

mitted unspeakable outrages into some place of suffering, we had done so with a profound sense of righteousness; and had we been able to remove the unhappy people to a safe and pleasant land, where they would know terror no more, this we had also done with a profound sense of relief. Are we then to suppose that the future life will be no improvement upon the present, but that for ever our moral sense will be insulted with the sight of unpunished wickedness and of wronged innocence? Are we not bound to believe that where there is sin there must and ought to be suffering, and that among the mercies of God by which we are weaned from unrighteousness and held in the way of life everlasting, not the least is the punishment of sin both in this world and in that which is to come?

JOHN WATSON.

CHRIST'S THREE JUDGES.

III.

HEROD.

(LUKE XXIII. 7-11.)

THE appearance of our Lord before Herod was a kind of interlude in the tragic farce of His trial. In all courts the first interest must be the adjusting of the issues, the defining of what exactly is to be tried in order that both witness and pleader may be kept to the point, and that judgment may not in the end be given on anything but the real question in dispute. Now, when Jesus stood before Pilate, the issue was clear. The Romans had no concern with questions of doctrine or worship in Palestine, and their courts, therefore, could try Jesus only on the charge of being disloyal, an enemy to Roman order in the land. This man claims to be a king, and gathers a party—that was the charge; and Pilate had to judge if it were seriously

made. Caiaphas presided in a court, partly civil and partly ecclesiastical, where heresy and blasphemy were crimes, and there Jesus was tried on His relation to Jewish doctrine. He has spoken slightingly of the Temple, He has called Himself the Son of God: these were the accusations. In each case there was an issue; but Herod had nothing to try, for against the conduct of Jesus as a workman and citizen in Galilee, where Herod's power was, no voice was raised. And, what is more, he had no jurisdiction in Jerusalem; even in his own territory his power was jealously limited by the Romans. In a fit of drunken boasting he had sworn to give the daughter of Herodias even the half of his kingdom, but, in fact, he could give nothing away without the consent of his masters. And that was where his power lay; whilst in Jerusalem he was merely a guest, come, like others, to the feast, who had no authority to judge as he had no offence to try. It may have been this lack of responsibility which suffered him to fall so low. Caiaphas saw in Jesus an enemy of all he counted sacred, and his rage gave him seriousness and a touch of dignity. Pilate, though he looked more at policy than at justice, was yet the custodier of Roman peace throughout the province, and that kept him from the lowest depth. But Herod had no quarrel to pursue and no large interest to maintain. He was invited by Pilate to lend him the help of his experience in coming to a decision; and in the invitation he saw nothing more than an opportunity of gratifying a poor curiosity and of making sport at the expense of a suffering man. It is the most undignified and the most indecent chapter of the long, sorrowful story. Though he had nothing to try, he did, virtually, give a decision on the one point of Christ's claim to be a king. On that, in his own brutal fashion, he pronounced an unmistakable judgment. A king? Yes, of this sort; a king made of rags and cast clothes, a king to be mocked at,

a king who needs no other exposure than the scornful repetition of his own claim : that—a king ! The jest gained wider currency as the hours wore on, as heartless and foolish jests are apt to do ; it was elaborated in Pilate's guard room, where the soldiers enriched it according to their humour, one thrusting a reed for sceptre into the unresisting hand, another crushing the plaited thorns down on the mournful brow, whilst round the room there ran the jeering words of homage : Hail, King of the Jews ! There the jest's prosperity was complete ; but the discredit of its origin seems to lie with Herod, who, because he was himself a shadow king, with dignity so ill secured, was quick to mock at those who grasped at power. That he judged thus of Christ's claim to be a king was his contribution to the work and the wisdom of that day of many sentences.

On the surface this judgment of derision may appear foreign and even monstrous ; but the reason which accounted for it and the essential fact of it have never been unknown, and thus its admonition is for all time. The motives of a man's judgment of Christ are always complex ; but, certainly, one reason for Herod's public derision of the Nazarene lay in his previous interest and curiosity. There was no lack of wonderworkers in Palestine in that age : when Jesus was accused of casting devils out by the help of Beelzebub, He answered, " By whom do your sons cast them out ? " For there were many who claimed, and many who seemed to possess such power ; and the very men who made the evil charge against Jesus were ready to boast of the supernatural gift of their own kinsmen. Superstition is the ghost of religion, which lives and has power when religion is gone. And Herod, as a child of his age, was tempted by the thought of a man who could command the spirits of life and death and disease, who, standing before him in unsupported weakness, could make him conscious

of movements of influence from a world of unknown power. To the jaded sense of a master in cunning and a slave of passion there was seduction in the very promise of it, and Herod's one desire of Jesus was to have his pulses quickened by a sense of wonder, to get something by which to mark a day in the long monotony of tedious hours and days and years. He had no thought of learning from Jesus, or of becoming another man under His constraint; he only wished, whilst remaining the same man, to have one exciting day. That is to say, he wished to sit apart from Jesus, and look at Him as a spectacle—to be interested, excited, perhaps disappointed, if the man did not justify His reputation. But that was all; and when Jesus refused to indulge him, he took a characteristic revenge. A man who dared to deny the king amusement in one form should give it in another; so Jesus was draped in some rejected royal finery, led about the hall to the huge entertainment of the king, and then sent away. Herod was prepared to go so far in belief: if Jesus had made a dumb man speak, that would have pleased the king; if, like Moses, He had turned a rod into a serpent, that might have won applause; if the hall had grown dim, and voices of dead men been heard, and ghostly figures had chilled the king in their passage, he might have turned pale, but the charm of the unaccustomed would have held him. He was prepared, as a spectator, to welcome any marvel Jesus did; but when Jesus gave no sign and spoke no word, He was sent away in contempt. A king? why, He is not even master of His poor conjuring trade! I gave Him every chance, and He did nothing and said nothing, so I dismissed Him in contempt. Herod asked one thing of Christ, and when he was denied that, he derided Christ's claim to be something else, of which he had made no trial. And in that he is by no means alone. For there are many who find nothing in Christ because He does not satisfy their curiosity. They

sit apart like Herod, willing to see what Jesus has to show them ; they know Him by reputation, they have heard of His power in human life, and, as observers, they are interested. But, from first to last, there appears in them nothing but the superiority of a spectator and a patron, willing to give his countenance to one who has deserved it. And after a while they turn away and give their report on the whole Christian claim. I went with an open mind wishing to see, and I did not see any of those startling resurrections in character of which men told me, and I did not experience in myself anything of the arresting and transforming power of which I had heard. And henceforth a man feels free to pronounce authoritatively on the nullity, or, at least, on the narrow limitation, of the influence of Jesus Christ. It does not seem to strike such men that, perhaps, Christ is greater than they, that He will not come at their call and play before them the part they wish ; for He does not ask for their approval or their countenance, but for their submission. The mere spectator in religion will never travel far. Christ has reason enough to give, He can justify Himself at any serious tribunal ; but there are times for silence as for speech, and many plausible and inquisitive minds are met by Christ, as Herod was, with a majestic silence. These things are hid from the wise and prudent. Not for the man who wonders how Christ could really make out His immense claim are the lips opened which spake as never man spake ; it is not for him who sits apart as a spectator that Christ works His mighty works. He may do what he will, he may sneer at the faith of Jesus as outworn, but Jesus will answer him nothing. His silence will be as fixed as His word is prompt and gracious and convincing to the man who submits and who prays. There is no hopeful way of approaching Christ but that of faith ; to the mere spectator nothing of His power is disclosed. And he who starts with Herod in patronizing

curiosity is likely to end with him in a groundless rejection and contempt of Christ the King.

And the essential form of this judgment of derision is familiar. It consisted at first, and it still consists, in investing Jesus with some emblem of authority, whilst the authority itself is denied. He once complained of men who called Him Lord, and who gave Him no obedience. They fancied that they honoured Him by the title, but He took it from them as an added wrong. The king's robe of scarlet is worth wearing only if it carries power with it; but many have nothing to give to Christ but the robe. They call Him Master and Lord, but they do not shape their lives according to His will; they honour Him in prayer, but they do not use in life the helps that come by prayer; they bring their children to Him in baptism, as if His blessing were first of all things in their life, and then, by example and maxim, they show how religion may be postponed to work, or pleasure, or society, as if nothing were less important. A man may have the utmost reverence in his imagination for Christ, he may sympathize with all that poet or rhetorician can imagine for the exalting of the praise of Jesus; but if he is without obedience, his praises are like the gorgeous robe. Whenever we recognise Christ in form and deny Him in substance, when we give Him what it suits us to allow, and refuse Him all He really desires, the old derision is renewed. And Jesus Christ is led to-day about the streets of Christian cities in this unchanging masquerade: Hail, King! men cry to Him, keeping in their hearts the purpose of doing as they will with their lives. And He who searches the heart marks the gap between their word and their will.

Nothing should strike one more in this story than the gravity for men themselves of this judgment of derision, when they refuse to take Christ's authority in earnest. There is no deeper or nobler instinct in man than that of deference ;

our knees were made to bend. In this distracted world men are always conscious of their need of guidance; their wavering wills, their unsure judgments, their limited knowledge, all ask for support. And the welcomest sight for men who know themselves is the advent of a really strong man on whom his fellows may lean. How deep the need is of some one to obey we see in the homage offered to mere simulacra of kingship. Think of Sir Walter Scott, intoxicated with loyal enthusiasm at the coming of George IV. to Edinburgh; think of the devotion, the poetry, the magnificent affection lavished on Charles Edward by the Highland clans! In such records there is a kind of inverted nobility; they show, at least, how necessary it is for men to honour and obey some one, and how spontaneous and profound is the affection which loyalty can evoke. If only the right man were found! if there were some one into whose hands men could commit themselves for guidance without absurdity!

And such a man did come, a King of God's own making, with wisdom, generosity, power sufficient to rule the unsteady hearts of men. Of Him it had been said in prophecy, "The government shall be upon His shoulder; of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end." And when He came to fulfil His mission in the world, He was received with ribald laughter; for, to the mass of men, it seemed the height of absurdity that He should be called a king. A king without an army and without a court, with no weapon save truth and gentleness—a king who took it as an honour to suffer for the least of His subjects—that they could not understand. So they mocked His claims away, and their lives remained unruled. "But to as many as received Him, He gave power to become sons of God"; for that is the fruit of His authority, and that is what is missed by those who will not have Him for their king. The works of Christ are known in

those who admit His power—a new steadiness of aim, a noble superiority to slights, cheerful contentment in adversity, tenderness and patience towards the weak; they become sons of God. Much wrong is done to the name of Christ by the disobedience of His professed subjects, who will not suffer Him to work His will in them, and in whom no ray of His brightness can be seen. But none the less is He the Lord of human hearts, in whom life comes to fulness. And those who will not yield obedience judge not Him but themselves; they sentence themselves to exclusion from what is best in life to a course of lower aims, and poorer hopes, and more inglorious service. For Christ, the King of men, guides those who submit to Him along the road He took Himself. “If any man serve Me, let him follow Me,” said Jesus, “and where I am, there shall My servant be”; that is to say, in all places where the world is being redeemed, where light is struggling with darkness, where God’s will is done, there shall My servant be. That is Christ’s promise, and each man must judge whether there is attraction in it for his heart.

But what meaning had the derision for Christ Himself? At first sight the scene may compel in us a sense of the irony of fortune. Throughout His life Jesus had aimed at authority over men; for this He was born, and this was intended in all that He did. And, at length, He was crowned as king; but He was enthroned in mockery, with a reed for sceptre; the royal mantle was an insult, the crown a brutality. At the Supper He was already weary, and to Judas He had said, “What thou doest, do quickly,” for He was eager to reach the end of His pain. And since then had come the agony in the Garden, and this long travesty of justice which had lasted right through the night. It was a pitiful and broken figure on which Herod looked, with the royal cloak deriding the trouble of the face. Looking simply at that hour we can hardly miss the sug-

gestion of irony ; this was the turn given by the world to all His hope and labour. He had asked bread, and men gave Him a stone ; He had sought to be king for their good, and they answered with the thorns. The seeming irony of fortune has so large a place in human life that this example of it is, at least, worth noting. Men often labour, and plan, and pray for what is good, and when an answer comes against their heart's desire, they feel aggrieved by the wantonness of God. Such men need to learn the help of Christ's companionship, and to wait with Him for the end which lies beyond. For Jesus Himself was not troubled by the seeming wrong ; His report on every stage of His suffering would be, " Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." He endured through one hour and then another, sustained by the sight of what was to come ; He grasped the sceptre of reed knowing that that express symbol of frailty would break the sword of every champion of wrong. Even in the hour of it the derision missed its mark, for by faith Jesus was beyond it.

And whatever may be said of the actual moment of the derision, only one judgment is possible of its final effect. For it served to force Him on to His eternal kingship and captaincy among men. It was intended to mark His quality as a man exposed in making ridiculous claims ; in throwing the gorgeous robe about Him, they said with emphasis that there was nothing kingly in Him. Yet by their rejection they made Him King. For one thing they gave Him opportunity to show Himself. He hung on the cross undefeated, and there received men's honour as a king does on his throne. The dying thief, the centurion—any soul of nobility and insight—felt that it was not preposterous, but supremely credible, that He was king. It is in the day of disaster that the true king is discovered, and thus the men who flouted Christ helped Him to His place. And more than that, by their rejection of Him they riveted

His hold on human hearts. For the things which He bore for us become to us the symbols of His authority. By the sorrows He endured for men He commands their joyous and unquestioning obedience. It is an unforgettable note in the Gospels that in His resurrection body the marks of the wounds remained; and still, when men limit or waver in their obedience, they need to return to look at the print of the nails. I wonder if the marks of the thorns will still be in the face we shall see one day; His crown then will be not of gold and jewels, His splendours not to dazzle the eye. His wounds are His royal splendours, the marks and the reminders of the pain He bore for us. By these it is that He commands men still, and of the increase of *that* government there shall be no end.

So the malice of men defeats itself, and He is lifted to the throne by hands which sought to wound Him. Caiaphas and Pilate and Herod combine to make Him King; in their several ways they judged Him, and each contributed something to raise Him higher. Derided because He said He was a king, abused because He called Himself the Son of God, condemned because even the majesty of Rome did not dare to set Him free. How high He is lifted above the measures of common men! *Passus quia Ipse voluit*—He suffered because He willed to suffer; He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. And each judge in turn must take his place in the pageant of the triumph of Christ.

When a man rejects Him, he does not degrade nor diminish the authority of Christ, he gives Him another chance of showing His power over hearts. The unbroken will, the lordly pride, shall one day do Him homage, for to Him every knee shall bow. But such extorted service—a service, like Herod's, against the purpose of his heart—is unworthy of a man. Has he not a mind to own the noblest when he sees it? Jesus Christ took it both as a grace of

God to Himself, and as a crown, that He was permitted to taste death for men. Are there not grace and honour both in serving such a Master? "To Him who loves us and loosed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever!" Thus by the power of His heart Christ holds upon His way from where His royalty is derided to where it is rejoiced in with singing.

W. M. MACGREGOR.

LINES OF DEFENCE OF THE BIBLICAL REVELATION.

IV. THE ARGUMENT FROM SILENCE.

THE argument from silence represents the following series of syllogisms. Had B existed in the time of an author A, A must have known of B. Had A known of B, he must have mentioned or cited B. But A neither mentions nor cites B. Therefore B did not exist in A's time.

It is clear that this argument involves two assumptions which are not always capable of demonstration. Human action is characterized by fitfulness, whence it is not absolutely certain that a man will perform an act which he may be well expected to perform. Hence, while knowing of B, he may for some unknown reason fail to mention B. Or, though the chance of his having failed to hear of B may be exceedingly small, it is often difficult to deny the admissibility of such a chance.

The most powerful argument from silence known to me is that urged against the genuineness of the document called the Cairene Ecclesiasticus, a copy of Ecclesiasticus in Hebrew of the eleventh century. Rashi, who lived in the eleventh century, and whose work on the Talmud embodies the whole of the Jewish learning of the time,