

The cells were built either of wood and wattle or of slabs of stone. There was a chapel, and some room large enough for a refectory, and the whole was surrounded by a fence called "a cashel." Greatly did these monastic abodes differ in their simplicity from the grand foundations of subsequent ages. But they were homes of devotion combined with missionary effort, and when the latter ceased, the spiritual life of monasteries began to decay. Bede tells us that in these simple dwellings, the Irish monks used to receive Saxon students, and not only gave them gratuitous instruction, but entertained them without charge. What a contrast with the state of things now!

S. HARVEY GEM

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## ST. JOHN XIX. 11 : A PROBLEM AND A SOLUTION.

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**S.** T. COLERIDGE is reported, in his *Table Talk*, under date May 20, 1830, to have said:—

"The meaning of the expression, *εἰ μὴ ἦν σοι δεδομένον ἄνωθεν*, 'Except it were given thee *from above*,' in the 19th Chapter of St. John, verse 11, seems to me to have been generally and grossly mistaken. It is commonly understood as importing that Pilate could have no power to deliver Jesus to the Jews, unless it had been given him *by God*, which, no doubt, is true; but if that is the meaning, where is the force or connexion of the following clause, *διὰ τοῦτο*, 'therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin'? In what respect were the Jews more sinful in delivering Jesus up, *because* Pilate could do nothing except by God's leave? The explanation of Erasmus and Clarke, and some others, is very dry-footed. I conceive the meaning of our Lord to have been simply this, that Pilate would have had no power or jurisdiction—*ἐξουσίαν*—over him, if it had not been given by the Sanhedrin, the *ἄνω βουλή*, and, therefore, it was that the Jews had the greater sin."

The chief merit of this passage lies in its transmitting to posterity the views of a layman upon an acknowledged Scriptural perplexity; but its author was no ordinary layman. As a ripe scholar, a profound thinker, and the possessor of an acute brain, he takes rank with the foremost giant intellects of the nineteenth century. His acquaintance with Patristic literature was perhaps

comparable only to that of Gladstone, while the keenness of his vision into the heart of things was second to none. It was doubtless a consciousness of this mental superiority that gave to his utterances, both written and spoken, an appearance of an *ex cathedra* dogmatism which lesser lights misunderstood and resented. But his genius justified his manner, though neither implied infallibility, while both challenged and gained attention. And it is as a lay exegete that he is requisitioned to initiate this inquiry, a rôle for which he was eminently fitted by nature and culture. His interpretation of the stock difficulty involved in the verse under discussion is at once subtle and ingenious, as his summary rejection of that by Erasmus and Clarke is couched in characteristic language. That this interpretation would prove acceptable to other exegetes was not to be expected. Nor did it. Yet Coleridge was far more worthy of a hearing than were many of his professional critics. I do not, of course, include Westcott in this category, though he, too (1886), stigmatizes the philosopher-poet's theory of *ἀνωθεν* as "wholly unnatural, though it has the confident support of Coleridge." It has "the confident support" of others than Coleridge, as we shall see presently, when we come to examine the intrinsic value of the theory. Meanwhile let me divide this thesis under headings suggested and provided by the verse in question.

I. *Ἐξουσία*. In apposition (and opposition) to Pilate's arrogant use of the word in the preceding verse. But what "power"? Critics have, to the darkening of counsel, plied their waywardness over it. Thus, Luther, Calvin,<sup>1</sup> Baur, etc., limit its significance to Judicial Authority; whilst Beza, Gerhard and Tholuck confine it to Actual Power. But if *all* power be of God (Rom. xiii. 1) these distinctions are clearly superfluous. Again, Westcott and Lange argue that it is the possession and *exercise* of, not the *power* itself that were given to Pilate. "That which was 'given,' it must be noticed, is not the authority itself," says the former, "but the possession and exercise of it (*ἦν δεδομένον* not *ἦν δεδομένη*)." Why again this further distinction? For, assuredly, the two latter presuppose the gift or bestowal of the former, as this involves the

<sup>1</sup> "Rectius meo iudicio sentiunt, qui locum hunc restringunt ad magistratus officium. Stultam enim Pilati arrogantiam castigat Christus his verbis, quia perinde se extollat tanquam potestas ejus non a Deo esset." Calvin *ad locum*.

other two. And if "possession and exercise" be "given," what are they but the "power" itself? This *gratis asseritur* is obviously based upon the use by the inspired writer of ἦν δεδομένον instead of ἦν δεδομένη, the neuter in lieu of the feminine form. I submit that such a deduction is neither logical nor grammatical. The neuter form may be, as Lange insists, "more general than the feminine," but how do these two critics extract from or read into the first-named "possession" and "exercise" to the exclusion of "power"? To me the use of ἦν δεδομένον is simply an impersonal construction implying (by ellipse) the article τὸ or our pronoun "it"—as is supplied by our A. V., and as furnished by Beza thus:—<sup>1</sup>

"Non haberes auctoritatem in me ullam, nisi hoc tibi datum esset superne."

The Vulgate omits "hoc," but gives the same sense:—

"Non haberes potestatem adversum me ullam, nisi tibi datum esset desuper."

Compare also more modern versions of this verse:—

Italian: "Tu non avresti alcuna podestá contro a me, se *ciò* non ti fosse dato da alto."

Spanish: "Ninguna potestad tendrías contra mi, si *esto* no te fuese dado de arriba."

French: "Tu n'aurais aucun pouvoir sur moi, *s'il* ne t'était donné d'en haut."

German: "Du hättest keine Macht über mich, wenn sie dir nicht wäre von oben herab gegeben."

Norwegian: "Du havde aldeles ingen magt over mig, dersom den ikke var given dig ovenfra."

I may add that, in addition to the above, similar renderings are supplied by the Welsh, Irish, Russian, and Bask versions.

Finally, Westcott draws a further hazy distinction between "power" and the "right to exercise authority." What are they, too, but synonymous terms? The whole contention, therefore, is self-destructive by its subtlety, and would have escaped allusion here were it not for the weight attached to its author's name. It is mere literary jugglery or camouflage to bandy these words about

<sup>1</sup> Another neuter form (as supplied by Meyer) would be τὸ ἐξουσιάζειν κατ' ἐμοῦ, but this likewise "includes possession of authority or power, together with the manner in which it is exercised."

indiscriminately whilst admitting that "power is a divine trust" as evidenced by the *διὰ τοῦτο*.

2. Upon the question of Pilate's unconsciousness as an agent of the Divine purpose I judge it futile to speculate. We know nothing absolutely about it, though I would hazard the opinion that he ranks with Balaam, Caiaphas, and Gamaliel, all instruments, conscious or unconscious, of "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Pilate's guilt, which lay in his conscious condemnation of an innocent man (vv. 4, 6), was not affected by this surmise.

3. *ἀνωθεν* = from above. The rock upon which the conflicting views of expositors split. Coleridge and Semler take the meaning of this expression to be "from the Sanhedrin, a higher tribunal, to the Roman Court," which Westcott declares to be "wholly unnatural," yet he owns that Caiaphas "represented the theocracy." But is it so? "From above" may very well mean "from a higher tribunal," which would very naturally indicate the Sanhedrin—a tribunal higher in the Jewish polity than that of the Roman Court, and which, like the Mediæval Christian Church, passed its victim from the ecclesiastical on to the civil authority. This view is less improbable than Usteri's opinion that the Roman Emperor is referred to. And I do not contend that the word may not be taken as the equivalent of *ἐκ θεοῦ* or *ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς*, but I do maintain that Coleridge's exegesis is not to be so glibly rejected as "wholly unnatural."

4. *διὰ τοῦτο* = therefore, on this account, for this reason. Coleridge may well ask "where is the force or connexion of this clause?" if the common, or orthodox, interpretation is to be enforced. The expression has both a retrospective and prospective action, qualifying what precedes and succeeds it. Because power, or authority, or their exercise was given to thee, "therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." But why and who? What had the grant of power to Pilate from a higher authority—whether God or the Sanhedrin—to do with the guilt of the deliverers of Christ to him? Herein lay Coleridge's difficulty, which is only solved on the hypothesis that the higher authority is represented by Jews. Of course, as he admits, primarily and ultimately, the power to judge and condemn Christ, to whomsoever given, came from God by actual concession or passive permission—as it does in all exercise of power here below, i.e., directly or indirectly, but

why should, and how does, the power given to Pilate directly (if it be so) by God to work out His purposes accentuate the guilt of the deliverer or deliverers? This was Coleridge's dilemma and it is mine. Pilate's guilt was engendered by violation of conscience and cowardice, and the fact of his being empowered and used as a channel of the Divine will did not modify, still less condone, it. It was *sui generis* and stands alone. But how, as *διὰ τοῦτο* distinctly seems to hint, can this misuse of authority render the deliverers the more guilty? Coleridge's answer is, to my mind, the only satisfactory solution of the problem, which leads to my last paragraph.

5. ὁ παραδιδούς. This is really the crux of the whole contention. Is the phrase one of multitude or not? And if either, who was, or were, the delinquents? Was it Judas, or Annas, or Caiaphas, or they collectively with the Sanhedrin, or the Jewish nation? Lange renders the expression as in the present, "because the act is just going on" (this, however, is immaterial), and decides that the deliverer is "unaptly" considered by some to be Judas "who is now out of sight." And Westcott equally peremptorily pronounces that "there can be no reference to Judas in the surrender to Pilate (*to thee*)." Very likely not, though all are not of that view, and, after all, Judas, the arch-traitor, did deliver the Lord up *indirectly* alike to Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate. But I am not unwilling to concede that in all probability (not in certainty) he was not included in this condemnation. His treason was unique and apart from that of either Annas, Caiaphas or the Jews. Certainly the action of Annas and Caiaphas was more direct, yet it must not be overlooked that others shared in that action. "The responsibility for the act," to use Westcott's verdict, may be "concentrated" in Caiaphas, but most assuredly Annas, the Sanhedrin and the Jewish nation were implicated in that act, for I conceive that though the former acted on his own official responsibility, he fully represented the latter, as *primus inter pares*, that is, as head and spokesman of both bodies. If Caiaphas was the one referred to by the Lord, his, then, would be the "greater sin," but as he was not so designated by name the matter is clearly open to conjecture. Moreover, Annas seems not to be without some share in the delivery of the Lord to Pilate, for in Luke iii. 2, both he and Caiaphas are called "High Priests," and in Acts iv. 6, the former only is termed such,

On this, Edersheim (*Life and Times of Jesus*, Vol. II, p. 547) has a pregnant passage:—

“Annas was as resolutely bent on His [Christ’s] death as his son-in-law, though with his characteristic cunning and coolness, not in the hasty, bluff manner of Caiaphas.<sup>1</sup> It was probably from a desire that Annas might have the conduct of the business, or from the active, leading part which Annas took in the matter; perhaps for even more prosaic and practical reasons, such as that the Palace of Annas was nearer to the place of Jesus’ capture, and that it was desirable to dismiss the Roman soldiery as quickly as possible—that Christ was first brought to Annas, and not to the actual High-Priest.”

From this I venture to maintain that the share of Annas in the “greater sin” is within the province of argument, for *Ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν ὁ Ἄννας δεδεμένον πρὸς Καϊάφαν τὸν ἀρχιερέα* (xviii. 24).

I come now to the Sanhedrin. This is Edersheim’s view of their complicity (*Ibidem*, p. 556, 7):—

“Alike Jewish and Christian evidence establish the fact that Jesus was, not formally tried and condemned by the Sanhedrin. . . . But although Christ was not tried and sentenced in a formal meeting of the Sanhedrin, there can, alas! be no question that His condemnation and death were the work, if not of the Sanhedrin, yet of the Sanhedrists—of the whole body of them (‘all the Council’), in the sense of expressing what was the judgment and purpose of all the Supreme Council and Leaders of Israel, with only very few exceptions.”

It is clear from this weighty passage that the distinction between a formal and informal trial is too subtle to affect the fact that the Sanhedrin did actually, in conjunction with their Chiefs, condemn the Lord and deliver Him to Pilate, and so is a confirmation of the *τὸ συνέδριον ὄλον* of Matthew xxvi. 59, and the more emphatic line in Mark xv. i. “*ὄλον τὸ συνέδριον . . . παρέδωκαν τῷ Πιλάτῳ*.” This is the *ἄνω βουλή* quoted by Coleridge, and the strength of his view—that the “whole Council” were the deliverers, and on them, as a Jewish assembly, rested the “greater sin.” His idea seems to me to be that they constituted the jury, and that Caiaphas was both Judge and Foreman, and directed their verdict by his famous utterance recorded in xviii. 14. The chief difficulty which this interpretation has to confront is, of course, the Lord’s words, *ὁ παραδιδούς*, being in the singular, which, in my view, is met by widening it so as to embrace alike Annas, Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin

<sup>1</sup> Dante, of course, places Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin in Hell (*Inf.* xxiii. 115–123) amongst the Hypocrites of the Eighth Circle, but metes out a special punishment to Caiaphas which “seems,” observes Dean Plumptre, “to reproduce the thought of *Isaiah* li. 23.” This consisted of being impaled naked on a cross, and experiencing “The weight of whoso passeth by his feet.”

and the Jewish people. Stephen himself mulcted the Sanhedrin with the crime (Acts vii. 52) as *προδότηι καὶ φονεῖς*, as did Peter in Acts iv. 10, *ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε*; while the *τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν* (Matt. xxvii. 25) of the Jewish people besmirched them with it also, in addition to Peter's charges in Acts iii. 15, *τὸν δὲ ἀρχηγὸν τῆς ζωῆς ἀπεκτείνετε*. And a minor objection may be unearthed from Acts iii. 17: *οἶδα ὅτι κατὰ ἄγνοιαν ἐπράξατε, ὥσπερ καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες ὑμῶν*. Is this to be regarded as either a deliberate and inspired plenary absolution of the Jews and their rulers from their criminal share in the anti-judicial murder of the Christ on the score of ignorance, or a mere human gush of generosity wrongly directed? Neither, assuredly. To me it simply aggravated their guilt, for both people and rulers—the latter especially, as they, at least, *should* have discovered their Messiah through their prophets. Nor can the Apostle have meant to absolve them from this guilt, but merely to point out that a way of escape was not precluded by it. Culpable ignorance was their then normal state, but, for the reason just alleged, final obduracy, as Lange well points out, was not to be imputed to all, for many passed through the open door of repentance and pardon. Neither can the First (if genuinely transmitted) of the Seven last Words (Luke xxiii. 34)—*Πάτερ, ἄφεσ αὐτοῖς· οὐ γὰρ οἶδασι τί ποιοῦσι*—which undoubtedly was uttered for the Jews and not the Roman soldiery, be consistently understood in any other sense. Some theologians hold that ignorance, apart from malice, or which acts *in bona fide*, excuses guilt, but malice and ignorance were here conjoined. And though, unlike human legislation, divine laws may attenuate *bona fide* ignorance, yet, from the view expressed above, I am disposed to deny this quality to the Jews and their rulers. Thus, in my contention, this third obstacle is shorn of its force.

But to close.

I suggest that, on the evidence adduced and sifted, Coleridge's contention stands unassailed, viz., that the power given to Pilate came directly from the Sanhedrin, and that they with their people incurred "the greater sin," which they would not have done had Pilate condemned the Lord *proprio motu* or directly by Divine impulsion. Any other exegesis renders the *διὰ τοῦτο* meaningless—which is utterly unthinkable.