

MISCELLANEOUS.

DID THE SANHEDRIN EXIST AT THE TIME OF JESUS?

In the article "The Indispensability of Bible Study" in the January *Open Court* the statement is made that the Sanhedrin had been abolished by Herod in 40 B. C. and was only reinstalled by Agrippa I in 42 A. D. Josephus relates (*Ant.* XIV, 9, 4) that when Herod became king he killed all the members of that Sanhedrin before which he had stood on trial for having killed the Jewish robber-chief Hezekiah, except Semeas, who took such a bold stand against Herod on the occasion of the trial. But by this act he did not abolish the institution of the Sanhedrin altogether. This is proved by *Ant.* XV, 6, 2, which tells us that Hyrcanus II was in correspondence with the governor of Arabia, Malchus, in order to find there an asylum for himself in the expectation that Herod would not perhaps receive the kingship the second time from Octavian as he had received it from Cæsar, upon which Hyrcanus would again become king. The passage then further relates that Herod found out the matter and when Hyrcanus denied it, "Herod showed his letter" (the one sent by Hyrcanus to Malchus) so says Josephus, "to the Sanhedrin." This was not the same Sanhedrin Herod had punished. Evidently of course Herod always saw to it that ever afterwards the Sanhedrin was composed of men who were submissive to him, but he did not abolish the institution entirely. I hardly think that Herod, though he did many high-handed things which embittered the Jews, would have dared to abolish entirely the highest religious tribunal of the Jews. Who would have conducted the religious and ordinary civil affairs which were both closely bound together in the Jewish people, if there had not been a Sanhedrin under Herod and, after the Herodian family had lost the kingship till Agrippa I, under the Roman governors? Upon what authority is the assertion based that the Sanhedrin was only reinstalled by Agrippa I?

There is also another statement made which is misleading. Rabbi Drucker refers to Lev. x. 6 and xxi. 10 which say that high priests should not rend their clothes, as was done in the trial of Jesus. But both passages according to the context refer to the rending of clothes as a sign of mourning. The gospels are not the only writings which relate that high priests rent their clothes on other occasions than that of mourning. Josephus relates in *Bell. Jud.* XV, 15, 4 that when the procurator Florus intentionally did everything to inflame the Jews to revolt, the high priests in great agitation with rent clothes begged the people to desist from all rash deeds. In *Macc.* xi. 71 the high priest Jonathan in a state of great agitation, when he and a few about him are left alone and the rest of his men flee before the enemy, throws dust upon his head, just as the high priests did in the case of Florus, and rends his clothes.

Of course the fact that the Sanhedrin existed at the time of Jesus does not solve the question of the irregularities connected with the trial of Jesus. Still W. Bousset (in *Jesus*) says rightly: "We must not judge the tumultuous proceedings against Jesus according to the regulated way of the Jewish law as we see it in later sources." Josephus relates a very similar trial before the Sanhedrin which was later condemned by the people. It was when the high priest Ananus brought James the brother of Jesus and others before the Sanhedrin and had them stoned. In the heat of passion even high legal courts have not always been entirely regular in their proceedings during the course of human history, especially where the court is accuser and judge at the same time as often happens in ancient times.

Regarding the trial of Jesus I would call attention to the following points. The gospels are evidently striving to put all the blame on the Jews and to exonerate Pilate as much as possible. It is very questionable though whether Pilate did not play a more active rôle in the case of Jesus. Pilate was not the man to care much whether one Jew more or less was sacrificed in his efforts to quell Jewish tumults. When he heard about the enthusiasm for Jesus among the people he may have thought that it would be better to put Jesus out of the way right at the start before the enthusiasm would spread further, just as Herod Antipas did with John the Baptist, as Josephus tells us. In this matter he may have found support from the side of the high-priestly aristocratic party, consisting to a great extent of the Sadducees: that political party among the Jews who since the time of the Maccabees were never so strict about the national law and religion as the Pharisees, and were open to foreign influences and relations if only by this their people would prosper and especially they themselves. To sacrifice the Galilean Jesus, who through the enthusiasm for him among the people might create disturbances to the injury of the Jewish state in its relations to the Roman government, may have seemed to the aristocratic party in Jerusalem a very wise political course. The discussion in the Sanhedrin in John xi, though very probably imaginary, may not be entirely wrong in giving the views of the aristocratic party in regard to Jesus. "It is peculiar," says Bousset, "that in the last days of Jesus his old opponents, the Pharisees and scribes, entirely leave the stage, and their place is taken by the high priest and the sanhedrin." (At least scribes take a subordinate position, perhaps only as legal advisers regarding the claims of Jesus, in the council of the high priests. Only the entirely idealizing Fourth Gospel mentions Pharisees on that occasion.) The high priest at that time was Caiaphas, who according to Josephus held his position, in which he had been placed by Gratus the predecessor of Pilate, very much longer than most of the high priests under Roman dominion. He was first deposed by Vitellius who had also previously deposed Pilate after his governorship of ten years. Caiaphas was probably an astute obsequious high priest under Pilate. All along he yielded submissively to let the Romans have the custody of the high priest's garments which were only given out to him a few days before the great festivals. Vitellius greatly favored the Jews after the deposition of Pilate and Caiaphas by giving them back the old right of taking care of these garments themselves. It is not at all improbable that submissive high priests like Caiaphas in the Sanhedrin, from policy, self-interest, fear of losing their position and hold of power, they being "the party of the rich and not of the multitude," as Josephus says (*Ant.*, XIII, 10), fear of disturbances among the people,

sacrificed the Galilean and even played him into the hands of Pilate. What was the poor Galilean to them, who surely had said many things derogatory to them? And even if we except all motives of self-interest which may have led the aristocratic party, they might easily represent to themselves the delivery of Jesus into the hands of Pilate as a patriotic act, since it did away with a disturbing element among the people who had been in an excited state of mind ready to break loose ever since they had come under the Roman dominion. And who will deny that there was a good reason for the Sadduceic idea that the people should be kept in a quiet state of mind? Was it not the Pharisaic party, or at least its ultra elements, which rejected all compromises with foreign ideas, that finally drove the Jewish people to the destruction of its state?

Another point in connection with the trial of Jesus is also this that the Sadduceic party was "very rigid in judging offenders above the rest of the Jews," as Josephus says (*Ant.*, XX, 9, 1). All these things may give us something of an insight into the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin, though they may not fully explain the matter. The death of Jesus was surely brought about through the instrumentality of only a small though influential circle of men in Jerusalem and partly perhaps, as said, by even well meant and patriotic motives seeking the peace of the state. The release of Barrabas, to the demand of which "the crowd" had been persuaded, as Mark gives it, was perhaps only a sop to the multitude to quiet them. The Galilean evidently seemed to be the more dangerous one to the aristocratic party. The words which the haughty Roman in his contempt of the Jewish people put over the head of Jesus, "The King of the Jews," may have stung the men deeply who had lent a willing hand to the execution of Jesus, but they choked it down, for the fatherland had once more been saved.

A. KAMPMEIER.

ASHVAGHOSHA'S "AWAKENING OF FAITH."

Ten years ago the Open Court Publishing Company published a translation by Teitaro Suzuki of *Ashvaghosha's Discourse on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*. The little treatise was written in its original Sanskrit in the first century of the Christian era and is perhaps the most important post-canonical exposition of the Buddhist faith. It may be compared to Bishop Anselm's *Cur deus homo*, and it is recognized by all Buddhists as an authoritative exposition of their faith; but strange to say it is lost in its original Sanskrit and is preserved only in several Chinese translations. We consider it a strange neglect of European scholars that this book remained untranslated until 1900, but in the meantime two other translations have appeared, one in French, and another English version by a Christian missionary, the Rev. Timothy Richard (Shanghai, 1907). Dr. Richard's translation lies now before us and we learn from the preface that it had been finished before Mr. Suzuki's work appeared in print. Thus we may consider the two translations as independent. Dr. Richard has only made good use of the critical comments and other information contained in Suzuki's preface.

It will be the more interesting to compare the two translations since they have been made by men of different race, different religious convictions and different attitudes. Mr. Suzuki is a Buddhist, while Dr. Richard is a Chris-