

and in all the Churches of Asia. We rejoice greatly to hear that the word of the Lord is glorified amongst them, and to know that thou art reaping much fruit of thy continued labour in that region.

“Mayest thou, by the mercy of God, be strengthened in body, and be comforted in heart in regard both to us and to all thy disciples in the Lord. Our love be with thee in Christ Jesus. Farewell!”

GEO. G. FINDLAY.

CHRIST'S THREE JUDGES.

I. CAIAPHAS.

(MATTHEW XXVI. 57-66.)

ON Caiaphas, first, was laid the burden of judging Jesus of Nazareth; and the temper in which he faced the task is worthy of our study, for it shows in a great historic instance the difficulty a man must find in denying to Christ His place. Caiaphas, of course, had had his mind made up for long; rumour had discovered this man to him as an enemy of order and religion, and he was not sorry when, at length, the chance was offered of giving effect to that opinion. But the judgment seat is bound by self-respect; and when the men were face to face, Caiaphas could not speak simply from rumour or his own prejudice—he must, as a judge, find reason for thinking the worst of his prisoner. The interest of the situation arises at that point: he wished to justify his own prejudice, and to justify himself in getting rid of Jesus as a disturber. But the task was harder than he thought, and, at last, we see his temper, fretted by the unlooked-for hindrances, rush up in sudden conflagration as he cries, “I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ, the Son of God.” The question did not aim at information, for no assurance on Christ's

part would have convinced Caiaphas that He was other than a pretender. It was a bewildered attempt to extort from the prisoner some word which would justify the evil reports of Him ; for even His judge, bent upon His death, found it hard to think other than nobly of Jesus when they were face to face. And that might be given as one part of Christ's mission in the world : He seeks to bring men away from their prejudices and their evasions to where they must look Him in the face, and see Him for what He is. If, at the beginning, it could be said of Him, " He is despised and rejected of men," " He came to His home, and His own people received Him not," it is also said in prophecy, " Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and even those who pierced Him ; and all the nations of the earth shall mourn because of Him." For He passes up from rejection to a universal recognition, and a universal homage. And the change is wrought as men are driven one by one to see Him as He is.

In the High Priest's case we are, however, reminded that, in spite of difficulty, a man may hold to the meaner judgment of the Christ. Though Caiaphas and Jesus were face to face, and though the judge was not insensible to the look of innocence in the prisoner, there were other forces at work in him which kept him from seeing Christ at all. It was his business to maintain an existing order from which he got his wealth and social consequence, and to which he owed all that was best in his life. It is unreasonable to think of him merely as the champion of the interests of a class ; at least we may be sure he fancied there was more than that in his purpose. He was not, probably, a very religious man ; but something he knew of religion—the decorum, the antiquity, the solemnity of it—and it was all bound up with the Temple service. This was not, in his view, a vulgar conflict about the material advantages of the priesthood ; he was the custodier of a great tradition,

which was seriously threatened by the Galilean ministry. By clearing the Temple courts Jesus had called attention to an abuse which the priests had suffered to grow up ; and on the same occasion He had declared that, though the sanctity of the Temple were altogether destroyed, He could of Himself rear up a new order of right worship. He set His own decision against that of Moses, and affirmed or limited parts of the law as one who had authority. And in all this He won the assent of many. The man healed of blindness was bold, in face of the Council, to declare, " He is a Prophet." Officers sent to report His words returned with a new sense of awe, for " never man spake like this Man." Men of rank within the Council—Nicodemus and Joseph—were wavering ; for this obscure man, of whom the worst was credible, was somehow able to break the weapons which were used by Caiaphas against Him, and held on His dangerous way, unfixing men's regard for the ancient order of religion. So disdain changed to irritation, and that deepened into hatred against One who threatened what was sacred in the High Priest's eyes. And throughout that process, Caiaphas never once was able to see Christ justly ; he saw a distorted imagination of Him through the mist of his own ignorance and his threatened interests. And when, at length, Jesus stood before him, Caiaphas was unable to see Him from the constraint of habit. He sought not for the truth about his prisoner, but for a better persuasion that he already knew the truth.

The same difficulty is common to men ; and they come into conditions of singular advantage for knowing Christ, so hampered by their own past that they cannot know Him. Unconsciously they have adopted a view of His value, and they have been confirmed in that in the time of their ignorance. They have judged Him on grounds of rumour, considering not what He is, but what people have said of Him, or what those are who believe in Him. And to the

end they may see the real Christ through that haze of misinformation; for the habits of a lifetime are not easily shaken off. Within the Church itself there are many who judge unworthily of Christ's claim upon them because they do not truly see Him. Just as the High Priest, with no adequate information of what Jesus taught, yet vaguely surmised in Him a force unfriendly to the old order, so men are still driven into antagonism by such vague suspicion. They do not know what He really seeks, or the promise that lies in His call; they dislike what they fancy He is seeking, and they see in Him always one who threatens the continuance of much they have enjoyed. The promise of a new manhood is to them a threat, for they find the old is good. They do not wish to change, but to remain as they are. And when Christ, whom the common people heard gladly, is presented to them, they see Him in the shadow of their own ignorance. And from that there would be no escape if it were not for the mercy of our God, who delivers men from the blunders of their own past and offers them another chance. In the working of Providence, God brings them to look at His Son in new relations, to judge Him in new conditions. As on that night so many ages back, Jesus is hurried to-day from one tribunal to another; and every man is given the judge's place, and is asked again on soul and conscience for his sentence on Jesus, called the Christ. We may not see Him rightly yet, or give Him all His place; it is much if we even feel, like Caiaphas, that the meaner judgment of the past is hard to maintain, and that a new judgment is now called for.

A man has come far in his apprehension of the truth who finds it hard to bring Christ down to the measures of ordinary human life. In Him we often meet with the contradiction which vexed the temper of the High Priest. On the surface is a suggestion of obscurity and feebleness which tempts us to judge lightly of Him; but when we go deeper,

we find always more of mystery and authority, so that the first prompt judgment is rebuked by facts which it cannot explain. The strength of the catholic faith is that, whenever men have given to Christ a place less than the highest, there remains a margin of historical fact which demands another judgment. Many to-day are tempted to find in Christ nothing more than a supremely good man; they recognise in Him a Pattern, an Example, a Teacher. But He claimed more than that, and the record of His relations with His people is filled with something different from that. The holy Church throughout all the world has confessed the beauty of His example and the truth of His teaching; but what has wrung from it the most passionate utterances of devotion is neither example nor teaching. He is the Saviour, "who has loved us and loosed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us priests to God." There is surely an enormous audacity in leaving out the facts which look in that direction, and in recognising in Christ only what our previous misinformation has allowed us to see. The testimony of those who have been closest to the heart of Jesus is itself a fact which requires consideration; and a wise man, even if he cannot go with them yet in all their witness, will admit that in that direction there lies some element of truth which he has not yet mastered. He will say what he can, but will not close or complete his formula; he sees in the Cross a martyrdom, the inevitable end of a religious reformer's career; he sees that love is at the heart of the mystery, love which is always vicarious, and takes to itself burdens which are not its own. Step by step he may advance, and still feel that the fact is beyond him. Jesus breaks the bread, and gives it to the disciples, saying, "This is My body, broken for you." You are to be fed and strengthened by My death. "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." A new relation between God and man is made possible by this event in history. When

the traitor went out from the company, and Jesus entered into the valley of the shadow where He knew such bitterness, He said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." He felt that, at last, He was coming to His crown, His day of obscurity and impotence was ending. The first step into the shadow was, in His judgment, a step up to the throne. And thus one writer is bold to speak of Him as "crowned with a view to the suffering of death." Is it not a little precarious to find in Christ's death everything except what He found in it, and His Church has found?

Wherever we touch Jesus of Nazareth we find something of the same kind, for after we have conceded all that life has prepared us to grant, we are pressed with the necessity of granting more. Some people set limits to their thoughts of Jesus, because they do not wish to be driven past a limit in submission; and others because their theories do not leave room for a larger Christ. To each Christ has something to say; He will be judged by Himself, not in the light of a man's preconceptions. He will not come in as a detail in a philosophical theory, to take the measures and play the part which the theory allows. He cannot be understood at all by those whose theory has room for no exceptions, for He claimed to be alone, and His Church has worshipped Him as the Only Begotten. Against the cramping conditions to which men subject Him He asserts Himself; when they roll the stone, and set their seal to mark that He has found a limit, they declare their own incompetence. "He dieth no more." And reverent thinkers, who have dared to say less of Christ than the Apostles did, have yet been conscious of a margin of power and mystery beyond their explanation. Like Caiaphas, they have felt that the view they brought with them was curiously hard to maintain; and their fidelity to facts would draw them on to widen their thoughts, and give Christ more room. At all degrees

of apprehension we need to say of Him, "Now we see in a glass darkly, but then face to face."

The one thing certain is that the claims of Jesus-cannot suffer by being brought into clearest light. The region in which He is condemned or made little of is the region in which tradition and preconceived opinion rule. Caiaphas is the type of those who are being driven by Christ into the open, and who struggle back to the congenial dimness of half knowledge. There I had no hesitations, Caiaphas might have said; the matter was plain, and my duty to the country was plain. And now I must by any means find reason for thinking Him such as I once thought Him. And Jesus to that makes answer, "From this day on you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power." He divined the movements in the soul of Caiaphas; He saw him struggling back into the gloom; and He said, From this day on it will be harder and harder for you to set the Son of man aside, until it will be impossible. He might use the same words to all men. "When a man is right, he is much more right than he thinks," is a wise French saying; and he who gives Christ His place finds his act confirmed by the experience of every year. And he who gives Christ another place will find it harder, as life goes on, to keep Him from His crown; he will need to do more and more violence to facts. For Christ is on His way to the throne; to Him every knee shall bow.

That assertion of Christ's gives to His religion its proper place in life. Caiaphas had striven to depress and disregard it, whilst Christ claimed for it a growing prevalence and mastery over the thoughts of men. "From this day on you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power." Mark Pattison, in his Autobiography, observes casually that "religion is a good servant, but a bad master," an epigram which has all the vices of its race. It has an appreciable core of sense, but so minute as to warrant any

one in rather calling it nonsense. And yet, to a host of people religion is a servant; it accepts the limits and conditions which they impose; it comes and goes at call, and gives no trouble. It is one of the minor interests in life, belonging to the circle of their relaxations. Such people are often quite orthodox, in so far as religion is a matter of dead truths; but they certainly know nothing of what religion really is. For it is wholly a force, and its ideas are what Ruskin calls "sapling truths," which grow and blossom out into more glorious truths. The religion of Jesus can never be a servant: it is a power, which takes hold of a man and leads him on to farther and farther confession of Jesus Christ. Continually it discovers more of what Christ is and what He asks; belief grows and obedience grows; and thus life, under its constraint, is both quickened and widened from year to year. A Christian man to-day has thoughts and accepts duties which were not in his mind at the beginning. When Jesus bade him follow, he did not know where he might be led; but he has tried to go where Christ has led him, and in all places of fear and doubt the goodness of his Leader has upheld him. "The love of Christ constraineth us." That is what we have to seek in Christ, and not, like Caiaphas, to catch at every plea which might bear us out in disregard of Him. Men's lives in the end are tested at this point—what they have made of Jesus Christ; a revolutionary, says one, a saint, a holy teacher of truth, a friend and lover of men. Is that all? Is there nothing more to say? Paul said of Jesus Christ, "He loved me and gave Himself for me"; and so he lived as one no longer his own, but bound to learn and to serve. And Thomas, with doubt all banished, fell before Him, crying, "My Lord and my God!" Can we say that yet?

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