

in battle against Him, he had inspired Judas and the soldiers to seize the Master, he had determined the Princes of the priests, the Scribes, and the great ones of the Jewish nation to procure with the greatest fury the death of the Divine Saviour. Here we behold the Sanhedrites again their docile instruments. Pilate comes forth to appeal once more to the crowd before the prætorium for the release of Jesus whom they call the Christ. At once, the members of the Grand Council scatter through the crowd, persuading them by all kinds of reasons and at any price to condemn Jesus and deliver Barabbas. So, when Pilate demanded the final decision of the populace, they responded in one prolonged cry : "*Not this Man, but Barabbas ! Away with Him, and deliver to us Barabbas !*" This was, indeed, as said the Prophet Jeremias, "The roaring of the lion in the forest." These people, who had so frequently experienced the great liberality of Jesus ; these people, who had so often hung on His lips under the charm of His words ; these people, who knew, at least vaguely, His Divinity, having been so frequently witness of His miracles—these people are about to commit the double crime of demanding the deliverance of a murderer and the death of Jesus, who is innocence and goodness personified. "*Not this Man, but Barabbas ! Away with Him ! Away with Him !*" The Prophet Jeremias foretelling in prophetic accent this sovereign injury offered to the Messiah, cries out : "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this and ye gathes thereof, be very desolate, said the Lord, For My people have done two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no waters." Jesus is the fountain of life. If He passes away, the divine graces with which He longs to enrich His people will disappear at the same time.

How this unjust preference must have torn and wounded the tender Heart of Jesus ! In the presence of all and by all, He is put below Barabbas ! All, both high and low, treat Him as the "reproach of men and the outcast of the people !" And in the midst of this universal conspiracy of a whole nation, not one voice in favor of His innocence ! Where, then, are Thy friends, O Jesus ? Where are they to whom Thou didst restore health, or whom Thou didst otherwise benefit by Thy miracles ? Has no one the courage to oppose the fury of the Princes of Thy people ? No, not one ! Just as Thy Apostles