

TWO ANSWERS TO THE CHALLENGE OF JESUS.

BY WILLIAM WEBER.

(Concluded)

The words of Caiaphas breathe the same spirit in which the ruling classes of all nations and ages up to the present day have identified their own privileges with the welfare of their whole nation and even of the entire world. There is no need of looking for a higher truth hidden in them as the author of verse 51-52 does. "Now this he said not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation: and not for the nation only, but that he also might gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad," was not written by the author of verse 47-50, but was added by the compiler or a later reader. The statement belongs to an age when the death of Jesus was considered no longer as an event of human history, but of divine economy. As a matter of fact, the high priests were not endowed by virtue of their office with the divine spirit. Priesthood and prophecy were two separate things. The one was an hereditary position with strictly defined duties and emoluments, the other an individual gift of God that fell to the lot only of such as deserved it. A man of the type of Caiaphas was absolutely unworthy of divine inspiration. Thus no allegorical interpretation can be permitted to obscure the plain meaning of a proposition which breathes nothing but a selfishness that shrank not even from murder. That the resolution, offered by Caiaphas was adopted without a dissenting vote goes without saying. Before dismissing this subject, we have to consider the question how a disciple of Jesus could have learned what he relates about the council that decreed the death of Jesus. The general public cannot have known anything about that conspiracy. The account in Luke comes apparently from one of the Twelve. It does not contain anything but what an intelligent outsider could know and deduct from

what happened. The author of the Johannine version is, up to a certain limit, much better informed. He must have possessed special information which came to him from the camp of the enemy, unless we should have to conclude that his pen was guided by a vivid imagination. But such a conspiracy was bound to become known to quite a number of people. The chief priests had to take their whole entourage into their confidence and persuade them of the necessity of doing away with Jesus. They needed the co-operation of the temple servants for arresting him. We may therefore assume the meeting of verse 47-50 to have been of a semi-public character as far as the personnel of the temple was concerned. That some or the other of the subordinate priests and the Levites who were present at that occasion became afterwards believers in Jesus, is not impossible. In any case, the words ascribed to Caiaphas seem to have been addressed to the gallery.

The Johannine and the Synoptic accounts under discussion are independent of each other. The more important is the agreement of the Luke version with that of the Fourth Gospel. According to both, the chief priests and their allies want to put Jesus to death; and in both the hold which Jesus had upon the people is the cause of their murderous hatred. No details as to how that should be accomplished are discussed, whereas in the first two Gospels the emphasis is laid upon the means by which the end was to be attained. The reports of Luke and John are in that respect historical. For the execution of a plan of that kind is left quite naturally to an executive committee that is better qualified to act with decision and promptness than a deliberative body.

We are now in a position to state definitely what the first answer to the challenge of Jesus was. The chief priests and the scribes took up the gauntlet and replied: Thou shalt die!

Looking for the continuation of the source from which Jn. xi, 47-50 has been taken, Jn. xi, 54-57, and xii, 1-11, have to be put aside. The first passage is clearly unhistorical. For, according to it, Jesus, after having challenged the chief priests and incurred their deadly hatred, sought safety in flight and remained in hiding at a place called Ephraim for a whole year. For in verse 55 f. it is said that the people looked for Jesus at the next passover and wondered whether he would come to the feast. There are two unanswerable objections. In the first place, Jesus could not run away and hide himself after he had cleansed the temple without losing the confi-

dence of the people. Whatever else the Messiah might be, he could not be a coward. In the second place, Ephraim is identified with a fort only fourteen miles from Jerusalem. Jesus and his disciples could not tarry there for a whole year without being recognized and reported to the chief priests, especially as the enemies of Jesus had given commandment that the whereabouts of Jesus should be made known to them because they wanted to arrest him.

The Anointing at Bethany (Jn. xii, 1-8) has parallels in Mt. xxvi, 6-13, and Mk. xiv, 3-9. It is not a genuine Johannine pericope but a rather late compilation, most of whose features have been borrowed from not less than five different sources. These are, besides the just mentioned Matthew and Mark stories, Lk. vii, 37-39, Lk. x, 38 ff., and Jn. xi, 1-46. The name of the place where Jesus was anointed is derived from the first two Gospels as well as from Jn. xi. While the name of the host is not given, the names of Lazarus, one of the guests, and of Martha and Mary come from Jn. xi. But the statement "and Martha served," in verse 2, is based upon Lk. x, 40, where we read: "but Martha was cumbered about much serving." Mary anoints the feet of Jesus and wipes them with her hair. That feature is copied from Lk. vii, 38. The criticism of Mary by Judas Iscariot and her defense by Jesus is based on the Matthew account, not that of Mark; only there the disciples, instead of Judas Iscariot, find fault with the woman.

The party who put together Jn. xii, 1-8, out of odds and ends was an indifferent writer. The second half of verse 1 reads according to the Greek text: "where was Lazarus whom raised from dead Jesus." One might say perhaps that the first subject is placed after the verb for the sake of emphasis, but no reason can be found why Jesus should stand at the end of the second clause. That name indeed is entirely uncalled for, because the sentence to which that relative clause belongs begins: "Jesus came to Bethany." The reference to the raising of Lazarus from the dead is superfluous. For it has just been related at great length in the foregoing chapter. Neither the missing article before "dead" recommends our author. "But Lazarus was one of them that sat at meal with him" (verse 2) is rather suspicious. One should think Jesus could not have been the guest of anybody else at Bethany than of his friend Lazarus. The compiler must have felt that, too. For he omits the name of the host, who, according to Matthew and Mark, was Simon the Leper. The nameless woman of Matthew and Mark anoints the head of Jesus, whereas Mary anoints his feet and wipes them with

her hair. But in taking over these features from the Third Gospel, our writer failed to grasp their true significance. The woman of Luke is called a great sinner. When she stood with her cruse of ointment behind Jesus at his feet, her emotions overcame her, and her tears fell on his feet. That unforeseen accident forced her to dry the wet feet with her hair. Thereupon she kissed the feet and anointed them. As a rule friends kissed each other on the mouth, and the head was anointed with oil, as we learn from Lk. vii, 45 f. (comp. Ps. xxiii, 5). But the woman for obvious reasons did not dare to treat Jesus as a social equal. At Bethany, as is proved by the Matthew and Mark account, there was no reason why Mary should have abased herself. Moreover, the woman in Luke does not use her hair to anoint but to dry the feet of Jesus in order that she might anoint them. Mary in John simply rubs off the ointment with her hair and thus anoints rather her own head than the feet of Jesus.

The only original feature in John is that not the disciples in general, or some bystanders, or the host, but Judas Iscariot criticizes Mary, and that he is called a thief. In view of the other shortcomings of the pericope, no weight can be attached to these statements. Our compiler did not have first hand information. He lived at a time when Christians unconsciously drew the picture of the traitor in ever darker colors and crowned the faithful apostles with a halo. The answer of Jesus: "Suffer her to keep it against the day of my burying," indicates likewise the age of the compilation. It belongs to a time when the Christians believed the body of Jesus had been anointed when it was committed to the ground. But Mk. xiv, 8, and Mt. xxvi, 12, Jesus says: "She hath anointed my body beforehand for the burying," and "In that she poured this ointment upon my body, she did it to prepare me for burial." That was written while the Christians still knew that the corpse of Jesus had not been anointed. Therefore Jn. xii, 7, has to be regarded as an intended emendation of the older text. But since the nard had been applied to the feet of Jesus, it could no longer be sold nor kept against the day of the burial of Jesus. Thus the emended text of verse 7 is contradicted by its own context. Final proof of the dependence of our pericope upon the Synoptic Gospels is the expression *Judas Iscariot*. That is a strictly synoptic term and is used two times in each Synoptic Gospel. The Fourth Gospel calls the traitor three times *Judas the son of Simon Iscariot*, which therefore has to be considered as characteristic of John.

Jn. xii, 9-11, is closely connected with and dependent upon the story of the Anointing at Bethany. Since the latter is spurious, the former cannot be genuine. Both stand and fall together.

The Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (Jn. xii, 12-15) takes up the thread of the narrative which broke off Jn. xi, 50. The opening phrase, "on the morrow," places in the present condition of the text the occurrence on the fifth day before the passover. But that is an impossible date. The chief priests and the Pharisees could not afford to wait six days before they struck their victim. Their revenge, in order to be sure, had to be swift. The Jews remained for eight days at the temple; including the journey to and from Jerusalem, the Galileans spent about two weeks for the passover. For that reason alone, they would not congregate in any large numbers at the temple until the last day before the feast. The compiler of our section was aware of that fact. He undertook to account for the early presence of the multitude by stating in Jn. xi, 55: "Now the passover of the Jews was at hand: and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the passover to purify themselves." Still "many" and "a great multitude" are not the same thing. Besides, special purifications were not required before the passover. The law said: "If any man of you or your generations shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be on a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto Jahweh" (Nu. ix, 10). Moreover, Jn. xi, 55, could not explain the early arrival of Jesus. He foresaw the fate that awaited him; he had made up his mind to bear the cross; but he would hardly anticipate the fatal moment. The right time for striking effectively at the chief priests was when the pilgrims had arrived, that is to say, the afternoon of the last day before the paschal lamb had to be prepared. Of course, as soon as the true character of Jn. xi, 51-xii, 11, has been established, both the phrase "on the morrow" and the expression "a great multitude" of Jn. xii, 12, are quite correct. Jesus arrived and cleansed the temple during the afternoon of the thirteenth of Nisan. The chief priests and the Pharisees decided the same evening to put him to death. The next morning a great multitude went forth to conduct their champion in triumph to the temple.

The idea of going out to meet Jesus on the road and escort him into the city and temple was conceived and executed by the people. Neither Jesus nor his disciples suggested or arranged that triumphal entry. They played throughout the whole affair a strictly

passive part. It is necessary to call attention to that fact because the Synoptic Gospels tell a different story.

The Johannine multitude went forth to salute Jesus as victor. That is shown by the palm branches with which they were provided. The fronds of palm trees were the symbol of victory. They are mentioned only in John. Likewise the definite article is not to be overlooked. We read: "They took *the* branches of the palm trees and went forth to meet him." The taking of the palm branches was evidently a deliberate act, not a mere accident. Palm trees are not found in the neighborhood of Jerusalem. The altitude is too high for them. They do not thrive at an elevation of more than 1,000 feet above sea-level. They grow in the seacoast plain of Palestine and were raised in antiquity also in the Jordan valley near Jericho. (Ant. xvii, 13, 1) The palm fronds could therefore not have been picked up by the roadside. They must have been taken along from the temple. We know from Lev. xxiii, 40, that the Jews used palm branches at the feast of Tabernacles. But it is very probable that this custom was extended also to the Passover as well as Pentecost. One of the ancient rabbis, at least, writes: "With the palm branches in your hand, ye Israelites appear before the Eternal One as victors." Also Plummer (Internat. Crit. Commentary, St. Luke, p. 498) assures us: "The waving of palm branches was not confined to the feast of Tabernacles." The palm branches, and especially the definite article, are such an intimate feature that no later writer, interpolator or commentator could have added it to the narrative.

Since the palm branches were taken along purposely, the great multitude of pilgrims that sallied forth to meet Jesus must have intended to greet him as victor. But a victory implies a preceding fight. In what fight, had Jesus been victorious? We know of no other attack he made upon anyone except that upon the chief priests and the scribes when he cleansed the temple. In that encounter he held the field while the chief priests and their partners had to withdraw in discomfiture. The pilgrims who had sided with Jesus had prevented the chief priests from inflicting any harm upon him, mistook that initial advantage for the final victory. They argued, very likely, "As long as Jesus is in our midst, nobody shall lay hands upon him."

From that point of view, the clause "when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem" cannot refer to the first arrival for the feast. His coming to the temple on the morning after the

cleansing must be meant. The Greek text reads "into Jerusalem." That may be significant. Jesus and his disciples as well as the great majority of pilgrims camped during the week of the feast outside of the city, from where they came daily to attend the religious exercises at the temple. Some enthusiastic admirers of Jesus must have learned from the disciples where he was staying over night and by what road he came to the city. That knowledge enabled them to arrange the royal reception they gave him. The original text, however, may have been changed slightly by the compiler. That man, as I presume, supposed the triumphal entry to have taken place on the very day when Jesus arrived from Ephraim. That would follow from Jn. xi. 55, and agree with the Synoptic tradition, with which the compiler was familiar.

The great multitude went forth, according to verse 13, with their palm branches to salute and honor Jesus not only as victor but also as the Messiah. For they hailed him:

"Hosanna!

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,
Even the king of Israel!"

What could have prompted the people to acclaim thus in public the Messianic mission of Jesus? His teaching alone could not have caused them to do so. For thereby he had demonstrated only that he was a great prophet. The Messiah indeed was expected to possess the spirit of prophecy and know the will of God even better than the greatest prophets of old. But that spiritual gift alone could not prove his Messiahship. Neither could the miracles ascribed to Jesus establish any royal claims. For prophets of past ages like Elijah had performed similar deeds. Moreover, the signs of the Fourth Gospel do not belong to the oldest Johannine source which relates only the passion of Jesus. All references to those signs belong to the compiler. The Messiah, besides being a great prophet, was expected in the first place to do Messianic deeds. The Fourth Gospel reports only one such deed. That is the Cleansing of the Temple. An ordinary mortal would never have dared to do that. It presupposed the consciousness of royal, Messianic authority which surpassed that of the priests. Anybody might have criticized the chief priests most severely, but nobody would have dared to interfere actually with their business in the temple and with the sale of victims that were devoted to God. The people recognized that instantly. They understood at once what Jesus meant with his question about the baptism of John.

The royal reception which the pilgrims gave to Jesus was their answer to the Challenge of the Chief Priests and the Pharisees. Jesus, as the Messiah, had called them to repentance and urged them to renounce their selfish greed. The people saw that as clearly as they themselves did; but while the latter decided to kill him, the former ranged themselves with unbounded enthusiasm at his side. He was the long-expected Savior. They went forth to give expression to their conviction in an unmistakable manner for the purpose not only of honoring Jesus but also of bringing to bear the pressure of public opinion upon his opponents.

While Jesus was being escorted into the city, there happened an incident of little importance in itself. Jesus and his disciples were, of course, walking afoot when the multitude met them. Getting ready to march back with Jesus in their midst, the thought occurred to them how little it became Jesus to enter the holy city like any other poor pilgrim. Looking around, they found a little ass whose owner consented to put it at the disposal of Jesus. Neither Jesus and his disciples nor the multitude paid any special attention to that occurrence at the time being. Only later on they remembered a saying of the prophet Zechariah which had been fulfilled literally. Jn. xii, 14-16, says: "Jesus, having found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,

Fear not, daughter of Zion:
Behold, thy king cometh,
Sitting on an ass's colt.

These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him."

The words quoted show that neither Jesus nor his disciples were responsible for the episode of the ass. "They," that is to say, the multitude or the leaders of the multitude took the initiative.

The Synoptic version of the Triumphal Entry is very different from the Johannine account. It is found Mt. xxi, 1-11—15-16; Mk. xi, 1-11, and Lk. xix, 29-40. It does not follow the cleansing of the temple but precedes that event. The very first sentence with which the narrative begins in the first two Gospels shows very distinctly that the triumph was celebrated right at the arrival of Jesus for the Passover before he had been in the city and temple. Mt. xxi, 1, reads: "And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem."

In the preceding paragraph (Mt. xx, 29-34) Jesus passes through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem.

Also the place whence Jesus started his ostentatious procession is named. Matthew tells us: "and came unto Bethphage unto the Mount of Olives"; Mark: "unto Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives," and Luke: "when he drew nigh unto Bethphage and Bethany at the so-called Mount of Olives." Why the First Gospel has omitted the second village is not difficult to see. The Greek translator employed by mistake a wrong preposition for rendering the preposition of the Semitic text. He wrote "came into Bethphage." As a person can enter not more than one village at the same time, he felt constrained to omit "and Bethany." But the Hebrew preposition here in question means as a rule with verbs of motion like go and come "to" or "towards." That is confirmed also by verse 2, where Jesus directs two of his disciples: "Go into the village that is over against you." Jesus had not entered Bethphage nor intended to do so. Therefore Jesus may have stopped in the neighborhood of two villages before he rode into Jerusalem.

All three Gospels have Jesus order two of his disciples to fetch him an ass from Bethphage. He wanted to fulfill literally an old prophecy (Zech. ix, 9). We are told so Mt. xxi, 4 f. That passage is indeed a gloss, because it is not supported by Mark and Luke. But even if it is dropped, the fact remains Jesus in all three Gospels makes deliberate preparations for going into Jerusalem just as the prophet had described it. The very act of riding on the back of an ass proclaimed Jesus to all who knew him as the Messiah.

The translator of the Matthew version committed another linguistic error when he translated the just-mentioned prophecy into Greek. He discovered therein two different animals, an ass and a colt of an ass. He was not acquainted with the characteristic peculiarity of Hebrew poetry to repeat a statement in other words, called parallelism of members. The prophet had written:

"riding on an ass,
even upon a colt,
the foal of an ass."

That means the king rode upon a young donkey. But our interpreter made the disciples bring an ass and a colt. They not only put their garments upon both, but even made Jesus ride upon both at the same time, as if he had been an equestrian performer. The

translators of the Mark and Luke text did not make that mistake. There the disciples obtain but one animal.

As soon as Jesus had identified himself in that manner with the Messiah of Zechariah, the disciples started an ovation, designed to call the attention of the pilgrims to what was going on and enlighten them as to its true import. They spread their garments on the way and saluted Jesus as "the king that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Lk. xix, 37 and 39). The second Gospel reports the same thing. Only one addition is made. Besides the garments, leaves, cut from the fields, were strewed upon the road for Jesus to ride over. The disciples are not mentioned expressly; but as no other subject is introduced, the "many" and "others" of Mk. xi, 8, must belong to the same group of people as the "they" of verse 7. Of course, the term "disciples" embraces under those circumstances all the adherents of Jesus that were present. That is indicated perhaps also by the expression "the whole multitude of the disciples" of Lk. xix, 37. According to Matthew, the disciples, that is to say, the Twelve, only secured the ass for Jesus and put their garments upon him; everything else is done by "the multitudes." As they are thus distinguished from the disciples, the term must denote the pilgrims that happened to be traveling along with Jesus and his twelve companions. It reads: "The most part of the multitude spread their garments in the way; and others cut branches from the trees and spread them in the way; and the multitudes that went before him and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna," etc. (Mt. xxi, 8 f.) When, at last, they had marched into the temple, and the grown people had become quiet, the children still continued to shout: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (verse 15). The three Synoptic accounts form a climax. The ascent from Luke through Mark to Matthew is quite conspicuous. One is tempted to consider "the whole multitude" of Lk. xix, 37, as a later addition to the text, suggested by Matthew. According to Luke, only garments were placed in the road like rugs for Jesus to ride over. Mark adds leaves cut from the fields. The Greek noun rendered in the American Revised Version "branches" (Mk. xi, 8) means a bed of straw, rushes, or leaves whether spread loose or stuffed into a mattress. The first Gospel has: "Others cut branches from the trees." (Mt. xxi, 8) That is doubtless unhistorical. Branches would not have made the road any smoother. Besides, nobody would have thought of depriving in the vicinity of Jerusalem trees of their branches, be-

cause trees are rare in that region. Thus the most simple account, that of Luke, seems to be the most original of the three.

But even the Luke account, though superior to that of Mark and Matthew, contains highly improbable statements. Jesus tells the disciples, who were to fetch the ass for him, they would find in Bethphage "a colt tied whereon no man ever sat." He also instructs them as to what they should say if anybody should try to prevent them from taking the animal along. Neither Jesus nor his disciples were acquainted with the owners of the ass. Jesus therefore must have possessed the gift of the second sight, and the owners must have been influenced by supernatural means to hold their colt in readiness for two men who were to claim it in the name of the Lord.

It would be silly to reject anything related about Jesus simply because it looks like a miracle. Still supernatural things do not exactly lighten the task of the exegete. But any explanation of the Synoptic pericope of the Triumphal Entry presents unsurmountable difficulties as soon as it is placed side by side with the Johannine account of the same event. The Synoptic Gospels date the Entry before, the Fourth Gospel after the Cleansing of the Temple. The former makes Jesus the arranger of the whole demonstration, and Luke confines it to the disciples; the latter describes the triumph as arranged exclusively by the people without previous knowledge and consent of Jesus and his disciples. The donkey which plays so prominent a part in the Synoptic Gospels is merely an accident in the Fourth Gospel. As the two versions are directly opposed to each other in their principal details, only one of them can be genuine.

The Johannine account presents not a single objectionable feature. Jesus acts as he acted before. He does not violate any of his well-known principles. He did not make a bid for the applause of the people; he simply accepted it when it was offered to him unsought although by doing so he sealed his fate. The Synoptic Jesus acts in an altogether different way. He proclaims his divine mission to the multitude of pilgrims who ascended to Jerusalem with him. It was quite a theatrical performance. Still up to that moment, he had concealed his identity most carefully and had even forbidden his disciples to tell the people who he was. He wanted the people to recognize him as the Messiah themselves. Jesus can never have renounced that principle and advertised himself like a charlatan. Thus the Fourth Gospel alone has preserved the authentic account

of The Triumphal Entry. The parallel tale of the oldest synoptic source was lost by some accident. But the compiler of the first synoptic memoirs possessed a legendary version of that event, inserting it, however, in the wrong place. That apocryphal version may even have induced him to omit the original story of his best source because, in his opinion, it was too plain and too short. Consequently, we have to insist with the Johannine account that the Triumphal Entry of Jesus, as arranged and managed by the people on their own responsibility, is the answer of the people to the challenge of the chief priests by Jesus.

That answer proved disastrous for Jesus. His mortal enemies needed the active co-operation of Pontius Pilate unless they wanted to employ hired assassins. A public crucifixion by order of the Roman governor was, of course, more desirable and safer than secret murder. It would look like a swift judgment of God because Jesus had rebelled against the priests. But Pilate would only proceed against Jesus if he had become convinced of the dangerous character of the man from Nazareth as an enemy of the Pax Romana.

Under these circumstances, nothing could be more welcome to the priests and scribes than the enthusiastic demonstration of the people in favor of Jesus. They passed the Antonia when entering the temple, and that citadel must have been the Praetorium of Matthew, Mark and John. Many scholars indeed regard the palace of Herod as the official residence of the governor. They do so because he occupied the palace of Herod at Caesarea. (Act. xxiii, 35) But there is a great difference between Jerusalem and Caesarea. Within the walls of the latter, the Roman governor was absolutely safe and would inhabit as a matter of course the most pretentious building. At Jerusalem, where he was only during the great festivals, he was in a hostile camp. His task was to prevent or to suppress any outbreak against the Roman authority. Not personal comfort and splendor but exclusively military considerations prescribed his place of business. He was compelled to be at the strategic point. As the temple was the only place where a revolt might start, the Antonia, a strong fort at the northwest angle of the temple, which commanded the entire temple area, was the Praetorium at Jerusalem. It offered ample room for a large garrison, was safe from attack from without, and gave "immediate access to the flat courts and to the inner Temple." Thus Pilate, his officers and soldiers always knew what was going on in the temple. In the

given instance, the guards, many of whom were recruited in Syria and Palestine, would report that a man riding on an ass was acclaimed by a large multitude as the Son of David, the king of the Jews. Pontius Pilate himself would in all probability come out to watch the scene. In any case, he would send at once to the high priest for information and advice. That worthy dignitary had only to confirm the suspicions of the governor and promise to have the pretender arrested during the next night so that he could be crucified in the morning without the knowledge of his adherents.

The high priest was not even compelled to resort to lies. All he had to do was to assure the Roman of his undying loyalty and devotion and complain of the attack made by the Galilean upon himself the day before. His wrong consisted simply in not telling the whole truth. But truthfulness is not to be expected from men of his caliber. For the whole truth would have indicted himself and his colleagues. They had abused their sacerdotal office to further their own unsavory ends. They were guilty of atheism and robbery and were ready to crown their misdeeds, unpardonable for men in their position, with the judicial murder of him who had dared to warn them.