

The Pagan Cyrinus of Cyprus

From the school Jesus went in the evening twilight, accompanied by the disciples and the people who had awaited Him outside the synagogue, up to Thabor. A multitude of others and some of His own relatives were already there assembled. Jesus sat down on the mountain, His hearers reclining or sitting below at His feet. The stars were twinkling in the sky, and the moon was shedding around her gentle radiance. Jesus taught until late into the night. He often did this even after a toilsome day's work when in the midst of a little band of pious souls. The peace was then more profound, His audience less distracted; the heavens, the stars, the wide expanse of nature, the pleasant coolness of the air, the stillness reigning around, fell like soothing balm upon men's souls. They heard their Teacher's voice more distinctly, comprehended His words more easily, were less confused at hearing their own faults laid bare, carried His instructions home with them, and pondered them with fewer distractions. This was especially the case in the magnificent region in which Jesus now was, in the wide prospect that unfolded from the heights of Thabor. The mount itself, on account of the sojourn of Elias and Malachias upon it for a time, was held in special veneration.

When Jesus was returning home late in the night, followed by the crowd, there approached Him on the way a pagan from Cyprus who had been present at the instructions. He was one of the occupants of Jesse's house and had something to do connected with the manufacture of the essential oils. Up to this time, however, he had kept aloof through a spirit of humility. But now Jesus took him into a room of the house where He sat with him alone, as He had done with Nicodemus, instructing him and answering the questions that he put so humbly, yet with so eager a desire of learning the truth. This pagan, a man most noble and wise, was named Cyrinus. His remarks were most profound, and he received Jesus' instructions with indescribable humility and joy. Jesus, on His side, was very loving and confidential toward him. Cyrinus said that for a long time past he had been sensible of the emptiness of idolatry and had longed to become a Jew, but that there was one thing which presented an insuperable objection, namely, circumcision.



He asked whether it was not possible to attain salvation without it. Jesus answered him in words both familiar and significant regarding that mystery. He might, said Jesus, circumcise his senses, his heart, and his tongue from carnal desires and pleasures, and then go to Capharnaum for Baptism. At these words, Cyrinus asked why He did not preach that openly, for he thought that if Jesus did so, many pagans who were longing for it would be converted. Jesus answered that if He should say such a thing to the multitude, blinded as they were by their prejudices, they would certainly put Him to death, and one must not scandalize the weak. Again, abolishing circumcision might give rise to multiplied sects; besides, the law was necessary for some of the pagans as a means of trial and sacrifice. But now that the Kingdom of God was drawing near, the covenant of circumcision in the flesh was fulfilled and the circumcision of the heart and the spirit must take its place. Cyrinus inquired also as to the sufficiency of John's baptism, and Jesus spoke with him upon that point. He told Jesus about many people who were sighing after Him in Cyprus, and complained to Him of his two sons who, though otherwise very virtuous, were fierce enemies of Judaism. Jesus consoled him and promised that, after He had fulfilled His mission, his sons would yet become zealous workers in His vineyard. These sons were, I think, called Aristarchus and Trophimus. They afterward became disciples of the Apostles. This most touching nocturnal interview lasted till morning. On the sunny side of the mountain were large reservoirs hewn out of the rocky wall, and in them were vessels belonging to Jesse, in which were prepared perfumes from herbs and other substances. The oil dropped from one vessel into another, making many a turn in its course.