

*Christ on Trial* by Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury  
Session 4 – **JOHN: HOME AND AWAY** – WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 2004

TEXT

Prayer        *Jesus,*  
for the        *make us tell the truth about ourselves;*  
Study        *help us not to be afraid of meeting you*  
                  *and seeing ourselves with your eyes.*  
                  *Help us to care more about the truth and love we see in you*  
                  *than about anything the world may say or do.*  
                  *Amen.*

NOTES

**JOHN 18:**<sup>12</sup> So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. <sup>13</sup> First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. <sup>14</sup> Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people. <sup>15</sup> Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, <sup>16</sup> but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. <sup>17</sup> The woman said to Peter, “You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.” <sup>18</sup> Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself. <sup>19</sup> Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. <sup>20</sup> Jesus answered, “I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. <sup>21</sup> Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.” <sup>22</sup> When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, “Is that how you answer the high priest?” <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered, “If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?” <sup>24</sup> Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. <sup>25</sup> Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, “You are not also one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” <sup>26</sup> One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Did I not see you in the garden with him?” <sup>27</sup> Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed. <sup>28</sup> Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate’s headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. <sup>29</sup> So Pilate went out to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this man?” <sup>30</sup> They answered, “If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.” <sup>31</sup> Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves

and judge him according to your law.” The Jews replied, “We are not permitted to put anyone to death.” <sup>32</sup> (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.) <sup>33</sup> Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” <sup>35</sup> Pilate replied, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?” <sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” <sup>37</sup> Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” <sup>38</sup> Pilate asked him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, “I find no case against him. <sup>39</sup> But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” <sup>40</sup> They shouted in reply, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a bandit.

**JOHN 19:**<sup>1</sup> Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. <sup>2</sup> And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. <sup>3</sup> They kept coming up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and striking him on the face. <sup>4</sup> Pilate went out again and said to them, “Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.” <sup>5</sup> So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!” <sup>6</sup> When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.” <sup>7</sup> The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God.” <sup>8</sup> Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. <sup>9</sup> He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup> Pilate therefore said to him, “Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?” <sup>11</sup> Jesus answered him, “You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.” <sup>12</sup> From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, “If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor.” <sup>13</sup> When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge’s bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. <sup>14</sup> Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, “Here is your

King!”<sup>15</sup> They cried out, “Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!” Pilate asked them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but the emperor.”<sup>16</sup> Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

*New Revised Standard Version*

#### **4-A**

Repeatedly, John’s theme is that those who consciously identify themselves as the ones who really believe or really know are also those who cannot bear the light that comes from Christ; and those who identify themselves as Abraham’s children, children of election and promise, prove unable to live in the trust Abraham showed. *The fundamental issue is to do with the challenge to the ‘insider’, just as much as in Luke. That challenge comes not because of new teaching or new information, but because of who Jesus is.* John, like other New Testament writers, is in fact clear enough that Jesus’ identity as child of Abraham and David is precisely what gives a tragic edge to the constant misrecognitions or refusals to understand that run through the narrative.

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#### **4-B**

As soon as we begin to feel driven to defend Christ by the calculations of the world, by those tactics that inevitably make winners and losers, something is broken.

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#### **4-C**

Near the end of *The City of God*, Augustine puts before his readers a paradox worthy of Zen Buddhism. The only causes you can fight for, he says, are the ones that are not absolute; once you decide that what you are fighting for is absolute, you have made it relative. ... *Identify what you are defending with God’s will, and you may be sure that you have driven a deep wedge between your cause and God.* You have mingled your passion and fear with a witness to God’s truth.

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#### **4-D**

If there are things that become untrue when they are said, there are also, for Augustine, things that become untrue when they are defended, or at least defended in a certain way. For those of us not directly concerned with decisions about war, the application must be to *how we regard the conflicts of our daily work and relations.* When I am criticized, do I assume that my critic is deliberately sinning against the light? When my proposal fails or is delayed, how far will I go to see that it is finally successful? How much loss and suffering for others as well as myself am I going to ‘budget’ for? *Do I actually believe that truth will ultimately look after itself, that it is still there on the far side of any controversy?*

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#### **4-E**

To pick up a powerful phrase from a book on Mary by an American missionary in Africa, *we have to ask who and what our grief serves.*

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#### **4-F**

So far, nearly all of what has been said about ‘living in the truth’ has been

to do with cost and struggle – living in the riskiness of Jesus’ presence, where *no external guarantee can establish that living there is the right place to be.*

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#### **4-G**

We are not – it seems – permitted to be at home in the sense that we can feel ultimately satisfied with where and what we are, longing to hold on to it and unwilling to respond to challenge; we are not to settle down in our place and our time because we feel comfortable. There are always questions to be asked by us and of us. That said, however, *what is asked of us is a commitment to the here and now – our questioning can never be an attempt to deny or to escape the present moment.* To know this moment, this place, this body, this set of memories, this situation, for what it truly is and to accept this as reality, the reality with which God at each new instant begins to work: this is the ‘being at home’ we have to learn.

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#### **4-H**

*We constantly try to start from somewhere other than where we are.* Truthful living involves being at home with ourselves, not complacently but patiently, recognizing that what we are today, at this moment, is sufficiently loved and valued by God to be the material with which he will work, and that the longed-for transformation will not come by refusing the love and the value that is simply there in the present moment

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#### **4-I**

Our immersion in the present moment which is God’s delivers the world to us – and that world is not the perfect and fully achieved thing we might imagine, but the divided and difficult world we actually inhabit. Only, by the grace of this living in the truth, we are able to say to it at least an echo of the ‘yes’ that God says, to accept as God accepts.

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#### **4-J**

This *fear of God’s otherness* means that the world fears and hates whatever speaks of that other source of value – it hates Jesus and the community of Jesus because they do not live by the same fears and do not use the same defences.

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#### **4-K**

Nonetheless, Jesus’ friends are not to be taken out of the world (John 17:15). They have to live daily with those systems of hostility and competition. In the midst of this, however, *they know the world as it really is, as God sees it, as the object of a love that is beyond violence and rivalry.* They inhabit that kingdom which has no defences, the kingdom which does not derive from the world.

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#### **4-L**

Faith in Jesus is not bound first to the establishing of facts about him – remember how briskly this is disposed of by John in his account of the trial before Annas. Concern with such facts is and must always be related to who he is and what must be said about his identity as a whole. However much we know about Jesus, *the verdict on who he is can only be delivered*

*if we are willing to move, willing to be on trial both with him and before him.*

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#### **4-M**

The point is that here, as we see Jesus standing before the tribunal, we have to decide what our own response will be. Without this, and without the execution that follows, we could just about get away with seeing belief in Christ as obedience to his teaching and conviction on the basis of his miracles. Faith is neither of these, however, because *it requires us to move from our centre to his – and this is what the trial stories seek to help us achieve.*

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## Supplementary Material

*The Trial*, by Franz Kafka • from Chapter Nine, *In the Cathedral*

TEXT

NOTES

‘Josef K!’

K. came to a halt and stared at the ground in front of him. For the moment he was still five, he could go on and make his escape through one of the three little dark wooden doors just in front of him. This would simply mean that he had not understood, or that he had understood but did not care about it. But once he turned round, he would be caught, for that would be tantamount to admitting that he had understood very well, that he really was the person who had been summoned and that he was also ready to obey. If the priest had called again, K. would certainly have gone on, but as everything remained quiet although he continued to wait, K. turned his head slightly to try to see what the priest was now doing. He was standing calmly in the pulpit as before, though it was clear he had seen K. turning his head. It would have been a childish game of hide-and-seek if K. had not turned round completely now. When he did so, the priest beckoned him nearer. Now that there was no need to prevaricate, K. ran – because he was curious and because he wanted to get the whole affair over – with long, flying strides towards the pulpit. He stopped at the first pews, but the priest seemed to think he was still too far away and stretched out his hand, pointing his forefinger steeply down at a spot right in front of the pulpit. K. went there, but once at that spot he had to bend his head a long way back so that he could still see the priest.

‘You are Josef K?’ the priest said, raising his hand from the balustrade in a vague movement.

‘Yes,’ K. said, and reflected how freely he always used to give his name and how for some time it had been a burden to him. Now it was known even to people he was meeting for the first time, how nice it had been not to be known until we introduced oneself.

‘You are an accused man,’ the priest said very quietly.

‘Yes,’ said K, ‘so I’ve been informed.’

‘Then you are the man I’m looking for.’ said the priest. ‘I am the prison chaplain.’

‘Oh, are you?’ K. said.

‘I had you summoned here.’ said the priest, ‘to have a talk with you.’

‘I didn’t know that,’ said K. ‘I came here to show an Italian round the cathedral.’

‘Keep to the point.’ the priest said. ‘What’s that you have in your hand? Is it a prayer book?’

‘No,’ K. answered, ‘it’s in album of things worth seeing in the city.’

‘Put it down,’ said the priest. K. hurled it away so violently that it flew open and slid some way across the floor with the pages crumpled.

‘Do you know that your case is going badly?’ the priest asked.

‘That’s the impression I have too,’ said K. ‘I’ve taken as much trouble as I could, but so far without any success; though my petition isn’t ready yet.’

‘How do you think it’s going to end?’ asked the priest.

‘I used to think it was bound to end all right,’ said K, ‘but now I sometimes doubt it myself. I have no idea how it will end. Do you know?’

‘No,’ the priest said, ‘but I’m afraid it will end badly. You are

considered to be guilty. Your case may not get beyond a lower Court at all. For the moment at least, your guilt is taken as proven.'

'But I'm not guilty,' said 'It's a mistake. How can a person be guilty at all? Surely we are all human beings here, one like the other.'

'That is right,' said the priest, 'but that is the way the guilty are wont to talk.'

'Are even you prejudiced against me?' K. asked.

'No. I'm not prejudiced against you,' said the priest.

'I'm grateful to you,' K. said. 'But everybody else who is concerned in these proceedings is prejudiced against me. They make even those who aren't involved prejudiced against me. My position is getting more difficult all the time.'

'You are failing to understand the facts of the case,' the priest said. 'The verdict does not come all at once, the proceedings gradually merge into the verdict.'

'So that's how it is,' K. said and let his head drop.

'What do you plan to do next in your case?' the priest asked.

'I'm going to get some more help,' K. said, raising his head to see what the priest thought of this. 'There are still certain possibilities I haven't made the most of.'

'You ask for too much help from other people,' the priest said disapprovingly, 'especially women. Don't you see that that is not the kind of help you need?'

'Sometimes, even frequently, I would admit you're right,' said K. 'But not always. Women have great power. If I could get some of the women I know to join together in working for me, I would be bound to win through. Especially with this Court, where they're practically all women-chasers. You only have to show the Examining Magistrate a woman in the distance and he will knock over the table and the defendant to get to her before she disappears! The priest leant his head over the balustrade as if the canopy of the pulpit were oppressing him now for the first time. What sort of bad weather might there be outside? It wasn't dull daylight any more, it was already pitch-dark. Even the faintest glimmer from the stained glass in the big windows could not pierce the dark will. And the verger chose this of all moments to start putting out the candles on the high altar, one by one.'

'Are you angry with me?' K. asked the priest. 'Perhaps you don't realize the kind of Court you're serving?' He got no answer. 'I'm only telling you what I've experienced,' K. said. There was still no answer from up above. 'I didn't mean to offend you,' said K. Then the priest shrieked down at K:

'Can't you see what is just in front of your nose!' It was a howl of anger, but at the same time it sounded like the cry of someone who sees another person fall and, because he is frightened himself, screams unwarily, involuntarily.

Neither said anything for a long time. It was so dark beneath the pulpit that now the priest certainly could not make K. out distinctly, whereas K. could see him clearly by the light of the little lamp. Why did the priest not come down? He had not given a sermon, of course, but had only told K. a few things that would probably do him more harm than good if he paid heed to them. Yet it seemed to K. that the priest undoubtedly meant well; it was not outside the bounds of possibility that, if he came down, they might come to some agreement, it was not impossible that K. might get crucial

and acceptable advice from him which might, for example, show him not just how to influence the course of the case, but how to break away from it, how to avoid it altogether and live beyond the reach of the Court. There must be a possibility of this, recently K. had often thought about it. And if the priest knew of such a possibility, perhaps, if one begged him, he might reveal it, though he belonged to the Court himself and though he had suppressed his gentle nature and had shouted at K. as soon as K. had attacked the Court.

‘Won’t you come down?’ said K. ‘You don’t have to preach a sermon. Join me down here.’

‘Now I can come down,’ the priest said, perhaps regretting that he had shouted. As he detached the lamp from its hook, he said:

‘First of all I had to speak to you from a distance. Otherwise I am too easily influenced and then I forget what I ought to be doing.’

K. waited for him at the bottom of the steps. While he was still coming down, the priest stretched out his hand towards K. from one of the topmost steps.

‘Can you spare me a little time?’ K. asked.

‘As much as you need,’ the priest said and handed him the little lamp to carry. Even now that he was done, he did not lose a certain air of solemnity.

‘You’re being very kind to me,’ K. said as they walked side by side up and down the dark aisle. ‘You’re an exception amongst those who belong to the Court. I trust you more than any of them, though I’ve got to know a lot of them I can speak freely to you.’

‘Don’t delude yourself,’ said the priest.

‘How am I supposed to be deluding myself?’ K. asked.

‘You’re deluding yourself about the Court,’ the priest said. ‘In the writings which preface the Law it says about this delusion: before the Law stands a door-keeper. A man from the country comes up to this door-keeper and begs for admission to the Law. But the door-keeper tells him that he cannot grant him admission now. The man ponders this and then asks if he will be allowed to enter later. “Possibly,” the door-keeper says, “but not now.” Since the door leading to the Law is standing open as always and the door-keeper steps aside, the man bends down to look inside through the door. Seeing this, the door-keeper laughs and says: “If it attracts you so much, go on and try to get in without my permission. But you must realize that I am powerful. And I’m only the lowest door-keeper. At every hall there is another doorkeeper, each one more powerful than the last. Even I cannot bear to look at the third one.” The man from the country had not expected difficulties like this, for, he thinks, the Law is surely supposed to be accessible to everyone always, but when he looks more closely at the door-keeper in his fur coat, with his great sharp nose and his long, thin black Tartar beard, he decides it is better to wait until he receives permission to enter. The doorkeeper gives him a stool and allows him to sit down to one side of the door. There he sits, day after day, and year after year. Many times he tries to get in and wears the door-keeper out with his appeals. At times the door-keeper conducts little cross-examinations, asking him about his home and many other things, but they are impersonal questions, the sort great men ask, and the door-keeper always ends up by saying that he cannot let him in yet. The man from the country, who has equipped himself with many things for his journey, makes use of everything he has, however valuable, to bribe the door-keeper, who, it’s true, accepts



it all, saying as he takes each thing: "I am only accepting this so that you won't believe you have left something untried."

'During all these long years, the man watches the door-keeper almost continuously. He forgets the other door-keepers, this first one seems to be the only obstacle between him and admission to the Law. In the first years he curses this piece of ill-luck aloud, and later when he gets old, he only grumbles to himself. He becomes childish and, since he has been scrutinizing the doorkeeper so closely for years that he can identify even the fleas in the door-keeper's fur collar, he begs these fleas to help him to change the door-keeper's mind. In the end his eyes grow dim and he cannot tell whether it is really getting darker around him or whether it is just his eyes deceiving him. But now he glimpses in the darkness a radiance glowing inextinguishably from the door of the Law. He is not going to live much longer now. Before he dies all his experiences during the whole period of waiting merge in his head into one single question, which he has not yet asked the door-keeper. As he can no longer raise his stiffening body, he beckons the man over. The door-keeper has to bend down low to him, for the difference in size between them has changed very much to the man's disadvantage.

"What is it you want to know now then?" asks the doorkeeper. "You're insatiable." "All men are intent on the Law," says the man, "but why is it that in all these many years no one other than myself has asked to enter?" The door-keeper realizes that the man is nearing his end and that his hearing is fading, and in order to make himself heard he bellows at him: "No one else could gain admission here, because this door was intended only for you. I shall now go and close it."

'Then the door-keeper deceived the man,' said K. immediately, very strongly attracted by the story.

'Don't be too hasty,' said the priest. 'Don't accept someone else's opinion without testing it. I've told you the story exactly as it's written. It doesn't say anything about deception.'

'But it's obvious,' K. said, 'and your first interpretation was quite correct. The door-keeper did am give the message of salvation till it could no longer help the man.'

'He wasn't asked until then,' said the priest. 'And remember, he was only a door-keeper and a such fulfilled his duty.'

'Why do you think that he fulfilled his duty?' K. asked. 'He didn't fulfil it. It might have been his duty to turn away all strangers, but the entrance was intended for this man and he should have let him in.'

'You don't show enough respect for what is written, and you're changing the story,' the priest said. 'The story contains two important statements by the door-keeper about admission to the Law – one at the beginning and one at the end. In one place it says that he cannot grant the man admission now, and in the other it says that this entrance was intended only for the man. If there were any contradiction between these two statements you would be right and the door-keeper would have deceived the man. But there isn't any contradiction. On the contrary, the first statement actually implies the second. One might almost say that the door-keeper exceeded his duty in holding out to the man the prospect of perhaps being admitted some time in the future. The door-keeper's duty seems to have consisted at that time solely in turning the man away, and in fact many commentators have been surprised that the door-keeper gave any hint at all

of such a prospect, since he seems to be a stickler for precision and very jealous of his office. During all those years he never leaves his post and does not shut the door completely, until the very last moment, he is very conscious of the importance of his work, for he says, "I am powerful," and he has respect for his superiors, for he says, "I am only the lowest door-keeper." He is not over-talkative, for the story says that, throughout the many years, he asks only "impersonal questions". Nor can he be bribed, for when he takes a gift he says, "I am only this so that you won't believe you have left something untried." Where it is a question of fulfilling his duty, he can be moved neither to resentment nor pity, for the story says that the man "wears the door-keeper out with his appeals". And finally even his external appearance hints at a pedantic nature, the big pointed nose and the long, thin black Tartar beard. Could you have a more conscientious door-keeper? But the door-keeper's character is compounded of other elements which, tend to favour considerably someone seeking admission and which nevertheless make it understandable enough that he might exceed his duty somewhat by suggesting the possibility of admission in the future. For it's undeniable that he's a little simple-minded and therefore a little conceited as well. Even if his remarks about his power and the power of the other door-keepers and about how even he can't bear to behold them – I maintain that even if they are essentially true, the way he comes out with these remarks shows that his interpretation is clouded by both simplemindedness and arrogance. Commentators say: "The correct interpretation of a certain subject and misunderstanding of the same subject do not wholly exclude each other." At any rate it must be assumed that that simple-mindedness and arrogance, in whatever trivial way they may manifest themselves, are defects in the door-keeper's character and do indeed weaken his guardianship of the entrance. One must also add that the door-keeper seems by nature to be friendly, and by no means always does he play the official. In the very first moments we notice that he jokingly invites the man to enter, despite the rigorously maintained prohibition on entry, and then he doesn't, for example, send him away but gives him, we are told, a stool and lets him sit to one side of the door. The patience with which he puts up with the man's appeals over all those years, the little cross-examinations, the acceptance of gifts, the gracious way he allows the man to curse aloud right near him the unlucky chance that has posted the door-keeper before the door – all this implies that he feels sympathy. Not every door-keeper would have acted like that. And in the end, when the man beckons to him, he bends down low to give him a chance to ask that one last question. And in his words "You're insatiable" there is merely a slight hint of impatience, for the door-keeper knows that the end is near. Many people go even further in this kind of exegesis and hold that the words "You're insatiable" imply a sort of friendly admiration tinged, though, with condescension. At any rate the door-keeper's character emerges differently from the way you see it!

'You know the story in more detail than I do, and you've known it longer,' K. said. They were both silent for a while. Then K. said:

'So you don't believe the man was deceived?'

'Don't misunderstand me,' the priest said, 'I'm only telling you the different opinions there are about it. You mustn't pay too much attention to them. The scripture is unalterable and the opinions are often merely an expression of despair on the part of the commentators. In this case one

opinion even has it that it is the door-keeper himself who is deceived.'

'That's going a bit far, isn't it?' K. said. 'What's the evidence for that?'

'The evidence for that,' answered the priest, 'is based on the premise of the door-keeper's simple-mindedness. It's argued that he doesn't know the inner world of the Law. He only knows the path to it, and the entrance to that path which he has constantly to patrol. The ideas he has of that inner world are felt to be childish, and it's thought that he himself fears what he aims to make the man afraid of. Yes, he fears it even more than the man, for the man wants nothing else except to enter, even when he has heard about the terrible door-keepers inside, whereas the door-keeper doesn't want to enter – at least we don't hear that he does. Other people, true, say that he must have already been inside, since, after all, once upon a time he was recruited to the service of the Law and that, they say, can only have happened inside. The answer to that is that he might well have been appointed to the post of door-keeper by someone calling from inside, and that, he could not have been right inside anyway, since he could not bear the sight of even the third door-keeper. Moreover, there is no report that in all those years he ever said anything about the inside, except for his remark about the door-keepers. He might have been forbidden to do so, but there is no mention of that either. All this implies, that he doesn't know anything about the appearance or the significance of the inside, and so he is deluding himself. He is even misled, some people argue, about the man from the country, for he is subordinate to this man and does not know it. You should still be able to remember many things that show he treats the man from the country as his subordinate. But, according to this version of the story, it is perfectly clear that it is, in fact, he who is subordinate. First and foremost, a free man is superior to one who is bound. Now the man from the country is actually free, he can go wherever he wants, it is only entry to the Law that is forbidden him, and then only by one individual, the door-keeper. If he sits on a stool beside the door and stays there for the rest of his life, this is a voluntary action, the story says nothing about compulsion. The door-keeper, on the other hand, is duty-bound to stay at his post, he may not go out into the country, nor apparently is he allowed to go into the interior of the Law, even if he wanted to. What is more, he is, it's true, in the service of the Law, yet he serves only this entrance, and therefore only this man, for whom alone this entrance is intended. For this reason, too, he is subordinate to the man. It must be assumed that, for many years, for the length of time it takes a man to reach maturity, his duty was in a way an empty one, for it is said that a man comes, that is a fully grown man, and that therefore the door-keeper had to wait a long time before the purpose of his service was fulfilled, and indeed he even had to wait till it pleased the man to come, for the man came of his own free will. But there is also the fact that his service ends only when the man is dead, and so the door-keeper remains subject to him until the very end. And it is stressed all the time that the door-keeper seems to be unaware of all this. But there's nothing remarkable about that, for according to this interpretation the doorkeeper is labouring under a much more serious delusion concerning his own duties.

'At the end, talking about the door, he says, "I shall now go and shut it," but at the beginning we are told that the door to the Law is standing open as always, but if it's always open, that is to say independently of the life-span of the man for whom it is intended, then it must be impossible for

the door-keeper to close it. Opinions differ about whether the door-keeper, in announcing that he is going to shut the door, is merely giving an answer, or is seeking to underline his official duty, or simply wants to cause the man sadness and remorse in his last moments. But many people are agreed that it will not be possible for him to close the door. They even believe that, at least at the very end, he is also subordinate to the man in the matter of knowledge, for the man from the country sees the radiance coming from the entrance to the Law, while the door-keeper, in his official capacity, presumably has to stand with his back to the entrance and, moreover, gives no indication that he has noticed any change.'

'That is soundly argued,' said K, who had repeated to himself in a low voice individual parts of the priest's explanation. 'It is soundly argued, and I now believe too that the door-keeper is under a delusion, but that doesn't mean that I've abandoned my earlier opinion, for to some extent the two opinions overlap. It makes no difference whether the door-keeper can see clearly or is under an illusion. I said the man was deceived. If the door-keeper sees things clearly, there might be some doubts about that, but if the door-keeper is under an illusion, his illusion must necessarily be communicated to the man. In that case the doorkeeper is not, it is true, a deceiver, but he is so simple-minded that he ought to be dismissed from his office immediately. You must remember that the delusion under which the door-keeper labours doesn't hurt him, but it does infinite damage to the man.'

'There's a contrary opinion to be mentioned there,' the priest said. 'Many people say, you see, that the story gives no one the right to pass judgement on the door-keeper. Whatever we may think of him, he is a servant of the Law, and therefore belongs to the Law, and that places him beyond human judgement. Nor should one, therefore, believe that the door-keeper is subordinate to the man. To be bound by one's office, even if that only means guarding the entrance to the Law, is incomparably more important than to live at liberty out in the world. The man is only coming to the Law, the door-keeper is already there. He has been appointed by the Law, and to doubt his worthiness would be to doubt the Law.'

'I don't agree with that point of view,' K. said, shaking his head, 'for if one does subscribe to it, one has to accept everything the door-keeper says as true. Yet that isn't possible, as you've shown very clearly yourself.'

'No,' the priest replied, '*one doesn't have to accept everything as true, one only has to accept it as necessary.*'

'What a gloomy point of view,' K. said '*The lie has become the order of the world.*'

K. said this definitively, but it was not his final judgement. He, was too weary to be able to grasp all the implications of the story, and he was unaccustomed to the train of thought into which it led him; they seemed unreal things which could be more appropriately discussed by a clique of Court official than by him. The basic story had become shapeless and he wanted to cut it from his mind. The priest, who now showed great tactfulness, tolerated this and accepted K's remark in silence, though K's opinion certainly did not agree with his own.

They walked on for a time in silence, K. kept close to the priest without knowing where they were. The torch he was holding had long since gone out. Once the silver statue of a saint shone directly in front of him, but only with the gleam of its own silver, and then immediately vanished into the

darkness. In order not to be completely dependent on the priest, K. asked him:

‘Aren’t we near the main entrance now?’

‘No,’ said the priest, ‘were a long way away. Do you want to go now?’ Although at that particular moment he had not been thinking of leaving, K. said at once:

‘Yes, of course I have to go. I’m Senior Clerk at a bank and they’re expecting me there. I only came to show a business friend from abroad round the cathedral.’

‘Well,’ the priest said, and held out his hand to K, ‘then go.’

‘I don’t think I can find my way alone in the dark,’ K. said.

‘Go to the wall on your left,’ said the priest. ‘Then keep along that wall, don’t leave it, and you’ll find a door.’ The priest had only taken a step or two away from him, but K. shouted very loudly:

‘Wait, please, just a moment!’

‘I’m waiting,’ said the priest.

‘Don’t you want anything more from me?’ K. asked.

‘No,’ said the priest.

‘You were being so kind to me earlier,’ K. said, ‘and you were explaining everything to me, but now you’re sending me off as if you weren’t interested in me.’

‘But you have to go,’ said the priest.

‘Well yes,’ K. said, ‘you must understand that.’

‘But you must first understand who I am,’ said the priest.

‘You’re the prison chaplain,’ K. said, moving closer to the priest. His immediate return to the bank was not as necessary as he had made out, he could perfectly well stay here a little longer.

‘Therefore *I belong to the Court*,’ the priest said. ‘So why should I want anything from you? The Court doesn’t want anything from you. *It receives you when you come, and it dismisses you when you go.*’

*The Trial* by Franz Kafka

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