

last of their charges. He thus showed that he considered them all as invented.

Jesus inquired if this were his own question, or merely a repetition of what the Jews had said. (John 18: 33-38.)

Pilate disowned any personal inquiry, and tauntingly remarked that Christ's own nation had betrayed him.

Jesus admitted being a king, but showed that his kingdom was not of this world and was not defended by the strength of man, and therefore could not conflict with Cæsar's; that it was a kingdom of the truth, and secured the allegiance of the truth's adherents only. This was a complete refutation of all the charges of the Jews, and so Pilate understood it.

12-14.—Pilate then went out and told the Jews that he found no fault whatever in Christ. This meant the acquittal of the accused, and therefore all their proceedings were cancelled. The plain course of duty was to liberate Christ at once.

But as the Jews reiterated their charges more fiercely than ever, Pilate began to waver. He feared an insurrection which would be fraught with great danger when such multitudes were in the city. He dreaded a complaint to Tiberius, whose suspicious madness would seek the blood of anyone who sheltered a pretending king. His past crimes made him afraid of an investigation into his administration. And so goaded on by cowardly fears, by the rage of Jewish fanatics, and by the conscious guilt of past crimes, he began to seek some excuse for disobeying the stern command of duty. And this was the first step down to his own utter ruin.

While he was listening to these repeated and amplified accusations, Christ maintained an unbroken silence. His innocence was so clearly established that he needed no further defence, and by no word nor sign would he sanction the prolongation of the proceedings.

His silence was a condemnation of both Pilate's hesitancy and the Jews' hate. Yet Pilate could not understand it. Nothing less than the prisoner's life was at stake, and still his majestic composure was unruffled. And Pilate marvelled greatly.

It is probably between verses 14 and 15 that we are to place the trial before Herod. (Luke 23: 6-11.) It came about in this way. Pilate noticed the word "Galilee" among the

outcries of rage that greeted his declaration of Christ's innocence. Whenever he found out that Jesus belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he determined to send the case to him for judgment.

This seemed a great stroke of policy. It was a recognition of Herod's authority, and would patch up their broken friendship. It would relieve him of the necessity of deciding a hard matter for he felt sure that Herod would settle it.

Herod was pleased both at Pilate's deference and at seeing Christ. But when Christ would not gratify his curiosity by even a word, he mocked him, made light of the charges, and sent him back to Pilate.

15-18.—A compromise was now suggested to Pilate. At that time the frequent insurrections of the Jews against the Romans led to the arrest of many of their national leaders. No matter what their character or past conduct, the mere fact that they suffered for fighting the Romans endeared them to the Jewish heart. To conciliate the people at a dangerous time, it was the governor's custom to release unto them their choice of these captives at the Passover.

Now he knew that the chief priests had delivered Jesus to him because they envied his influence in the nation, which was destroying their own authority. So he offered the people their choice between Barabbas, an insurrectionist, robber and murderer, and Jesus the Christ. He felt sure that they would select Jesus, and thus Christ would be saved, while he would avoid the danger of delivering him. Thus he betrayed his conscience to the popular vote. And he leaned on a broken reed.

19.—While Pilate was thus digging the pit into which he was to fall, a rescuing hand was stretched out to save him. His wife, to whom tradition gives the name of Procula, had just had a dream, in which she suffered many things because of Christ. So she warned Pilate to have nothing to do with him.

The way in which she refers to Jesus, would seem to imply that she and Pilate had spoken about him to one another before. Probably Edersheim is right in saying that Pilate must have known of Jesus' arrest before he was brought before him, since the soldiers who