

This curious statement, which leaves out of account the trial before Caiaphas and the charge of blasphemy at the same time, does so on the ground that the disciples and the evangelists could never know what happened at a trial for blasphemy, for only the judge and witnesses could be present at such a process. It is intimated by the author that this Caiaphas incident is brought in to unfairly implicate the Jews in the condemnation of our Lord; but there is no sufficient reason for the rejection of the record, and there are several ways of accounting for the securing of the information given. Whether He were an ordained teacher or not, we may hold that Jesus was condemned before Caiaphas and the Jewish rulers for blasphemy. I think there cannot be urged a contradiction between the statements of Matthew, Mark and Luke that there was a hearing before Caiaphas, before any took place in the civil courts and that of John who, as if he knew of the synoptic relation of the matter, says Jesus was brought to the house of Annas first, and then goes on to say what occurred at the high-priest Caiaphas' house—the intimation of the change of place being, as it seems to me, from some unexplained cause found in the middle of the account, in verse 24. He follows this up, of course, with the hearing before Pilate.

In regard to the false witnesses, the author claims that Matthew is the only Gospel which speaks of these as sought out, and that his account is a departure from the other narratives. The truth, he thinks, is not that false witnesses were sought; but that they came, and that the high-priest and the council sought to ascertain whether their testimony were false or not. Luke and John omit any reference to witnesses in the trial before the council, and, as to the record of Mark, it assuredly does appear to differ from that of the first evangelist. Mark says, Mark xiv. 55ff.: "Now the chief priests and the whole council sought witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found it not. For many bare false witness against him and their witness agreed not together. And there stood up certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands and in three days I will build another made without hands. And not even so did their witness agree together. And the high-priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?" The account proceeds to intimate that the high-priest did not press this question, but turned his attention to the claims of Jesus to the Messiahship. This passage says no word about the seeking of witnesses, and favours a close sifting of the evidence such as is contended for; but one can see that Mark's meaning clearly is, that witnesses of any kind were sought, but that true witnesses were not found. Matthew must be understood in this way, too; not as meaning that it was the only purpose of the Jewish authorities to find false witnesses, but that they sought any kind of testimony, and in their search secured much that was false. I conceive that the real search of the rulers would be for reliable rather than unreliable evidence.

The writer of the tractate denies that there was any judgment of Jesus as worthy of death before a Jewish tribunal, for the reason that such would have been against their own law. He calls Luke and John as witnesses against Matthew and Mark; but the lack of express mention of the capital finding in the two former is largely made up by circumstantial evidence (cf. Luke xxiii. 10, 13-25 and John xviii. 31, also xix. 6-7, where judicial action on the part of the Jewish rulers is presupposed.)

The claim is made that Annas and Caiaphas with their following, mostly Sadducees, being known as weak adherents of Roman authority, wished to show their faithfulness to Rome; and, consequently trumped up a charge of treason or sedition against Jesus, delivered him to Pilate, and excited the populace to demand a sentence of death. But their conduct after Pilate had pronounced our Lord innocent shows their real motive to have been intensely Jewish and not Roman.

The following grounds why a Jewish sentence of death could not have been passed are enumerated: (a) The charge of blasphemy must have been tried before the full Sanhedrim of 72 members. The place of trial required to be the Square Hall of the Temple, where the Sanhedrim regularly met. The session must have been held by day, judgment could not be pronounced until the follow-

ing morning, and only after a repetition of the process. Three days must follow for the publication of the sentence, and for possible modification of the result by the reception of fresh evidence favourable to the prisoner. Threefold notice of the charge must precede the trial. All these conditions fail to appear in the case of Jesus. (b) The crime was said to consist in the claim of Jesus that He was the Son of God, that He would sit at the right hand of God, and that He would descend with the clouds of heaven. The punishable offence according to the Law was the utterance of the sacred name יהוה in imprecations or insults. (c) The Law required in the case of a false prophet that judgment should be passed only after a time sufficient had been allowed for the accomplishment of the sign or miracle named by the alleged prophet as his credential. (d) The claim of Jesus that He was the Messiah the Son of God was only an opinion, and, as such, was not punishable in a land where freedom of speech and teaching was allowed. (e) The Law of the Halacha says expressly that he who announces himself as God is not to be visited with death, because all the world may say of him, "What is he more than we men?" (f) The claim of Jesus that He would sit at the right hand of God was one which in the mystical writings themselves was ascribed to the Messiah. (g) Jesus knew and regarded as fundamental the cardinal Jewish doctrine of the Unity of God. (h) The Halacha Law ordered that none could be put to death on his own confession of crime alone, as it was held that he was probably weary of life or afflicted with melancholia, and longed for death. (i) It was an ordinance that a unanimity in judgment among the Sanhedrists vitiated the judgment. The Gospels represent the Sanhedrim as of one mind in condemning Jesus. (j) As the trial (for blasphemy) must have been secret to be legal, the accounts of the Gospels cannot be reliable. (k) It is unthinkable that a Sanhedrim should pass sentence of death upon a man which would be fulfilled by a heathen Roman authority in such a frightful manner as crucifixion, which in Jewish circles was abhorred.

We do not stay to review these points, but will add only that they appear to the author sufficient to justify the conclusion that the crucifixion of Jesus was an act of the Roman Procurator, Pontius Pilate alone, and that Pilate's occasion for condemning Jesus was given him by the High-Priests Annas and Caiaphas and their following, who "feared that the Romans would come and take away their place and nation." Other cases of the execution of such persons by Roman governors are on record. Fadus executed Theudas, Felix would have put to death the Egyptian for whom Paul was mistaken. The record of the death of Jesus by Tacitus makes mention of Pilate only as the judicial cause of his death.

Two curious documents, with little doubt unauthoritative, are cited as supporting the view that the Jews had no part in the crucifixion, either in the trial, the sentence or the execution. The words of one document are given, and the other is said to be similar in its contents. The one cited was found among a collection of manuscripts destroyed in the burning of the archiepiscopal palace of Bourges in 1871. The following is the translation: "Jesus of Nazareth of the Jewish tribe of Judah, because of deceit and rebellion against the divine authority of Tiberius Augustus, delivered, and on account of this sacrilege, upon prosecution of our lord Herod, representative of the Emperor in Judæa, by the sentence of the Judge Pontius Pilate condemned to death, shall be led in the early morning of the 23rd before the ides of March under guard of a detachment of the Prætorian guard to the usual place of execution. The so-called King of the Jews shall be led through the Stranean Gate. Jerusalem, 22nd before the ides of March, 783, A. U. C."

After this argument to excuse the Jews from the guilt of our Lord's death, it is claimed that at the basis of the accounts in Matthew and Mark is a mock trial before Caiaphas for blasphemy, held by arrangement with the Governor, so that the justice of the condemnation by Pilate might be confirmed to his superiors by the result of this Jewish process.

It is strange that, after asserting B. C. 7 or 8 as the year of Jesus' birth, the tractate should, in its last sentence, say: "So died Jesus after his public activity of two and a half years in the year 35, aged 33."

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