

## ANNAS AND CAIAPHAS.

THE way in which the names of Annas and Caiaphas occur in the New Testament has given some trouble to Commentators. They are found first in St. Luke's Gospel,<sup>1</sup> mentioned both together at the commencement of the preaching of John the Baptist, and are there called "the high priests." St. Matthew, in the narrative of our Lord's trial,<sup>2</sup> speaks only of Caiaphas, and calls him "the high priest." But St. John, who also mentions Caiaphas as "the high priest," tells us that Jesus, after his arrest, was first brought to Annas,<sup>3</sup> as if he were of chief importance, and then was sent by him to Caiaphas. Lastly, in the Acts,<sup>4</sup> we have Annas called the high priest, and the name of Caiaphas mentioned at the same time, but no title is given to the latter.

But we know from Josephus<sup>5</sup> that Annas (Ananus), who was father-in-law to Caiaphas, was made high priest by Quirinus (Cyrenius), A. D. 7, and continued in that office for seven years, when he was deprived of it by Valerius Gratus, and was never chosen to be high priest afterwards.

Now this was a long time before the mission of the Baptist commenced. After Annas, Ismael, the son of Phabi, was made high priest for a short time, and then Eleazar, one of the sons of Annas, who had been high priest before, was appointed for a brief period, and there succeeded him Simon the son of Camithus.<sup>6</sup> Next in order came Caiaphas, who was also called Joseph, and he was the high priest from A. D. 25-37,

<sup>1</sup> Luke iii. 9.<sup>4</sup> Acts iv. 6.<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvi. 3, 57.<sup>5</sup> *Antiq.* xviii. 2, 1.<sup>3</sup> John xviii. 13, 24.<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* xviii. 2, 2.

and then was deposed by Vitellius.<sup>1</sup> So that Caiaphas was acting as high priest through all the ministerial life of John the Baptist and of Jesus, and for the first years of the early ministry of the apostles. Yet during this period we find in our historic books of the New Testament that Annas is called high priest when he was not actually so, that he is treated as of prime authority by the Jewish people, and is called high priest by the writer of the Acts, as though he took a rank above Caiaphas.

But if we examine the statements of Holy Writ, and the records to be found in later Jewish literature concerning the high priest's office, there seems to be no great difficulty in understanding that the words of the New Testament concerning these men are exactly such as would naturally be employed.

1. We see, from the first institution of the high priest's office, that Moses, who is himself counted (Psa. xcix. 6) a high priest on the same level as Aaron, anointed (Exod. xl. 12-15), not only Aaron, but his sons also, to be high priests. Also Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, is sent to the war against the Midianites with "the holy instruments"<sup>2</sup> (*i.e.*, the Urim and Thummim), a proceeding which shews that he at that time was high priest, as well as Eleazar, his father. Again, in later times, we have mention of "Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest,"<sup>3</sup> on which words the Targum explains that these were "the high priest and the Sagan, or deputy high priest."

And the Talmud makes it very clear that at certain times there was a special arrangement for providing a deputy to execute the high priest's office. Thus it is

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq.* xviii. 4, 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Num.* xxxi. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *2 Kings* xxv. 18.

said :<sup>1</sup> "Seven days before the day of atonement they remove the high priest from his house to the chamber of the assessors, and they provide another priest in his place, lest any disqualification should befall him." On this passage Rashi's note is (fol. 2 a), "To be high priest *instead of him.*"

A little later on in the same treatise,<sup>2</sup> speaking of the services of the day of atonement, the text runs thus. "Rabbi Khanina, the Sagan of the priests (and so one who himself had held the office), said : Why is there a Sagan on the right hand of the high priest (when the lots are cast for the goats)? The answer is : So that, if any disqualification should befall him, the Sagan may go (into the holy of holies) and perform the service in his stead."

There is also some illustration of this subject in the *Midrash Rabbah*<sup>3</sup> on Leviticus. In one place we read ; "If there was any defilement on Aaron, Eleazar served (as high priest) ; if there was any defilement on Eleazar, Ithamar served. Just as in the case of Shimeon, the son of Kimkith, who went out to speak with the king of the Arabians. There came a fleck of spittle from his (the king's) mouth upon his (the high priest's) garments, and he was unclean. And Judah his brother went in and served instead of him in the high priest's office. On that day their mother saw *two of her sons high priests.*"

And again, in the same Chapter : "Had not Elisheba<sup>4</sup> (the wife of Aaron) joy in this world, who saw five crowns (*i. e.*, subjects for rejoicing) in one day : her brother-in-law (Moses), a king ;<sup>5</sup> her brother

<sup>1</sup> T. B. *Foma*, i. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Par. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Foma*, 39 a, and the parallel passages.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. vi. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Deut. xxxiii. 5.

(Naashon), *nasi*<sup>1</sup> (*i. e.*, president of the Sanhedrin); her husband, high priest; her two sons, Sagans of the high priest; and Phinehas, her grandson, anointed for the war."

These extracts make it clear that from the earliest times down to a date after the composition of the Acts of the Apostles there were often circumstances under which two men were called high priests at the same time.

2. That one who had once been high priest, but had ceased to be in office, would still be called high priest, is evident from that principle which is laid down in several places in the Talmud,<sup>2</sup> that "you may elevate in the matter of a sacred thing or office, but you cannot bring down." As with us, "Once a bishop, always a bishop." The illustration there given is that you might lay the shewbread on a marble table first, and after that on a golden one, but the contrary order of proceeding was forbidden. A similar illustration is found<sup>3</sup> concerning the disposal of public property, where we are told that the authorities may sell ordinary land, to buy with the sum realized a synagogue; or may sell a synagogue to buy an ark for keeping the Law in; or may sell the ark to buy wrappers for the roll of the Law; or sell such wrappers to buy books, and so help on the spread of knowledge; or may sell ordinary books to procure a copy of the Law; because in each of these cases the thing purchased is of a more exalted character than that which was sold for its purchase. But the reverse of this process was unlawful.

We see, therefore, that when Annas had been high priest, it was not only likely that he would continue to

<sup>1</sup> Num. vii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> See T.B. *Shekalim*, vi. 4.

<sup>3</sup> T.B. *Megillah*, 26 a.

be called high priest, but that, according to Jewish usage, he could be called nothing else.

3. The age of Annas, and the influential position naturally occupied by one who had been acting high priest himself, whose son had twice held the same office, and who was father-in-law to the present high priest, are sufficient to warrant the action of the crowd in taking Christ to Annas first ; while in the passage of the Acts,<sup>1</sup> the mention of Annas at the head of the list, with the title of high priest (which, we see, would be sure to be given him), was nothing more than was due to his years and to the relationship in which he stood to Caiaphas, while the omission of the high-priest's title after the name of Caiaphas is no more a proof that he was not also high priest, than the language of St. Mark's Gospel,<sup>2</sup> when it is said, "Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter," is evidence that Peter was not one of the disciples. Instances of a like kind of omission might easily be multiplied, as when we read,<sup>3</sup> "Then Peter and the apostles answered and said." Peter is here placed apart from the rest, yet nobody would ever argue from such a passage that St. Luke meant to exclude him from the number of the Twelve.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts iv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Mark xvi. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Acts v. 29.

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