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**THE ELDERSHIP IN THE DAYS OF JOHN  
KNOX**

BY THE REV. JAMES STALKER, D. D.,

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JOHN KNOX may be called the creator of the office of elder for Scotland, Ireland and America; there having been nothing of the kind in the ecclesiastical system which he displaced. He himself, indeed, would have expressed the fact otherwise, for his contention was that he had invented or created nothing, but simply restored the lost image—or, as he was fond of calling it, "the face"—of a Church found in the Word of God. None of the other Reformers—not even Calvin—insisted as rigorously on the principle that nothing should be introduced into the Church, or tolerated therein, which is not sanctioned by this divine authority. Other Reformers, like Luther and the founders of the Church of England, were content with excluding whatever is forbidden in the Bible; but Knox went much further, admitting nothing for which actual Scriptural warrant could not be quoted.

Thus going back to the New Testament to discover the office-bearers of the Church of Christ, he found there three outstanding offices—Ministers, Elders, Deacons. A fourth he was willing to acknowledge—that of Teachers or Doctors, nearly corresponding with professors of divinity in our present system. Also, he admitted, as temporary expedients, necessary in the unsettled condition of the Church at that period and on account of the great scarcity of competent ministers, two other offices; the one being that of the Reader, who, in parishes where no preacher was procurable, might read the Scriptures and the Common Prayers at the meetings for worship; and the other that of the Superintendent, who should have charge of an extended district, the size

## “THE GREATER SIN.”

BY REV. PARKE P. FLOURNOY, D. D., BETHESDA, MD.

The discussion, under this title, by Dr. Alex'r Eagar, in the July *Expositor*, of the expression used in John 19: 11, must have attracted much attention by its ingenious and original treatment of a difficult and long misinterpreted passage of Scripture. Perhaps unnecessary pains were taken to show that the sin referred to was that of Caiaphas, which few can ever have doubted; but this demonstration of the erroneousness of the more generally accepted view of the passage is worthy of commendation. There are features of the solution proposed, however, which at least one reader finds himself unable to approve. The adjective (“greater”) is in the comparative degree, and a natural question is with what sin is this sin of Caiaphas compared and pronounced “the greater.” The writer says the sin of Pilate. But one feels bound to ask what could be our Saviour's object in informing Pilate that Caiaphas' sin was greater than his, and it would seem very strange that the information that *his* sin was less heinous than that of Caiaphas would fill Pilate with alarm and make him anxious to release Christ and get rid of a responsibility which now began to fill him with a strange dread, soldier and cruel man that he was. Besides all this, Pilate's great sin of condemning Christ to crucifixion had not yet been committed, and could not at this stage be compared with any other. So the common interpretation and that of this writer would seem to be equally at fault in making it appear that the sins compared were those of Caiaphas and Pilate.

But this is not the only difficulty about accepting Dr. Eagar's explanation; for under his interpretation the Greek word, *anōthen*, is made to receive a new meaning in being paraphrased “from a higher court.” Liddell and Scott seem to have found only two meanings for it in all Greek literature, one having reference to direction in space, “from above,” and the other to time, “from the beginning.” Combined with *palin* in Gal. iv., 9., it has been translated “again,” it is true, but *palin* by itself means “again,” and the *anōthen* must have been added to indi-

cate that the Galatians had gone back to a bad "beginning" in subjection to "the weak and beggarly elements."

Our Saviour is here speaking to Pilate as "the Son of God" and as the king of a kingdom "not of this world," and is giving him a most solemn warning of the terrible nature of the sin he is urged to commit; and no mind, unembarrassed by a theory to be supported, would understand this *anochen* "from above"—as having any meaning below the very highest—"from God." Pilate is, evidently, for the moment, impressed with the fact that he is face to face with a superhuman being. The accusation of the Jews that Christ said that He was "the Son of God" (because of which Pilate "was the more afraid"), Christ's own assertion of a supernal kingship, combined with the influence of that presence before which those about to arrest Him "went backward and fell to the ground," must have caused Pilate to feel an awe such as he had never experienced before. When Christ assured him, then, that he would have no authority (*exousia*) at all to try Him if it had not been "given him from above" to do it, he could think of no source of authority but that of God. The idea that anything coming from the provincial tribunal of the Jews, which had not even the power of life and death, to him, the representation of the power of the Roman empire, being "from above" could never have entered his mind, and the suggestion of such a thing would have impressed him with a feeling very far from awe, indeed. The high priest must have seemed in Pilate's eyes little more than a political puppet of the Emperor, whose representative he himself was. A prisoner might indeed be delivered *up* to him by the high priest as head of the Sanhedrin, but he could hardly think of any orders coming *down* to him from such a source without a feeling of amusement. No, Pilate made no such mistake as this. Everything combined to impress him with the fact that this was no ordinary prisoner before him, and when Christ spoke of it being "given from above" that Pilate should try Him, and that but for this he could have had no jurisdiction in the case, the Governor must have felt, however indistinctly, the mysterious fact that here was one who was "delivered by the determinate counsel of God," and that he was warned of the danger of putting forth a "wicked hand" for the perpetration of a judicial crime of no ordinary grade.

Now, I think we can appreciate the tremendous force of the

word "therefore" *dia touto* "on account of this," that is this fact, namely, that the prisoner was such a person that Pilate even, the representative of the Emperor, could have no authority over Him, except by divine permission—"given from above." For this reason—namely, that Christ was such a person—the sin of Caiaphas was greater, infinitely greater, than would have been the sin of delivering up to the Roman Governor an ordinary innocent prisoner. That would be a judicial crime, indeed, but this crime is that of compassing the murder of the promised Messiah, the Son of God, the King of the Kingdom of Heaven. "Therefore, on account of *this*, he that delivered me up to thee hath the greater sin," was the warning which made Pilate "from thenceforth seek to release Him." Because the prisoner was such a person Caiaphas' sin in delivering him up was the "greater," and now Pilate felt that if he condemned Him to death *his* crime would be as much the greater on account of *this*.

The crime of Caiaphas, the principal, was undoubtedly greater than that of Pilate, the tool, and this fact has misled the commentators.

The object in seeking an interpretation of this passage which will commend itself as true, is, as Dr. Eagar well expresses it, to "find such a nexus as will justify the use of the causative *dia touto* between the two clauses." I think it must be plain to every reader that we have found it in *Christ's person* and position, by reason of which He was *above all human jurisdiction*. The question is not, as has been said, the "relative guilt of the persons who brought on the tragedy of Calvary," but the relative guilt of Caiaphas in bringing on this, which has been impressively called "The World's Tragedy," and the bringing on of the tragedy of a single human life by an ordinary judicial murder. *Dia touto* on account of *this* the sin of Caiaphas in delivering Him up to Pilate was the greater. On account of *this* would Pilate's sin be the greater if he yielded to the powerful pressure to condemn Him to death; and it is not strange that "thenceforth"—from the moment of this warning—"he sought to release Him." He was too weak to withstand the pressure.

He who stood before Pontius Pilate stands to-day in the court of many a mind—still on trial. The warning to Pilate is not without its significance for each one who has not yet answered the question, "What think ye of Christ?"