxiii. 6–7.

interests, declares Himself the foe of the old and the founder of a new order. His ideas of worship contradict theirs, and threaten to abolish sacrifice, priesthood, and temple. And He does not belong to their class, is of no priestly stock, is without hierarchic notion or reverence, has lived without respect to their ritual and their sacerdotal laws. They have found it impossible to vanquish Him by ominous speech, or dark looks, or open and violent reproofs. The people believe on Him, wait on his every word, watch his every act. Miracles have made Him marvellous, and to excited hope He is the Messiah, the Redeemer who is to deliver them from their later and most hateful captivity. And the multitude is immense. Jerusalem alone might be managed, but Jerusalem is not alone. Israel is there, men out of all Judea and Galilee, Jews from the uttermost parts of the earth. The strangers are stirred by the strange news, expectancy and wonder are abroad, and men feel their spirits thrilled by the presence of hopes that had seemed too glorious to be realized. And in the heart of the city the abomination of desolation stands; over it there floats the ensign of Rome. Always a bitter sight, it was made far more bitter by being in Jerusalem and at the feast, when Israel came to confess his faith and realize his unity and mission. But to the men who found by the coming of Jesus their Messianic hopes kindled into burning passion and desire, it must have seemed an affront hardly to be borne, an hourly provocation to revolt. And Pilate, suspicious, cruel, unscrupulous, was in his palace watching all, ready to let loose his legions and begin the work Rome but too well knew how to do when dealing with a subject people that

would rebel. All this the priests divined and understood; but what was to be done? Rebellion simply meant destruction; it seemed inevitable if Jesus was spared. "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and our nation."[1] They had no concern with his claims, only with their own safety. They knew Him as at once the enemy of their order, temple, and worship, and the cause of all those dangerous and explosive hopes. The case was one where Caiaphas' craft was sure to seem wisdom. He went right to what they thought the heart of the matter when he said to the council, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."[2] There was no need to name the "one man." The men who ruled by pleasure of the Roman would sacrifice the greatest person of their race that the Roman might be pleased and they allowed to live.

To decide was to act; promptitude was necessary to success; the people must be surprised into connivance, and Rome into judicial approval and action. The priests proceed with wonderful courage and tact. The first thing is to get Christ into their power. Captivity will break the spell that binds the people to Him, and may even change them into enemies. By the grace of Judas the first step is taken. In the still night Jesus is seized and carried bound to the palace of the high priest. There all was wakefulness; and, though yet in the night, a council was summoned. While it was being got together, Annas, the head of the reigning house, saw and examined Him. This is

[1] John xi. 48. [2] Ibid. xi. 50.

one of the finely significant details we owe to John, the more historical and vivid that it is so unexpected. Yet, once the situation is comprehended, nothing is more probable. Annas was in all likelihood the oldest past chief priest. Appointed in the year 6 after Christ, his family had ever since, with a break of only two years, held office. The old man was subtle; his was the serpent's brood, theirs, as the Talmud says, the serpent's hiss.[1] Where the family had managed so excellently, its founder was sure to come by his honour. In the inner circle he could not but remain the high priest, though to the city and people the son-in-law filled the office. So John, with most conscious verbal inconsistency, but most significant accuracy, names now Annas and now Caiaphas high priest.[2] And the private process before this patriarch—reckoned happiest of men because the man with most sons in the priesthood—was most characteristic. The subtle old man used his opportunity dexterously. He "asked Jesus of his disciples and of his doctrine." These were the very points on which a little knowledge, privately gained, was sure to be most helpful at the trial, and after it. For what purpose had He organized a school, what sort of men formed it, how many were they, and what without their head would they be likely to attempt or do? In what principles had He instructed them? What did He think, how had He spoken, of the scribes, the priests, Rome? But Jesus declined to satisfy his astute curiosity. He had formed no secret society; what He had spoken to his disciples He had spoken "openly to the world." He had no secret doctrine; had taught in the most public places, in syna-

[1] Derenbourg, *ut supra.*

[2] John xviii. 13, 19, 24.

gogues, in the temple. Let those who heard be asked; they knew what had been said. The answer was offensive because so mild yet true, and the reply to it was a blow from one of the attendants. The master is known by his servants, the priest by his ministers.

But now the hastily summoned council is ready, and the captive is led bound into its presence. The judges sit in a semicircle, Caiaphas in the midst, before them the accused, at either end of the crescent the clerks or secretaries. A judicial process was necessary, and the priests were masters enough of legal forms to use them for illegal ends. Christ is there alone; no friend beside Him, no advocate to speak for Him, no opportunity granted to call witnesses in his defence. But what need of defence? No charge is as yet formulated; He is being tried for a crime that has yet to be discovered. He is an accused without an accuser, or rather, with only accusers and no judge. In their hour of need why did they not call the traitor? He had known Christ, had heard his most confidential words and doctrines, and so might have helped them to frame a charge. But he had done his work, and it was now doing a most unexpected work in him. It was not ill to find witnesses, but it was not easy to make their testimonies agree, or be agreeable to the purposes of the prosecuting judges.[1] But at last two witnesses came who said, "He said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.'" This seemed enough for the council; it could be made to prove Him a plotter against the existing order, an enemy to the worship and law of his people. The witnesses had, indeed, changed his

[1] Mark xiv. 55–59; Matt. xxvi. 59–61.

saying. He said, "Destroy"—the destruction was to be their work, not his—"and I will build it up in three days." It was a parable, too; a speech which shewed in symbol the destructive work they were daily doing, and the restorative work He was victoriously to achieve. But as they took it, it was, remarkably enough, the gravest charge they could formulate. Out of all the words He had spoken and works He had done they could find no graver. They could not charge Him with violation of the Sabbath law without approving the interpretations of their old enemies, the Pharisees. They could not charge Him with violent conduct in purifying the temple, for it was precisely conduct all the Pharisees and zealots would approve. They could not prove that the triumphal entry had any political origin or purpose, for He had not used it or made to it any public reference. His denunciations of the Pharisees they could not condemn; nor in his discourses in the city could they find matter to their mind. The utmost they could do was to build on this poor perverted misinterpreted saying, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and build it in three days."

The priest must be careful of the temple; so it was with the air of one whose very heart was touched that Caiaphas demanded, "Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?"[1] But Jesus, with serene dignity, "held his peace." Before expediency, imitating justice that it might the better work its unjust will, He could not condescend to plead; speech had only dealt with the semblance as if it were reality. In his silence there was a majesty that awed the council, and though now was the moment for the high

[1] Mark xiv. 60, 61; Matt. xxvi. 62, 63.

priest to gather and declare its mind, Caiaphas was too crafty to do so. He could not condemn and he would not acquit, and so, with the cunning of his house, he resolved to change his method. He would enlist on their side the honour, the conscious kinghood, of the Victim they had doomed to death. So in the name of the Holiest he appealed to Jesus to declare who and what He was—"I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Silence was not now possible to Jesus. He could not be unfaithful to Himself, or to the Name which had been invoked. "I am," He said. The consciousness of his Messiahship was never serener and stronger than now. In his hour of deepest humiliation He was most consciously the King; in the moment of utmost loneliness and desertion He knew Himself the Son of God, and feared not, even before the priestly council, to complete his confession.—"Ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven."

The high priest well knew what the words meant. Into the one phrase—"the Christ, the Son of God"—the hopes of a Psalm,[1] dear to Judaism for the victory and dominion it promised, were expressed; into the other the high apocalyptic dreams of Daniel were condensed.[2] In his soul he had little regard to either. They belonged to the things in which the Pharisees gloried, on which the zealots lived. He had seen many enthusiasts live and die, had often seen the fanaticism created by the ancient Messianic hopes break into useless rebellion and perish in blood. The man of expediency regards enthusiasm with cold and cynical

[1] Psa. ii. 7–12. [2] Dan. vii. 13, 14, 22.

scorn, while the child of enthusiasm regards expediency with blind and passionate hate. But in the hate there is more intelligence than in the scorn. Caiaphas could not distinguish between a Jesus of Nazareth and a Judas of Gamala, did not dream that the confession he had heard was to be the symbol of a New Religion, wherein man was to become consciously the Son of God, and God to be loved as the Father of man. All he knew was that his subtlety had succeeded. In claiming to be the Son of God Jesus could be charged with blasphemy under the law of Moses; in claiming to be the Messiah He could be represented as denying the authority of Cæsar and setting up as the Jewish king. So, happy in his exultant horror, the priest rose, rent his clothes, and cried, "What further need have we of witnesses? Lo, ye have heard the blasphemy! What think ye?" And the response came, clear and unanimous, "He is worthy of death!" [1]

Over the scene that followed it is well to draw the veil. Leaving the men who had the heart so to spit and buffet one so meek and guileless, let us watch a scene proceeding in the court below. There a fire was burning, and its lurid light fell upon a circle of faces pressing round to share its warmth. Into the court love had drawn two disciples. Peter was one, and, chilled by his sleep in Gethsemane, he stood forward to warm himself. The flame fell on his face, and a serving-maid, recognizing the strongly marked features, said in the hearing of the coarse and truculent band, doubtless discussing, in the brutal manner of their class, the terror in which "all had forsook Him and fled," "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth." The sud-

[1] Mark xiv. 63, 64; Matt. xxvi. 64, 65.

den charge was too much for Peter's ebbing courage, and he denied that he knew the Man. Withdrawing into the shade to escape further notice, he only stumbled upon another recognition and into another denial. Wretched, out of heart and hope, yet held by his very misery to the spot, he was not equal to a third recognition, and denied with cursing. But just at that moment a calm eye met his, and the passion changed into penitence, the cursing into tears. That night the silent heaven looked down on two men, the one driven by a tearless remorse and the burning stain of innocent blood on his conscience to seek the awful consolation of death, the other led by the tenderness of denied yet Divine love to tearful penitence and a nobler life. Without Peter the penitent we might never have had Peter the apostle. The love that impelled him to follow Christ was mightier than the shame that surprised him into the denial. He rose by falling. The event that shewed him his own weakness also revealed the secret of stability and strength.

In the morning, "as soon as it was day,"[1] the full Sanhedrim met. The proceedings of the council that had sat over night had to be revised and ratified. Without this these could have no validity. Judaism was at least merciful, and provided that the criminal should be tried by day and condemned by day; but, that temper might not control judgment, he was not to be condemned on the day on which his trial began. But the scruples of the scribes did not trouble the Sadducees, especially when commanded by expediency. The process begun by night was ended in the morning. The session was short, the witnesses were not called,

[1] Mark xv. 1; Luke xxii. 66.

the confession was not repeated, there was no discussion as to the guilt or innocence of Jesus. The only question was, What shall be done with Him? The priests were too adroit to hesitate. The sooner He was in the hands of the Procurator the safer they would be. While they held Him, there was no saying what the people might do; once He was in the power of Rome disbelief would be universal—no one would believe in a Messiah who could not resist the Gentile The Pharisees might dislike asking Rome to punish an offender against their own law, but the Sadducees were not so nice of conscience, knew that Rome, and not they, had the power of life and death. So the council resolved to deliver Jesus to the Governor.

In Pilate there appears the character that was needed to make the tragedy complete. In him Heathenism as it then was lived, and now, side by side with Judaism, confronted Christ, each asking the other what was to be done with Him, each helping the other by deepening his present shame to heighten his ultimate glory. Three religions here stood face to face, two of the past and one of the future. The religions of the past were exhausted, hollow, and unreal, but the religion of the future a thing of infinite promise and potency. Pride and strength seemed to belong to the old, humiliation and weakness to the new; but within the old the merciless forces of decay and disintegration were at work, while within the new germinative and organizing energies were generously active. The persons that act in this drama but veil great principles, and help us to see how the evil, even where most victorious over the good, may be only the more working its own defeat, and fulfilling the Divine purpose.

Pilate was, so far as he stands revealed in Christian and Jewish history, a true child of the Roman Empire in its period of insolence and victorious aggression. His was precisely the kind of character sure to be formed under the combined influences of its conquests and cosmopolitanism. Few races can bear conquest undepraved; the subject often suffer less than the subjecting people. The man who rules the men his kinsmen have vanquished is prone to regard them as a lower race, made of poorer and feebler stuff than his own. And where the ruler so regards the ruled, justice is impossible; his administration will be too thoroughly penetrated by his own spirit to be, where most regular or legal, altogether just. And this radical evil vitiated the Roman rule. What was wise and generous in it was perverted and poisoned by the men it employed; and they by the false attitude they occupied. The only remedy for the evil was the complete incorporation of the provinces with the empire; but this was less possible in its earlier than in its golden period, the days of Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius. Rome was tolerant of national institutions, but national instincts and institutions were not always tolerant of Rome. And where they were recalcitrant she was severe; and where the subject was an insubordinate race, too weak to rebel, too proud to be submissive, too tenacious of its own will and customs to love Rome, there her ruler would find his task the heaviest—exercise and apology for qualities imperial rather than regal or legal. Then while conquest depraved, cosmopolitanism enervated, weakened the faith that had created the moral and political ideals of Rome. As the Roman came to know many peoples he came to know as many religions; each believed

within its own circle, unknown or disbelieved beyond it. To his rigorous practical intelligence the main matter in each was its political significance. All could not be true, none had a universal truth, and each served a local purpose and had a particular use. A religion had only to be national to be recognized at Rome; she tolerated all that she might the better rule all peoples. The inevitable consequence was the one so well stated by Gibbon—while all religions were to the people equally true, they were to the philosopher equally false, to the magistrate equally useful.

And Pilate was in these respects a true Roman magistrate. His attitude to the Jews is expressed in the history of his government, his careless sacrifice of life, his insolent affronts to their deepest and dearest convictions. His attitude to religion is expressed in the question, asked in cynical impatience, "What is truth?"[1] meaning, "What is your truth to me? Fools may reason about it, statesmen cannot rule by it; he but wastes his time who seeks it." To such a man the Jews were an insoluble problem, and their religious discussions and differences an irritating trouble. He had come from Cæsarea to Jerusalem because of the feast. The multitudes were dangerous and discontented, and he had to be there at once to overawe the people and administer justice. His memories of the city were unpleasant. He had been truculent, but they fanatical, and his truculence had been defied and mastered by their fanaticism. And he finds them again agitated and fierce over these religious differences of theirs. And what was worse, they evidently mean to draw him into their disputes, and use his authority for

[1] John xviii. 38.

their sectarian ends. The priests had got soldiers the night before to capture a Man who was no political offender, and now here in the early morning they are bringing Him to the Prætorium.[1] Their conduct is irritating, a succession of small yet exasperating offences to a hard vain man like Pilate. They send their Victim into the Prætorium, but they themselves will not enter. They are but Jewish priests, yet would feel defiled by contact with the majesty of Rome. They wish him to work their will, but he has to go out to speak with them; they, for reasons he must as a governor respect, and as a man despise, refuse to plead in the hall of judgment. His feeling of impatient and fretful contempt is expressed in the question, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" They attempt, by standing on their dignity, to carry their point at once, "We deliver Him to thee; that is proof enough of his guilt." He, determined not to be their tool or any friend to their factions, stands on his authority and legal rights. "If I do not try Him, I will not execute Him. Judge Him according to your law." They, forced to feel that as they have no power to inflict they have no right to award the last penalty, have to submit their whole case to Pilate. But the new is not the old indictment; it is skilfully modified and enlarged into what seems a capital offence, whether measured by the law of Judæa or Rome. The charges are three—He has corrupted the nation, has forbidden to give tribute to Cæsar, and has claimed to be King Messiah.[2] Pilate, having heard their charge, returns to examine Christ. He asks, seizing the cardinal point for him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?"[3] But the question is not so easily

[1] John xviii. 28–32. [2] Luke xxiii. 2. [3] John xviii. 33–38.

answered; it may admit of either a yes or a no. So Jesus wishes to know whose it is—Pilate's or the Jews'? Pilate declares ignorance; he knows but what he has been told; he would never have imagined that the person before him could claim to be a king. Then Jesus breaks into a wonderful exposition of his kinghood and kingdom—"My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants have fought that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." And Pilate, anxious to reach what was for him the root of the matter, asks, "Art thou a king, then?" Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

These words are so remarkable, and form so striking a contrast to the sayings and conduct of Christ, as given in the Synoptics, that their authenticity has been amply doubted. But comparison with the synoptic narratives confirms rather than invalidates their truth. It is evident from all the gospels that Pilate condemned Jesus most reluctantly, or rather, refused to condemn Him, and allowed Him to be crucified only to please the Jews. He could not be made to believe in his guilt, believed instead that He was the victim of factious and unjust hate, struggled hard to save Him, and yielded simply to avoid a tumult. Now how had Pilate been so deeply impressed in favour of Jesus? Why so strongly convinced that the Jewish clamour was utterly unreasonable? Simple pity cannot explain it. He had seen too much to be easily touched, and was too much of a Roman to be ruled by sentiment.

And where political claims and fiscal agitation were concerned he could be as pitiless as any of his class. But grant this interview, and all is plain. These words would make on Pilate the impression of innocence unsurpassed. They would seem to him like the speech of a child, a simple and unworldly idealist too remote from the politics and concerns of life to be a trouble in the State. He knew the Jews, right well understood the kind of men that disguised policy in religion. But this was not one of them. His speech was without worldliness, a sweet and limpid idealism, no sour and impracticable fanaticism, and must be offensive to the Jews for reasons that concerned their superstition and in no way concerned Rome, which they did not love. And so the governor tried to save the Christ. He first pronounced Him innocent, but only to hear the chief priests the more fiercely charge Him with corrupting the people from Galilee to Jerusalem.[1] Then, anxious to be rid of the matter, he sent Him to Herod. But Herod, with the cruel and indulgent spirit of his race, only made sport out of the Sufferer, and sent Him back derisively arrayed to Pilate. With Jesus once more on his hands, the governor was forced to assume the responsibilities involved in judgment. He did not wish to sacrifice Jesus, but still less did he wish to risk a tumult. So he tried to avoid both by a mean expedient. Should he—addressing the excited multitude now gathered before his palace, and skilfully fomented into vindictiveness against Him who had deceived them into the thought that He was Messiah—should he, as they were accustomed to an act of grace at the feast, release unto them the king of the Jews? But

[1] Luke xxiii. 5–11.

"the chief priests moved the people" to cry, "Not this man, but Bar-Abbas."[1] By this appeal to the crowd the control of events passed from the hands of Pilate. Passion now reigned; the only question was, how long he would hold out and how best it could compel him to yield. He ordered Jesus to be scourged, clad in the symbols of mock royalty, and then shewed Him, bleeding and humiliated, a spectacle calculated to awaken pity and satisfy revenge. But the only response was the cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!"[2] If they would have it, then they must know the guilt was theirs. He would not condemn Him; he would remain "innocent of the blood of this just person." But the guilt they were ready to assume: "His blood be on us and on our children."[3] "Shall I," then said he, now willing to execute any sentence they might determine, "crucify your king?" And they, sealing their national crime by national infidelity, shouted, "Crucify him! we have no king but Cæsar."[4]

And so the conflict of the three religions ended; the Christ who held the future was to be crucified by the passion of sacerdotal Judaism and the weakness of cosmopolitan Heathenism. The tragic story is a parable in action. The religion of Israel, falsified by priests, perverted from a service of the living God into a sensuous worship, where the symbol superseded the reality, the temple overshadowed the God, and the hierarch supplanted his law, could find no love in its heart, no reverence in its will for the holiest Person of the race; met Him not as the fruition of its hopes and the end of its being, but as the last calamity of its life,

[1] Mark xv. 11.
[2] John xix. 4–6.
[3] Matt. xxvii. 24, 25.
[4] John xix. 15.

a being that must perish that it might live. The religions of the Gentile, penetrated and transformed by the thought of Greece and the political ideal of Rome, stood between Judaism and Christ, saw its want of the holy and hate of the good, saw, too, his innocence, the beauty that made his marred visage winsome and his ideal of manhood sweetly reasonable; but it had not heart enough to love the Christ, had not even conscience enough to compel the Jew to forego his hate and love his King. And between these there is the religion of Christ, which is the religion of man and his future, made the victim of their vices, sacrificed, as it might seem, to their blended hate and impotence. But his death is its life. Christ is like a holy and beautiful being bruised and broken by the collision of two brutal forces that cannot understand the sanctity and loveliness of Him they have destroyed, but they bruised Him only that there might escape from Him a fragrance that has sweetened the air of the world, made it for all time and for all men balmier and more healthful, like a diffused celestial presence, the very breath of God passing over the earth and abiding on it. His kingdom was not of this world, and in its unworldliness has lived its permanence and power. While the empires of Augustus and Constantine, of Charlemagne and Barbarossa, of the Frank and the Teuton, have flourished and perished, the kingdom of Christ has widened with the ages, strengthened with the truth, and now lives in the heart of humanity, the one presence of infinite promise and hopefulness and love.

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