

THE CONDEMNATION OF CHRIST.

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THE nature of the relations between the founder of Christianity and the class of Jewish teachers known in history as Pharisees, has been a subject of reverent study to the writer for several years. It appears to him that some opinions, widely current, on the character of the class in question, and especially its connection with the iniquitous trial and execution of Christ, are neither authorised by the Gospel narratives, nor the facts as recorded in Jewish history. These opinions are that the Jewish people of the time, as a body, were responsible for the crucifixion, and that the Pharisees among the Jews were the special enemies of Christ. Thus as among the old Romans "Punic faith" was synonymous with treachery, so in the modern Christian world "Pharisaic" has come to mean a hypocritic claim to righteousness. That such a character is not really applicable to the whole body of men known through Jewish history as Pharisees, may be judged from the description of them from both Christian and Jewish history, which I shall endeavor to give, with strict adherence to the sources of information at my command.

During the last centuries of the existence of the Jewish people in Palestine as a nation, two principal schools or sects divided its religious teachers. Under the Asmonean Kings, or perhaps earlier, a portion of the Rabbis, or authorised teachers of the Law, adopted the theory that the Canonical Scriptures were the only rule of faith. The common belief from the oldest times was that the body of doctrine handed down orally was equally a part of Divine Revelation with the written word.¹ The new school of Sadducees, or Godly Ones (from *Zodac* = righteous), rejected absolutely this belief and taught that the Scriptures alone contained all that was to be believed by Jews. Thus they rejected even the belief in a future

¹ Babli *Abodah Zara*, 58; *Yebamoth*, 46; *Megillah*, 19.

life, because it is not expressly mentioned in the Pentateuch. While thus retrenching the articles of religious belief, the Sadducean teachers made the practice of the law in matters of daily life much strict for the people. The observance of the Sabbath and similar obligations they made more minute and onerous than formerly. They increased the penalties for breaches of points of the law, especially among the poorer classes. The teaching of the common people they regarded as of little importance, provided external observances of the law were rigidly enforced. They cared little for proselytism, and exaggerated the value of Jewish race, and especially of connection with the Holy Land, in determining the worth of individuals. They attached themselves to the kings of the Asmonean race, and afterwards to their successors, and their Roman Masters as a matter of policy, notwithstanding their bigoted nationalism in religious matters. At their instigation John Hyrkan persecuted the Rabbis who adhered to the old beliefs in tradition. Ishmael Phabi, a Sadducee, purchased from the Roman Governor Gratus the office of High Priest as an inheritance. His successors, to the number of eight, all Sadducees, used the office for the purpose of gain, in a hitherto unheard-of fashion. They established bazaars on Mount Olivet for the sale of the tithes, which were seized by their proctors, and enhanced their revenues by the sale of doves and cattle, for use as sacrificial offerings and fines. By their influence in the Sanhedrin, they multiplied the number of breaches of the Law to be atoned for by fines of such animals, and, by their wealth as merchants, they monopolised the supply and raised the price of the same to exorbitant amounts. Shortly before the siege of Jerusalem by Titus the extortion of the Sadducean High Priests rose to such a pitch that Simeon, the President of the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee, had a decree passed reducing the price of doves for offerings from a gold Denar to the fourth of a silver one. Finally, three years before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jewish population rose in revolt, destroyed the bazaars of Anas, the same High Priest who had brought about the execution of James and other Christians. The mob slew Anas himself and cast his body to the dogs. Such were the Sadducees in theory and in practice, as we find them in Jewish history.

To the larger body of Rabbis or teachers, who retained their belief in the traditional, as well as the written law, the name of Pharisees belongs. It signifies "separate" and is of somewhat uncertain origin. From historical personages bearing the same

¹ Babli Kiddushin, 66.

name, there is reason to think it a term implying a less close connection with the Holy Land itself, than was claimed by the Sadducees. Many of the most eminent Rabbis, of the Pharisees, were either Jews who had come from foreign lands, or actual converts. Hillel, the greatest name in rabbinical history, was born in Babylonia. Shemaiah and Abtalion, his teachers, were of non-Hebrew descent.¹ The name would thus seem to indicate that the dominant Sadducees regarded the Pharisees as strangers in the land and so not entitled to equal rank in the Jewish people with themselves, the pure Palestinians by birth and long descent.²

The Jewish nation, at the time of Christ, was thus divided in a religious point of view into Sadducees and Pharisees. Those two classes embraced the whole nation, or at least all its teachers of religion. A third class which is mentioned in history, the Essenes or Healers, was not distinguished from the others by doctrines, but by more austere practices of life. They were analogous to the religious orders in the Catholic Church, rather than to a distinct denomination. The Jews were divided doctrinally into Pharisees and Sadducees; much as Christian Europe is divided into Catholics and Protestants. The first maintained the doctrines of tradition and scripture as the rule of belief and practice. The latter only acknowledged the Pentateuch, as interpreted by themselves. The distinction has been perpetuated under different names down to our own day. The orthodox Rabbis to-day recognise the Pharisee Doctors of the time of Christ as religious guides. The rabbinical literature owes its origin to a Pharisee Rabbi, Juda the Prince. The Sadducees, as a distinct body, melted out of existence many centuries ago, like the Arians in Christian history. As the latter have had successors in various sects opposed to doctrines held by the Catholics, so in Judaism sects have continued the tradition of the Sadducees by rejecting different points of the Orthodox traditional Jewish Law, in theory or practice.

The facts stated may put the strictures on the Pharisees recorded in the Gospel in a new light. The name was confined to Rabbis exclusively; thus the Pharisees spoken of by Christ may be regarded as the orthodox clergy of Jewish religion. It may be well to add that in the religious organisation of Israel the priests, properly so called, were only employed in offering sacrifice and the

¹ B. Gittin 57 gives their descent from the Assyrian King Sanherib.

² We incline to the idea that Parush or Parushim = Pbarisees is identical with Partheans or Persians and refers particularly to the Jews who came from Babylonia,—hence strangers or aliens nationally, analogous to the native American and the naturalised American.

service of the temple. They were neither teachers nor interpreters of the Law. The Rabbis or Masters of the Law handed down its interpretations from generation to generation. They decided its applications and judged offences against it. They taught the people in the synagogues and the disciples or clerical students in their schools. A Rabbi conferred the degree of Rabbi by the imposition of hands on such of his disciples as had shown competent knowledge of the law.¹ In after-times the right of conferring this ordination was reserved to the President of the Sanhedrin, but in all cases knowledge of the Law was required for it. No such test was required for the priest's office, though an ignorant priest was not held in reverence.²

Thus, in the Jewish system two distinct classes represent what is called the clergy in Christian communities. The Rabbi presided in the synagogue, the synod, and the ecclesiastical courts. The Priest was supreme in the service of the Temple alone.

Knowing that the Pharisees were, then, the teachers of orthodox Jewish religion, it is easy to understand that the reproaches addressed to them in the Gospels are directed rather against their imperfect fulfilment of the duty imposed on them by their station, than their absolute moral inferiority to others among the nation. Zealous preachers, when denouncing evil amongst their co-religionists, frequently use a similar line of reproof. The Saducees are but slightly mentioned in the New Testament, because the field of labor of Christ lay not among them, the courtiers and wealthy members of the Sanhedrin, but among the Pharisees, the teachers of the people at large. On the point of doctrine, his testimony is emphatic in favor of the Pharisee Rabbis.

“The Scribes and Pharisees have sat on the chair of Moses. All then whatever they shall say to you, observe and do, but according to their works do not, for they say and do not.”³

Compare this with the words addressed to the Sadducean teachers, who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, when they brought their creed to him.

“But Jesus answered, and said unto them, Do you not then err, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God? . . . He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You do therefore greatly err.”⁴

The conclusion seems inevitable, that Christ regarded the Pharisaic doctrines as the true interpretation of the Law of Moses.

¹ Babli Sanhedrin 13.

² Mishnah Gittin, 5, 8.

³ Matthew xxiii, 2.

⁴ Mark xii. 24, 27. Compare Babli Sanhedrin.

That Law He came not to destroy, but to fulfil. Then the Pharisees of his time must have been teachers of truth, whatever their practice.

The manner in which the Jews used theological terms differs so widely from modern usage that it needs special attention. The difference between two bodies of men, one of whom believed in the resurrection, while the other denied it, would be called to-day sectarian. The name of the sect, as Sadducee or Pharisee, would certainly be applied to all who adhered to either doctrine, be they laymen or religious teachers. Jewish usage, however, gave the distinctive name to the teachers exclusively. It was much as Catholics to-day apply the distinctive names drawn from different theological schools to their clergy exclusively. Men speak of Thomist or Molinist priests or theologians; they never speak of a whole population as Thomist or Molinist. Thus, among the Jews, those who adhered to the Pharisaic doctrines, that is the mass of the people, were never styled Pharisees. The strictures addressed to the Pharisees then were applied only to the Rabbis or preachers of the Pharisaic doctrines. The contrast between practice and preaching in preachers is a theme which finds endless development throughout the human race. In the case of the Pharisees, mentioned in the New Testament, this distinction should not be forgotten.

Among the Jews themselves, both before and after the time of Christ, we find many illustrations of the contrast between precept and practice in a part of the Pharisees, though the class itself was regarded as the teachers of orthodox Judaism. King Alexander Jannai, though himself a patron of the Sadducee faction, in his dying advice to his wife gave the charge:

“You need not fear the Pharisees (i. e., the mass of them), they will not return the evil I have done them to you nor your children. You need not fear the Sadducees, for they are my partisans. But fear those dyed Pharisees who do the deeds of Zimri, and ask the reward of Phineas.¹

The Talmud enumerates seven classes among the Pharisees,² five of which are condemned as hypocrites of various kinds. It does not mean that the majority belonged to those five classes, but that the ways of error in practice are many, while the way of truth is one. It is much as when Bossuet enumerates the endless sects

¹ Babli Sotah, 22. Numbers xli. 11, Zimri committed unspeakable crimes in public and was slain by Pinehas, the grandson of Aaron, the High Priest. These skin-deep Pharisees are the hypocrites of the New Testament. The Hebrew term is צהוים (*Tzeruim*), “died in the wool.”

² Jerusalemi Berachoth, 9, 5; *ibid.*, Sotah, 5, 5.

of Protestantism in contrast to the unity of belief among Catholics, he does not imply any numerical superiority of Protestants in the Christian world.

With regard to the body of Jews who followed the teachings of the Pharisee Rabbis, and even many, if not the majority, of those Rabbis themselves, it seems certain that from among them Christ drew his disciples and followers. There is no evidence that they were drawn from the ranks of the Sadducees, certainly. When Paul of Tarsus describes his own former creed, he describes himself emphatically as a Pharisee of the strictest kind, in terms that show he held Pharisaism to be the purest form of orthodoxy in the Law of Moses.

Another point of difference in the use of language between the Jews of Christ's time and modern Christians is the meaning of the terms Priest and Priesthood. In modern parlance, priesthood and clergy are synonymous. In the Jewish Law, the distinction was very broadly marked between the priests and the teaching clergy or preachers. A base born scholar—Talmid Haham—is better than an ignorant priest—Cohan Am ha—Aretz—is an ancient rabbinical axiom. The priesthood, so called, was hereditary in the family of Aaron. Its duties were almost entirely sacrificial and ceremonial. The Law itself was taught, and its purity guarded by another body, the Rabbis or Masters. The Rabbis were chiefly Pharisees, while the High Priest and his family were Sadducees from the time of Ishmael Phabi to the death of Annas II. before the fall of the Temple. The Sanhedrin, which was both the authorised teaching body and the Supreme Court of the Jewish Law, was presided over by the Nasi or Prince, who, under the Law, was the highest power in religious affairs. High Priests, like Simon the Just (330 B. C.) and Ishmael ben Elisha (first century A. C.), had seats in the Sanhedrin, but not in virtue of their office, but of their learning. Neither king nor priest were members of the Sanhedrin under the Law. They might appear as public Prosecutors, but they were not Judges. The High Priests, who had obtained their office by the favor of the Roman Governors, however, arrogated to themselves something like supreme power in religious matters at the time of Christ. The Sanhedrin, though presided over by a Pharisee in doctrine, was packed with the adherents of the High Priest, and the interference, when asked, of the Roman Governors, enabled them to control that body almost at will. This usurpation of powers, not lawfully attached to the office of High Priest, has aided in confusing the ideas of moderns on the distinction between

the rabbinical and the priestly classes among the Jewish ministers of religion.

The Pharisees then of the New Testament meant the orthodox Rabbis who taught the Law of Moses to the people. It was amongst their adherents that the mission of Christ was almost exclusively laid. The Sadducees appear in it not more than once or twice, and then they came with spies sent from the High Priest who sought to entrap him into a political declaration against Roman power. He preached in the synagogues, which were controlled by the Pharisee Rabbis, not by the priests of the Temple. He was invited to the houses of the principal Rabbis; they warned him of plots against his life and in other ways testified a friendly spirit, very different from that ascribed to the Sadducee Chief Priests. At times they emphatically approved his precepts, as when he answered the Sadducees. At others, their silence may fairly be taken for assent on the part of the majority of his hearers.

In truth, the teachings of Jesus were not opposed to the true spirit of the Jewish religion, as taught by the most distinguished Rabbis. He did not seek to take away all ceremonial, but to reform its abuses. Hillel the Babylonian and his successors all followed a similar course, with the approval of their contemporaries. To love God, to be humble and just to others, was the rule of life laid down by the disciples of Hillel. His axiom, "Do not to another what, if done to thee, thou wouldst hate, this is the law, and the rest is but comment," was widely current among the orthodox Rabbis, both before and after Christ. Akibah, the leader of the revolt against Rome under Hadrian, taught:

" 'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' is the fundamental law of the Mosaic dispensation."

Ben Azzai, his friend and pupil, said: " 'Man was created to the likeness of God,' is a greater text than 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.' "

By this he meant that the tie of brotherhood, derived from the Fatherhood of God, is stronger than any purely human bond. Such, indeed, is the similarity between the moral teachings of Christ and those of the orthodox Rabbis from Hillel to the present time, that when a learned and believing Jew reads—without prejudice—the maxims and teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, he feels, so to say, at home. He meets there nothing strange or heterogeneous; on the contrary, he finds much that is literally analogous and homogeneous to that which from childhood he has been taught to revere as sacred. Every Jew brought up strictly orthodox, that is, with

Pharisaic tendencies and according to the spirit of rabbinical Judaism, feels this. To him there is nothing in the utterances of Jesus of Nazareth that might possibly offend his religious feelings or principles. If these utterances were gathered in separate form and presented to such a Jew, he, not being aware of their origin, would regard them as a most beautiful contribution to rabbinic literature as embodied in the Talmud or Midrash.¹ Not only was the moral teaching of Christ in harmony with orthodox Jewish principles, but his acts also were in conformity with the ceremonial of the law as practised by the most learned Rabbis. He ate the Passover lamb in the prescribed time and form; he broke the bread and repeated the blessing; he took the cup of wine which, having blessed, he gave to his disciples; lastly, he recited the offertory almost exactly as the orthodox among the Jews do every year at the present time. He did not break the law of the Sabbath, he only told how it should properly be observed. He did not say that the act of his disciples in plucking ears of corn was not an infringement of the legal ordinance, but he excused it on the ground of necessity and justified his disciples by the example of David and the priests in the Temple. That his critics made no reply would show they accepted his reason as satisfactory to them. Indeed, similar dispensations from legal observance were recognised as lawful by the Rabbis. The famous answer, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," accords with the rule laid down in the Talmud, by the school of Shemaiah and Abtalion (63 B. C.). "The Sabbath may be broken to save life, as the Law is the guide of life not of death."²

The healing of the man with a withered hand on the Sabbath day is another instance of an act apparently opposed to the letter of the Law, but warranted nevertheless by rabbinical usage. The orthodox Rabbis taught that work of any kind was not merely permissible but commanded on the Sabbath if required to save human life. They extended this principle to cases where life was in jeopardy through sickness. They called one who hesitated to do work in such cases, a blood-spiller,—*Shofech Dam*. Others added by way of enforcing the weight of this obligation: "If the Sabbath ordinance may lawfully be broken for the service of the Temple, much more may it when human life is in danger." Two eminent Rabbis, Ben Menasia and Jonathan ben Joseph add: "The Sabbath is given to you, but you are not given to the Sabbath." The

¹ See Chrolson's "Das letzte Abendmahl Christi und der Tag seines Todes."

² Babli Yoma, 35.

analogy between these maxims of Pharisee teaching and those of Christ himself are noteworthy.

On the question of divorce the absolute prohibition laid down by Christ was certainly contrary to the practice of the Rabbis of Hillel's school. Yet Rabbi Yochanan says, "None shall divorce the wife of his youth [i. e., his first wife], unless she be guilty of grievous sin," and it was a rabbinical saying that "the Altar of the Lord weeps when such divorce is granted."

The tendency of the Pharisaic legislation, from Hillel at least, was entirely towards lessening the minute observances which had gradually become a part of Jewish religious life. The objection made then by Pharisees to the disciples of Christ eating with unwashed hands needs explanation. The washing of hands before eating Sacred Food, or that which had been offered to the Temple, was an old religious practice for all Jews. The priests alone were held bound to practise it before eating any food over which the "blessing" was said. In the time of Hillel, however, this observance was made of obligation for all the people. There was much animosity at the time between the Temple priests and the Rabbis, and it is possible that the object of this rabbinical law was to assert an equality between the people and the priests. It may thus have had a party character that incurred the reproof of Christ. The Talmud tells of a celebrated Rabbi, Eliezer ben Hanoch, who was put under excommunication by the Sanhedrin for persistent neglect or defiance of this law.

The foregoing examples show that there was no reason for animosity against the person of Christ among the Rabbis or teachers of orthodox Judaism. His teaching was in harmony with that of the best of their own class; he broke no part of the Law. That he was loved by the people at large cannot be questioned, and that his denunciations of the hypocrisy and crimes of many among the class of Rabbis had raised up enemies against him is also evident. Still it was not the rabbinical or Pharisee element that was responsible for his death. That supreme iniquity rests with Caiphas and his partisans, the High Priest of the Jewish Temple, by Roman favor, bought with bribes, and the head and patron of the Sadducees in doctrine. The President of the Sanhedrin, Gamaliel, was by strict law the head of the religious teachers, and also of the Judges of the people. He, the chief Rabbi, the grandson of Hillel and a Pharisee of the strictest kind, gave his views on the work of Christ after his death in a session of the Sanhedrin recorded in the Acts v. 38-39. The question was debated of the persecution of the fol-

lowers of Christ. Gamaliel rose and told the assembled members: "And now I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this council or this work be of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them, lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God." This utterance of the chief of the Pharisees shows the spirit which must have actuated the class at large in relation to the mission of Christ immediately after his execution. It seems hardly consistent with the general hostility before that event.

The relations between the early Christians and their fellow-Jews who remained under rabbinical guidance is worth recalling in this connection. According to Sulpicius Severus the majority of the Christians of Palestine still observed the Jewish ceremonial of the Law, while professing belief in Christ as the Messiah. A large number of the orthodox Rabbis found little to offend their conscience in the latter tenet. The Christian converts attended the synagogues, wrote scrolls of the Law, read it in public, practised circumcision and ate and drank in the mode prescribed for Jews. A famous Rabbi, Eliezer ben Hyrkanos, brother-in-law of the President of the Sanhedrin, was on very friendly terms with James and when asked authoritatively to pronounce whether a "Certain One" (Jesus) would share in heaven, he declined to answer. Even long after this time, Rabbi Juda the Prince received Christians at his table, and asked one to recite the Jewish blessing after eating. Indeed, all through the first century and a half after the death of Christ the mass of orthodox Jews regarded the followers of Christ as a part of their nation and not an outside or excommunicated body. From this it may, we think, be fairly inferred that there was little bitter feeling among the Jewish people to the person of Christ when he was seized by the emissaries of Caiphas. The Gospels tell how the High Priest and his colleagues arrested Jesus by night, "because they feared the people," and the triumphant popular reception given to him on his entry to Jerusalem is further evidence of the admiring regard of the body of the Jewish people for him. That people then was not his executioner nor the cause of his execution.

Neither was the Mosaic Law, nor its lawful ministers. In the whole career of Christ he did no act that called for punishment according to the rabbinical code. The laws of the Pharisees were singularly mild in the infliction of punishments, especially the death penalty. The crimes for which it might be inflicted were very few. Murder, incest, idolatry, and blasphemy were capital

offences, but extenuating circumstances were admitted by rabbinical practice to such an extent that the death penalty was hardly ever inflicted on a Jew by their courts. A maxim of the most celebrated Rabbis was, "A court which dooms to death more than once in seventy years is a court of blood shedders."¹ The sentence was only to be given in the day time, and not on the day when the trial began. Two sessions, on separate days, were required by rabbinical procedure in all capital cases. Even when a criminal was condemned to die, and led to execution, he had the legal right to a new trial if he claimed that he had any new point to allege in his own favor. This privilege he might exercise five times before death could be legally inflicted. While a criminal was being led to execution, the rabbinical law prescribed that a bailiff should remain at the door of the court room to receive any testimony that might, even then, be offered in favor of the culprit. A crier went before him and called on any one who knew anything in his favor to carry it at once to the bailiff. If any such evidence was offered, the execution could not be carried out till a new trial had been held. Moreover, the crucifixion of men was strictly prohibited by the Mosaic Law. It cannot be said certainly that such a law was responsible for the iniquitous condemnation carried out in absolute defiance of its provisions.

It should be added that the charge of blasphemy, worked up by Annas and Caiphas from the fact that Christ called himself the Son of God, could not be maintained in any rabbinical Court. Blasphemy was certainly a capital offence, but the Law declared expressly, "Death shall be inflicted on those only who couple the Ineffable Name of God with a curse." To apply the term "Son of God" to an individual was certainly not such blasphemy. Indeed, it is common in the mouths of religious Jews. In the prayers used daily by orthodox Jews the words "Our Father who art in Heaven" are employed. The people of Israel are frequently described as Sons of God in the Scriptures itself. To call the use of the same term by Christ blasphemy was an absurdity to every intelligent Jew. Moreover, it is even doubtful whether Christ's assertion of Divine Sonship was made directly. Two of the Gospels describe him as replying answering the question, "Art thou the son of God?" by simply, "So thou sayest." This was a common form for declining to give a formally direct answer, for any good cause. A person charged in Court who knew that a direct answer to a prosecutor's question might be twisted unfairly, would use this

¹Comp. Mishnah Maccoth, I., 10.

form of reply. An anecdote recorded in the Midrash Rabba (Koheleth, Chapter VII., 7-11) may illustrate the meaning of this form of reply.

The people of Sephoris were so attached to Rabbi Juda the Prince, that they made a vow to kill the man who should first announce his death. The Prince died, and Bar Kappra, a disciple of his, undertook to make known the fatal news. He came into the street with covered head and rent garment and cried aloud:

“The angels have taken the records of the Law (figuratively the learning of the deceased), and borne them away.”

When the people heard, they cried out:

“Woe is us, the Prince is dead,” and they surrounded Bar Kappra to kill him. But Bar Kappra was quick of wit and he said to them, “It is you have said it, not I,”—*Aton kamrithun ana le kamina.*

Whether the reply of Christ to the High Priest was framed in similar fashion or not, his answer could not be regarded as blasphemy by any religious Jew.

That, in fact, the charge was a flimsy pretext to obtain a sham Jewish condemnation, is shown by the form in which the High Priest put it to Pilate. According to Luke, he charged Christ with “stirring up the people,” i. e., sedition, not blasphemy, and it was only when driven to extremity by the sharp questioning of the Roman Governor that he suggested the Mosaic Law as calling for Christ’s execution. “We have a law, and according to it he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.” He had previously tried to cover up the weakness of his own cause by an appeal to his own position. “If he were not a criminal, we would not have brought him to you.” Finally, when neither Roman jurisprudence nor Mosaic law could find any fault in the illustrious prisoner, his death warrant was extorted from the reluctant Roman Governor by the violence of a hired mob and a base appeal to the Governor’s personal interests, “If thou release this man, thou art not the friend of Cæsar,” while a crowd, alleged to be aflame with fanatic zeal for Jewish nationality and religion, yelled in chorus, “Crucify him, the king of the Jews. We have no king but Cæsar.”

On whom then rests the responsibility of the judicial murder of Christ? We answer unhesitatingly: On the High Priest and his faction, Sadducees in belief, the venal sycophants of the foreign rulers of Palestine in policy. The name of High Priest carries to most minds, as it did to Pilate’s, the idea of Chief of the Jewish religion. Caiphas was not such by the Mosaic Law. Apart from

the fact that his office had been obtained by bribery, from the predecessor of Pilate, the High Priest had no lawful power either to teach the Law or to judge offences against it. Those functions belonged to the Sanhedrin, the assembly of great Doctors, and its Vice-President was the lawful Supreme Judge. Strange as it is, the High Priests of the family of Caiphas were not even believers in the Law in an orthodox sense, they were Sadducees, who believed not even in a future life. The origin of this combination of heterodoxy in belief with the priestly office dates from the first Asmonean king, John Hyrkan. He was a priest by race, and, when in power, added the office of High Priest to his political functions. It is not unlikely that the Sadducean rejection of the traditional law had more a political than a theological origin. The new priest-king was jealous of the power of the teachers or Rabbis who gave the law and judged the people. He persecuted the orthodox Rabbis bitterly. It was natural that a theory, which rejected the whole traditional law of Judæa, should find favor with an ambitious and unscrupulous ruler, who combined, in himself, kingly and priestly rank, by family descent. Certain it is, that Hyrkan and his successors made Sadduceeism the creed of the Court, and of the priests of the Temple. It continued to be so until both the king and High Priest ceased to exist. The President of the Sanhedrin then became the undisputed religious head of the people.

The High Priests who filled the office, from Ishmael Phabi to Annas the Second, were not only heterodox in faith and devoid of legitimate title, but they were eminently greedy, and oppressive to the people. They bribed the Roman Governors to uphold them in usurping control of the Sanhedrin or national Assembly of the Jewish community. The legitimate Presidents of that body, after Hillel, were practically powerless. The large body of Pharisee Rabbis, known as Sopherim or Scribes, who found profitable employment in transcribing legal records, were subservient to the High Priests in practice. By the people, these Scribes were held something between Pharisees and Sadducees. A recent writer has described a number of the English Catholics under Henry VIII. as "Church Papists." The Scribes in Judæa, under the High Priests, were a somewhat similar class. As the High Priests could not aspire to political sway under the Roman rule, they used their power in the Sanhedrin to enrich themselves by levying heavy fines for breaches of the Law on the people. Their Bazaars on Mount Olivet, connected with the Temple itself by a bridge, were stocked with merchandise which found sale among the numerous pilgrims.

It is most probable that the money changers, driven from the Temple by Jesus, were servants or employes of these merchant High Priests.

The animosity of these unworthy successors of Aaron to Christ had, then, not so much a theological as a mercenary origin. They feared that the excitement produced by his teaching would excite Roman jealousy and result in the destruction of their own profitable dignities. This must be clear to all readers of the New Testament from its direct statements. They desired above all things to prevent any popular commotion, which might interfere with their gains, while, as Sadducees, they also despised and disliked any awakening of the religious spirit of the people which might bring their own practices into popular odium. There were no scruples as to the means by which the desired ends were to be attained. When the report of the raising of Lazarus to life, was spread, it was a blow to the Sadducean theory, and Caiphas the High Priest decided that "one man should die for the people." To murder a man, however innocent, was in his eyes perfectly justifiable, if it secured his own power against risk. His Sadducean adherents and their subservient Pharisee Rabbis approved the vile counsel and proceeded to carry it into execution.

To accomplish the death of Jesus, legally, the High Priest had two agencies, one, his influence with the Roman Governor by his own wealth and position, the other, his power in the Jewish tribunal of Sanhedrin. The Romans left their Jewish subjects a good deal to their own laws, and Caiphas had succeeded in getting Pilate to regard him as the recognised head of the Jewish people. "Am I a Jew? Thy people and the High Priest have given thee over to me," was his reply to Christ during his trial. But the range of powers, left to the Jewish tribunals, did not extend to capital punishments. Hence the plan, adopted by Caiphas, was to seize the person of Jesus suddenly, bring him before a meeting of members of his own faction as a Court, charge him with some offence which would appear capital under Jewish law, and then apply to the Governor to have the sentence carried out, as a necessity for preserving the public tranquillity. The High Priest had already tried, unsuccessfully, to get up a charge of sedition against Christ by sending emissaries to ask his decision on the question of paying tribute to the foreign rulers. He now took another course.

By his office, Caiphas had control of the large body of servants attached to the Temple service, and he had no difficulty in getting a company of Roman soldiers to aid in seizing the person of Christ.

That effected, a semblance of trial and condemnation under the Mosaic Law was needed to accomplish his ends. What followed was not merely not a trial according to that Law, but a direct violation of all its rules. Christ was not brought to the judgment hall of the Sanhedrin, but to the private house of Annas the father-in-law of Caiphas. He was not tried by the lawful judge but by the High Priest whose only function in Mosaic procedure might have been that of accuser. He was not tried by day, nor was the second session strictly required by law for trying any capital charge held. No charge was made as required. The High Priest, after unsuccessfully bringing hirelings to lay accusations of seditious conduct against the prisoner, finally declares, the words used in answer to a question of his own to be blasphemy, and his accomplices proclaim that it was so and further worthy of death. It has already been shown how contrary this was to the Mosaic Law on the subject, but it was enough to serve as a pretext for an outburst of mock religious zeal in the Sadducean High Priest. It is noticeable that Caiphas did not charge Christ with claiming to be the Messiah. The fact was that almost alone among the Jewish people the Sadducees rejected all belief in a Messiah. Caiphas attached the name of blasphemy to the utterance of Christ in defiance alike of reason and justice and then he brought him before Pilate with the brand of condemnation by the Jewish Law upon his name.

In the Roman *prætorium* the hypocritical accuser brings another charge. He accuses Christ of sedition, of stirring up the Galileans, who were noted as a specially independent population. He urges on Pilate that the word of a High Priest should be warrant enough for a Roman Governor to send a mere Jew to execution. "If he were not an evil doer I would not have brought him to thee." His argument had little effect on the cold judgment of the Roman official. He asks for definite charges, and declares he finds none. The Jewish Law and the Roman alike proclaimed the innocence of Jesus of Nazareth.

But Caiphas was not to be balked of his victim by law. The mob of his dependents raised a tumult and filled the hall of the Roman *prætorium* with angry cries. There seems no warrant for supposing that the crowd who filled the air with cries of "Crucify him, crucify him," were the same Jews who a few days before had called, "Hosanna to the son of David." There is every reason to believe that they were the band of servitors of the Temple, who had only dared to lay hands on Jesus by night through fear of the people, and who had insulted and buffeted him through the hours

of waiting in the hall of Annas. Their cry, "We have no king but Cæsar," was surely not an expression of Jewish popular feeling, nor of the Rabbis who hoped for redemption from Heathen sovereignty. Neither was the brutal yell, "Crucify him." Crucifixion was not only abhorrent to all orthodox Jews, but was, as already stated, strictly prohibited as an abomination before God. The population of Jerusalem was not all Jewish, and those cries sound like the voices of a bought rabble of foreign origin. It was as easy for the wealthy Chief Priest to buy such voices as it had been to secure the services of the Roman cohort that seized Christ in the Garden of Olives.

The clamor, however, prevailed over the scruples of Pilate. He gave the innocent victim to the will of his persecutors, the Sadducee priests and they led him away to die on the cross. Of the enormity of the wickedness done then there is no question amongst right thinking men, but I would ask Christians in fair human justice not to lay the guilt where it does not belong. It rests not with the Mosaic Law, nor with the body of the Jewish people who had so eagerly crowded around Christ on his entry to Jerusalem, nor with the Pharisees, who readily approved his teachings, and taught in the same spirit afterwards. It rests on the men who had bought for money from strangers the sacred office of priests under the Mosaic law, who degraded that office by their crimes, and who too had openly rejected its leading doctrines.

If these remarks shall clear up to fair minds some difficulties in understanding the true character of the proceedings against Christ, and shall dispose them to a juster estimate of the Jewish people and the Mosaic Law, it seems an object well worth the labor spent in their preparation.