

and where under the new system they have now no representation on the town councils, whereas previously they elected practically 50% of the council members. Repeating his appeal for religious and political tolerance, the Primate concluded: "Let good-will reign North and South. Then we shall build well for progress and for freedom. We shall build well for time and for eternity."

THE STORY OF CHRIST

BY GIOVANNI PAPINI
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THEN THE HIGH PRIEST RENT HIS CLOTHES

Caiaphas' real name was Joseph. Caiaphas is a surname and is the same word as Cephas, Simon's surname, that is to say, Rock. On that Friday morning's dawn, the Son of Man was caught between those two rocks like a grain of wheat between two millstones. Simon Peter is the type of the timid friends who knew not how to save Him: Joseph Peter, of His enemies, determined at any cost to destroy Him. Between the denial of Simon and the hatred of Joseph, between the head of the church about to disappear and the head of the Church just coming into existence, between those two rocks Jesus was like wheat between the mill-stones.

The Sanhedrin had already come together and was awaiting Him. Together with Annas and Caiaphas who presided, there were John, Alexander, and all the reeking scum of the upper classes. As a rule the Sanhedrin was composed of twenty-three priests, twenty-three Scribes, twenty-three Elders, and two Presidents, in all seventy-one. But on this occasion some were absent, those who had more fear of an uprising of the people than hatred for the blasphemer, and those few who would not lift a finger to condemn Him, but would not defend Him openly: among these last were certainly Nicodemus, the nocturnal disciple, and Joseph of Arimathea, who was devoutly to lay Jesus in His tomb.

They had come together to ratify with a cloak of legality the decree of murder already written on their hearts. These delegates from the Temple, from the School and the Bank, burned with impatience to confirm, each for his own reasons, their revenged sentence. The great room of the council already full of people was like a den of werewolves. The new day showed itself hesitatingly: the orange-colored tongues of the torches were scarcely visible in the dim light of dawn. In this sinister half-shadow the Jews were waiting: aged, portly, hook-nosed, harsh, beetle-browed, wrapped in their cloaks, their heads covered, stroking their venerable beards, with choleric eyes, seated in a half circle, they seemed a council of sorcerers awaiting a living offering. The rest of the hall was occupied by the clients of the seated assembly, by guards with staves in their hands, by the domestic servants of the house. The air was heavy and dense as in a charnel house.

Jesus, His wrists still tied with ropes, was thrust into the midst of this kennel like a condemned man thrown to the beasts of the Imperial amphitheater. Annas had gathered together in all haste from among the rabble some false witnesses to make an end of any discussion or defense. The pretense of a trial began with calling these perjurers. Two of them came forward and swore that they had heard these words: "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands."

At the time and for those hearers this accusation was a very grave one, meaning nothing less than sacrilege and blasphemy. For in the minds of its upholders the Temple of Jerusalem was the one intangible home of the Lord. And to threaten the Temple was to threaten their real Master, the Master of all the Jews. But Jesus had never said these words or at least not in this form, nor with this meaning. It is true that He had announced that the Temple not one stone would remain upon another, but not through any action of His. And the reference to the Temple not made with hands, built up in three days, was part of another discourse in which He had spoken figuratively of His resurrection. The false witnesses could not even agree about these words confusedly and maliciously repeated, and one statement from Jesus would have been enough to confound them utterly. But Jesus held His peace.

The High Priest could not endure this silence, and standing up, cried out, "Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?"

But Jesus answered nothing. These silences of Jesus were so weighty with magnetic eloquence that they enraged His judges. He held His peace at the first questioning of Annas. He was silent now at the outcry of Caiaphas and He was to be silent with Antipas and Pilate.

He had made already, a thousand times, the statement He might have made now, and any other answers He might have made would either have been misunderstood by His judges, or have been used by them as new pretexts for attacking

Him. Superhuman truths are in their very nature ineffable, and only a shadow of them can be grasped, through a loving effort by those who already have a faint divination of that shadow; and even to them this comes more through the heart than through faulty and defective words.

Jesus did not speak, but looked about Him with His great calm eyes, at the troubled and convulsed faces of His assassins, and for all eternity judged these phantom judges. In a flash every one of them was weighed and condemned by that look which went straight to the soul. Were they worthy to hear His words, those flawed, self-seeking souls, empty and inane, those of them that are not ulcerous and moribund? How could He ever, by the most unthinkable prodigy, stoop to justify Himself before them?

Such self-justification was attempted by the son of the mid-wife, the flat-nosed student and rival of the Sophists! The seventy-year-old arguer, who for so many years had bargued the artisans and the idlers on the market-place, was capable of reciting to the judges of Athens an eloquent and carefully arranged oration of excuses, which, from the limits of dialectics, descended little by little to the sophistries of law courts. It is true that the ironical old man who had set himself to reform the art of thinking rather than the art of living, who had not been above usury, who, not having his fill with Xantippe, had had two children by his concubine Myra, and who amused himself with caressing handsome young men more than he was becoming for the father of a family, was ready to die, and knew how to die with noble firmness; but at the bottom of his heart he would have preferred to descend into Hades by the more natural road. Towards the end of his specious defense, he tried to placate his judges by recalling his old age to them. "It is useless to kill me because I will die very soon anyhow"—and offered to pay thirty greater mites if they would let him go in peace.

But Christ was neither a sophist nor a lawyer. Christ whom so many posthumous Pilates have tried to belittle by comparing Him to Socrates, so inferior to Him. Like Dante's angel, He disdained human discussions. He answered with silence, or if He was forced to speak, spoke candidly and briefly. Caiaphas, exasperated by this disrespectful taciturnity, finally hit on a way to make him speak. "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

As long as they conducted His trial with the usual insidious procedure, adducing falsities or asking Him about perfectly well-known truths, Jesus said no word; but even in the infamous mouth of the High Priest, the invocation to the living God was irresistible. Jesus could not deny Himself to the living God, to the God who will live eternally, and who lives in all of us, and who was present there even in that lair of demons. And yet He hesitated a moment before dazing those bleared eyes with the splendor of His formidable secret.

"If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me."

Now Caiaphas was not alone in putting the question; all of them, excited, sprang to their feet and cried out, their clawing fingers stretched towards Him. "Art thou then the Son of God?"

Jesus could not, like Peter, deny the irrefutable certainty which was the reason for His life and for His death. He was responsible towards His own people and towards all men. But, as at Caesarea, He wished others to be the ones to pronounce His real name, and when they had said it He did not refuse it, even though death were the penalty.

"I say that I am, I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

He had condemned Himself out of His own mouth. The snarling pack about Him was frothing at the mouth with delight and anger. In the presence of His assassins He had proclaimed what He had secretly admitted to His most loving friends. Although they might betray Him. He had not betrayed Himself or His father. Now He was ready for the last degradation. He had said what He had to say.

Caiaphas was triumphant. Pretending a shocked horror which he did not feel—because like all the Sadducees he had no faith whatever in the apocalyptic writers and cared about nothing but the fees and honors of the Temple—he rent his priestly garments, crying out, "He hath spoken blasphemy! What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye?"

And all the noisy kennel bayed out their answer. "He is guilty of death."

And without any further examination, without a single protest, they all condemned Him to death as a blasphemer and false prophet.

The comedy of legal pretense was played to an end, and the cloaked ghosts felt themselves relieved of an immense weight. It had cost the High Priest a garment and he let the torn pieces hang like glories or symbols of victorious battle. He did not know that on that very day a garment more precious than any of his was to be torn, and he did not dream that his gesture was

a symbolic recognition of another death-sentence. The priesthood of which he was the head was henceforth disqualified and abolished forever. His successors were to be mere semblances of priests, spurious and illegitimate, and in a few years the sumptuous garment of marble and masonry of the Jewish sanctuary was to be rent by the Roman rabble.

AND WHEN THEY HAD BLINDFOLDED HIM

When the tragedy acted by the masters had ended in a death-sentence, the devil's hand of subterfuge had their turn. While the high officials went apart to take counsel on the manner of securing the ratification from the Procurator and executing the death sentence with all speed, Jesus was thrown as prey to the rabble in the Palace, as the offal of the slain animal is thrown to the pack which has taken the lion's part. The rabble now lived upon the leavings of the Temple felt that they had as their perquisite the right to some amusement. Man, the beast, when he is certain of impunity, knows no more pleasing recreation than to wreak himself upon the defenseless, especially if the defenseless is innocent. Our bestial nature, crouching untemed at the bottom of every human heart, rushes out bold and snarling the face becomes a muzzle, teeth are tusks, hands appear what they really are, claws, the articulate sounds of human speech vanish in snarlings and growlings. If a drop of blood reddens to the view, they jostle each other to lick it up: there is no more intoxicating liquor than blood: it is far more stimulating than wine, and far fairer to see, red as it is, than the water of Pilate.

But tigerishness breaking loose readily takes the form of play; even tigers are sportive, even children, as soon as they begin to grow strong at all, are tigerish. The captors of Christ, waiting for the foreign authority, confirm the death sentence of the most innocent of their brothers, meant to give Christ a humorous foretaste of His sufferings. They had permission to jest with their King, to divert themselves with their God. And they felt that they really deserved some amusement; they had been awake all night long, and the night had been cold; and then the march up to the Mount of Olives, fearing resistance, a well-grounded fear, since one of them had had his ear stricken off; and then the long wait, till dawn, a very tiring business especially on those festive days when the city and the Temple were full of foreigners and there was so much more for every one to do.

But they did not know how to begin. He was dead and His friends had disappeared. But this man who looked at them with an expression they had never seen till then, with a steady look which seemed beyond all earthly things and yet searched them out within like a ray of troublesome sunshine—this man, bound, exhausted, the fresh sweat on His face softening the drops of dried blood on His cheeks, this insignificant man, this defenceless provincial with no protecting patrons, condemned to death by the highest and holiest tribunal of the Jewish people, this human rubbish destined to the cross of slaves and thieves, this laughingstock whom the authorities had given over to their abuse like a puppet at the stannaria, this man who did not speak nor comply, but looked on them as if He had compassion on them, as a father might look at his sick child, as a friend might look at a delirious friend, this man, mocked by all, inspired in their worthless souls a mysterious reverence.

But one of the Scribes or the Elders gave the example, and spat at Jesus as he passed by Him. He was too careful of His ritual cleanliness to contaminate. His newly washed hands, ready for the Passover, by touching an enemy of God, who, near to death, was already impure like a corpse. But saliva: what is saliva? Refuse of the body, contempt materialized in a liquid.

And on that face illumined by the early morning sun and by imprisoned divinity, on that face transfused by the light of the sun and by love's light, on the golden face of Christ, the spittle of the Jewa covered the first blood of the Passion. But for the rabble of the servants and the guards spitting was not enough, nor were they afraid of sulling their hands. The example of the leaders had overcome the impression made on them by the condemned man's sad and brotherly look. The guards who were nearest Him struck Him in the face; those who could not strike His face rained down blows and threats, and the words which came from the mouths of those insensate men wounded Him more cruelly than blows.

That face, which had been white as a hawthorn blossom and shining like sunlight, darkened into the livid purple of beaten flesh. The fair, gracious body, veiling with blows staggered in the midst of the heaving crowd. Christ said no word to those who vomited out on Him the appalling contents of their souls. He had answered the guard who had struck Him in the presence of Annas, asking him to correct Him if He had spoken ill; for this ribald mob let loose He had no answer. But one of them more quick-witted or more childish than the others had an idea; he took a

dirty cloth and with it covered the bleeding, buffeted face, tying the corners behind. And he said: "Let us play blind man's buff. This man boasts of being a prophet; let us see if he can guess which of us is striking him."

Christ's face was covered. Was there, in the action of the ruffians, an unconsciously compassionate desire to spare Him, at least, the sight of His brothers become like beasts? Or was that look of suffering love really unendurable to them? With childish cruelty, they arranged themselves in a circle about Him and first one and then another twined a fold of His garment, gave Him a blow on the shoulder, thrust Him in the back, struck Him with a staff over the head: "Prophecy! Who is it that smote thee?"

Why did He not answer? Had He not predicted the ruin of the Temple, wars and earthquakes, the coming of the Son of Man on clouds and many other idle stories? How was it that now He could not make such an easy guess, give the game of a person so close at hand? What sort of a prophet was this? Had he lost His power all at once, or had He never had it? He might be able to make those poor contrived Galileans believe His stories, but here we are in Jerusalem, the city which understands prophets and kills them when they do not show a proper spirit, Luke xviii. And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.

But Caiaphas and the others were in haste and thought that the servile pack had amused itself long enough. The false king must be taken to Pilate that his sentence be confirmed: the Sanhedrin could pronounce judgment, but since Jesus was under Roman rule, it had no longer, unfortunately, the Jus Gladii. And the High Priests, Scribes and Elders, set out for the Palace of the Procurator, followed by the guards leading Jesus with ropes, and by the yelling horde which grew larger as they went along the street.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE HOLY WINDING SHEET

One of the most precious relics that has come down to us from Christian antiquity is that which is enshrined in the beautiful marble chapel of the Dukes of Savoy, behind the high altar of the Duomo in Turin—Our Lord's shroud of finest Damascus linen.

According to the inspired Gospel narrative it was Joseph of Arimathea, a rich Jew and a disciple of Our Lord, who supplied these linen cloths—there were more than one—for the enshrouding of Our Lord's Body which he had begged from Pilate, and it was he who offered the new sepulchre, which he had just had hewn out of the rock for his own family, as a burial-place for Our Saviour.

But we also know that on the third day, when Our Lord rose from the dead, the women who first found the tomb empty ran to convey the news to the Apostles, and St. Peter returning with all haste found there the linen shroud which had enveloped the Sacred Body of Our Divine Lord.

The Gospel does not say so, but we may certainly presume that these winding-sheets were gathered up by the holy women, and treasured as most precious relics by the early Christians until the time came when the Patriarch of Jerusalem was appointed official custodian of these and of all the other relics of the Passion—the wood of the Cross, the Nails, the Sponge, the Lance, the Reed, etc., as detailed by St. John Damascene.

The Holy Winding Sheet was brought to the West in 1205 by the knights of the Fourth Crusade and venerated successively at Besancon, Trier, and Hippolyte, and was finally given into the custody of the Dukes of Savoy, who built a magnificent shrine for it at Chambery. Here for many years it became an object of the greatest devotion, and Chambery became world-famous as a place of pilgrimage, all wishing to see and to reverence the cloths that had enshrouded Our Lord's Sacred Person.

A great fire broke out in the chapel of Chambery in the December of 1692, and the holy relic might have been lost to the Church but for the bravery of the Duke of Savoy and some Franciscan Friars who faced the flames and rescued it, though the reliquary containing it was almost red-hot.

The cloth, in fact, was blackened by the smoke and burnt in two places: the Poor Clares were given the task of restoring it as far as possible to its former colour, and Blessed Sebastian Valfrè was later on commissioned to re-stitch it in several places. It was taken to Turin in the sixteenth century and there it has remained ever since, enclosed in a silver casket of great value.

The Winding Sheet itself is exposed but rarely to the gaze of the Faithful: the last occasion was in 1898 when the present King of Italy was married to Princess Helen of Montenegro. The cloth is about thirteen and a half feet long by one and a half wide, and the remarkable thing is that the outline of Our Lord's Body is clearly distinguishable, together with the imprint of His Sacred Face, corresponding exactly to that on the Towel of Veronica at St. Peter's, Rome.

The whole history of the Passion is there graphically portrayed for succeeding generations of mankind—the crown of thorns, the blood drawn forth by the cruel scourges, the imprint of the transpierced hands and feet.

The hair is long and falling to the shoulders, the beard short, the face shows traces of wounds and blood but is yet wonderfully regular and of a beautiful symmetry. The eyes are closed, and though sadness is the predominant note of the Sacred Countenance, there is also perceptible an air of sweet resignation as well as of majesty.

It was whilst kneeling in veneration before this precious relic exposed in the Church of Our Lady at Anney on the 21st of July, 1667, that Madame de Boisy, Countess of Sales, consecrated to God the infant who was about to be born, and who was to be one day Bishop of Geneva. And nine years before his saintly death, whilst passing through Turin St. Francis was one of the five prelates who were chosen to present the holy relic to the people on the occasion of its public exposition on the 5th of May, 1618.—The Pilot.

CATHOLICS IN U. S. TWENTY MILLION

MEIERS' NEW YORK BOOK GIVES HIGHER FIGURES

Chicago, Ill.—There are 20,788,447 Catholics in the United States, according to advance sheets of the 1925 edition of The Catholic Press Directory, which will be published by Joseph H. Meier, at 64 West Randolph Street, Chicago, shortly.

This figure shows that the Church has gained 10,608,770 members during the last twenty-five years and, comparing the total of today with that of ten years ago, the compiler points out that the increase in the number of Catholics during the last decade has been 4,429,137. This splendid record is shown despite the great World War, which practically stopped the European influx, and notwithstanding the restriction of immigration during the past few years. These gains also set at rest rumors of the so-called leakage in the denomination.

JUSTIFIES HIGHER FIGURES

The Press Directory publisher's figures for Catholic population are higher by over 2,000,000 than those published in the 1925 edition of The Official Catholic Directory, but Mr. Meier says he has taken into consideration the "floating" population and the non-registered membership. Mr. Meier was for fourteen years the compiler of The Official Catholic Directory, and for nearly twenty years he has made a study of Catholic statistics. He claims that in presenting his latest figures he has made use of the experience gained during the last two decades.

The Press Directory's Catholic population figures—20,788,447—are, also, much higher than those made public a few weeks ago by Rev. Dr. H. K. Carroll, the well-known Protestant statistician. Dr. Carroll annually makes up a table of statistics covering all denominations, but as a majority of the Protestant Churches figure only communicants, Dr. Carroll includes only communicants when quoting membership in religious bodies. This method, of course, excludes millions of Catholic children, who were too young to receive Holy Communion. According to Mr. Meier, Dr. Carroll follows this plan so that all denominations are figured on the same basis in his tabulation.

As the Government Census Bureau does not permit its enumerators to question citizens as to their Church affiliations, no actual count has ever been made, but if such a census were taken, the Chicago publisher claims his figures would be found under, and not over, the mark.

The new Catholic Press Directory also shows that there are 80,155 Sisters and Nuns in the United States, 5,273 residences of Sisters, 218 Seminaries, Universities and Colleges; 208 Monasteries, Abbey and Scholasticates; 592 Convents and Novitiates, 607 Academies and Boarding Schools, 611 High Schools, 659 Hospitals and Sanitariums and 598 Charitable Institutions.

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