

What irony ! What hypocrisy ! What a lying promise ! Very recently they refused to believe in the resurrection of Lazarus, although he had been dead four days. Jesus will arise in three days, but they will not believe. How, then, could they believe if Jesus did actually come down from the Cross, a miracle which would surely have been inferior to that of His resurrection ? No, they would not believe because they did not wish to believe ; and, still more, they desired at any cost, that no one should believe in the Messianic royalty of Jesus.

They added this new blasphemy : “ *He trusted in God. Let Him now deliver Him if He will have Him, for He said : I am the Son of God.* ” Their rage is ever on the increase. They now dare to attack the love of Jesus for His Father, and by a blasphemy even defy the Almighty ! To inflict this new outrage on Jesus, they went so far as to misinterpret a passage of the Holy Scripture regarded by all as Messianic.

Like love, hatred tends to expansion. Not content with insulting Him themselves, they run through the crowd, sowing hatred and outrages as in the prætorium, and stirring the people up to mock the Crucified.

2. *The passers-by.* — The passers-by, pausing before Jesus on the Cross, wagged their head in contempt, and cried : “ *Vah ! Thou who destroyest the Temple of God and buildest it up in three days save Thyself !* ” Do we not hear in these words an echo of the accusation launched against Jesus the preceding night by the false witnesses ? Perhaps might be here recognized the voices of those who, suborned by the Sanhedrim, had accused Him before Caiaphas. It was a defiance of His power. “ If Thou art so powerful as to destroy the gigantic structure of the Temple and to build it up in three days, it cannot be difficult for Thee to deliver Thyself. ” It was precisely this calumny that the priests had endeavored to render popular.

“ *If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross !* ” The Son of God, or the Messiah, should have power to perform all sorts of wonders. Since He aimed at that title, let Him then accomplish the prodigy of coming down from the Cross. These insults, which rise to the height of the Cross, are too well conceived to originate