

Jerusalem could valid offerings be made to Jehovah; and on the great feast days the Israelites crowded the city.

The silversmiths of Ephesus who found that St. Paul interfered with their business were less outraged than the great crowds of the citizens of Jerusalem who made the temple, the very sanctuary of the Lord, a place for barter and sale.

In Christ's time, says Papini, there were at least twenty thousand descendants of Aaron who lived in Jerusalem from the tithes,—from the five shekels paid by the parents on the appearance of each first-born. And then there were the Levites who were also of the priestly caste, the animal sellers, the money-changers in the temple itself, and the inn-keepers. Many of the priests had become merchants themselves; and any man who attacked the temple which, in defiance of the command of Jehovah, had become a mere market, was naturally an enemy of the rich, and of all those who gained their living and their profits from the degradation of this glorious building. It was the animal-seller and money-changer who resented first His curses against the venal Scribes and Pharisees. But when he drove the avaricious and the profiteers from the temple with whips, and predicted the fall of the centre of their trade, Caiaphas, who was that year the High Priest, met the Sanhedrim in order that Christ should perish to save the privileges of the powerful.

Caiaphas put it in a more sophistical way; he did not represent it as the determination of a caste to preserve its privileges. He said it was just that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation should not perish. When he said these words Caiaphas did not realize that he was expressing the truth that only the pure can cancel the debts of the ignoble, "that only God in His infinite magnificence can expiate the sins which man has committed against Him; this thought seems to man the height of madness exactly because the height of divine wisdom certainly did not flash out in the souls of the Sadducees when he threw

to his sixty accomplices the sophism destined to silence their last remorse."

Papini in this book has followed the methods of the Old Masters of Italy,—of those schools which, like that of Fra Angelico, saw Christ lovingly among human beings. When he approaches Christ, he has much of the brotherly and splendid spirit of St. Francis of Assisi and of the authors of the "Little Flowers"; but of that kind of simplicity which becomes simpleness he has no touch. He is always a man of the modern world who has found a remedy in eternal love, and who finds that that is the only hope for salvation in a civilization that has begun to commit suicide.

Without exaggeration, without an undue exercise of imagination into which his method of treatment might have betrayed him, Papini pictures very humanly the figures of the time, the customs of the time, the traditions of the time, and the humanity of the characters that are part of the picture in which the Saviour is the central character. He pierces the heart of many mysteries, but the mystery of Judas he cannot pierce. The philosophy of Jesus taught that a man must damn himself or he could not be damned. When Satan entered into Judas, he must have gone into the heart of this apostle through his will. His treatment of the mystery of Judas is a fine example of his power of expression and of his knowledge of the human heart.

Nothing that Papini says in this book is essentially new, but no man of feeling, doubter or not, can fail to see the beauty and the splendor of the "Life of Christ." Without an effort, he makes you live among human beings who are essentially the same to this day. You feel the atmosphere, as he feels it, and you read the hearts of the people. That an Incarnation should take place, that a man should be born of a Virgin, was prefigured in the corrupted myths of Leda and the swan, and of Danae and the shower of gold; the idea of sacrifice was in the symbol of Iphigenia and in the story of Epimenides the wise; and at Curium, in Cyprus,