

If we continue the line of travel – or travail – that we have followed over the last few days, we can see Jesus, in his increasing powerlessness, coming to the point where what we take as ultimate power in human terms – represented by Pilate and the Jewish authorities of his day – is finally shown up for what it is: a chimera, an illusion; a working hypothesis which ultimately fails. A hint of this is already at play in John's account of the Passion when the chief priests, in their eagerness to have Jesus done away with, admit that they have no king except Caesar. In this, their own powerlessness is laid bare: their powerlessness, that is, as members of fallen humanity or, to quote Diarmud MacCulloch again from yesterday:

*It is surely inevitable that any potential source of (political) power will fascinate fallen humanity, and that religion is as likely to bring a sword as peace.*

This is religion, indeed, which has lost its way again; which colludes with human power rather than acknowledge its powerlessness before God. It is fuelled by fear of losing the chimera of power, of status and possessions which we hoard against the possibility of death. And Pilate is, of course, no more free of this than they are : this fear of losing the little power he really has, and the chief priests cunningly play on his fear to have Jesus killed. It's an unedifying spectacle which repeats itself still, in stark contrast to the spectacle of Jesus on a cross which has no need of repetition. There's no pretence of power here, on his part; it's surrendered entirely to God. This is our path too, to resurrection: the line of travel – or travail – we would, naturally, rather not follow.

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