

significant change of name,¹ was calculated to rouse the jealousy of his elder brothers, and that their murder of their father was therefore part of an attempt to assert their rights and seize the kingdom for themselves. That Esarhaddon had to maintain his throne against their attacks will be seen in the inscriptions of that king given in the next paper of this series.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

PETER AND JOHN BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN.

ACTS iv. 7-20.

THAT the two Apostles who had been summoned to appear before the rulers of Jerusalem exhibited, in presence of their judges, a brave and manly bearing, and returned an answer worthy of their position in the Church, is manifest at a glance. It was equally apparent to the authorities at whose bar the two brethren stood on their defence. They saw the boldness of Peter and John, and the phenomenon surprised them very much; such self-possession and resoluteness in persons of their humble position, unlearned laics, before the awe-inspiring power of the world, being quite out of the common course. The startling fact was provocative of reflection. How, the Sanhedrists asked themselves, "how is it that these two men, whom we have known as illiterate persons of vulgar station, are able to carry themselves thus in presence of their superiors?" And the explanation which occurred to them was this: "They had been with my knees," or "child of my blessings," indicates something like a transfer of the privileges of the firstborn.

¹ I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Sayce for the meaning of the new name which Sennacherib mentions in his will, as signifying "Assur is lord, the establisher of the son." Mr. Sayce reads "*Etil*" for "*Ebil*," but this leaves the meaning unaltered.

Jesus." That circumstance, once it was recognized, was regarded by the rulers as a sufficient solution of the puzzle. It was by no means intended as a compliment. The notion of these rulers was that the followers and quondam companions of the crucified Nazarene were likely to be desperate men, fit for any enterprise requiring audacity, and reckless of consequences to themselves or others. In important respects they mistook the character of the Apostles who stood at their bar. Peter and John were not, as they imagined, coarse fanatics. They *had* strong convictions, but they were perfectly sober-minded. They had not the bull-dog courage of fanatics. They were, naturally, timid men, who had been brought to their present temper by a moral discipline of which mere zealots have no experience. In one point, however, the authorities were not mistaken, viz., in recognizing a close causal connection between the present bearing of the two Apostles and their past intimacy with Jesus. Beyond doubt their present moral courage was the natural effect of that bygone fellowship. There was much in that fellowship directly and powerfully tending to foster a heroic temper and type of character; how much, one can realize only after deliberate consideration of what was involved in companionship with Jesus. We propose, therefore, to enter into some detail to illustrate and establish the proposition that fellowship with Christ was the secret of the moral courage and unflinching fidelity to truth which characterized the Apostles in general, and the two pillar Apostles in particular. The study will repay the trouble; for it can be utilized for other purposes besides the one immediately in view; lending itself readily at once to homiletic and to apologetic uses.

Companionship with Jesus, then, tended to develop courage in the Disciples in the following ways:—

1. Intercourse with Jesus during the years of the personal ministry formed a *friendship* between Him and his disciples

which would make them in after days sensitive to all that affected his honour. The two men referred to in the story before us had been long enough with Jesus to have contracted, in a perfectly natural and intelligible way, a strong affection for Him. Now, according to the written word of one of these same brethren, "perfect love casteth out fear." It is, we know, the tendency of all powerful emotions to raise one above considerations of fear. Our hearts are cowardly only when they are cold and passionless. When they are warmed with some commanding passion, we can all do things which, in our cooler moments, we should never dare to attempt. The passion of anger, for example, kindled into a blaze by some flagrant wrong, will embolden a man to denounce and resist iniquity; and, when it serves such an end, it is a most holy passion. On this account nothing in the life of our Lord gives a true Christian more sincere satisfaction than that act of zeal by which, at the commencement of his ministry, He cleansed the temple with a whip of small cords. And, as wrath casteth out fear, so also does love. What will not a mother do to save the life of her child, or a son to defend the honour of his father? How little effort it cost Naboth to decline to part with his ancestral inheritance, though he could not but know that he thereby incurred the displeasure of an arbitrary, unrighteous despot! What will a patriot not dare for the sake of his country? Esther ventured to go into the inner court of the palace uncalled for, aware that the procedure was contrary to Court etiquette, and that she should die unless the king happened to be in the humour to be gracious. Love to her people cast out fear for her own life, and helped her to form the heroic resolve: "I will go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish." Precisely similar was the action of strong affection for Jesus in the case of the two Apostles. It made them bold in his honour and cause. The question

had been put to them, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" The alternative open was: to glorify their former Master by telling the truth—that, by his name and aid, the miracle of healing had been done; or to escape odium and risk to life by being silent as to the cause, or by explaining the whole matter away. How could men who had been with Jesus so long, and been loved by Him so faithfully, and to whom, in turn, they had been so deeply attached, even for a moment hesitate which alternative they should choose? It was such an opportunity of magnifying the name of their Lord in the world as his former companions would not for any personal advantage let slip. Therefore they returned the noble answer recorded by St. Luke.

2. Long continued and constant converse with Jesus tended gradually to imbue his disciples with his *spirit*. It is written that "evil communications corrupt good manners;" but the converse is equally true. Communication with the good improves manners. There is an imitative tendency in man, in virtue of which the characters of those who live much together become assimilated. The assimilative process affects not merely outward habit or opinions, but temper, feeling, disposition. The weaker nature becomes assimilated in a very pervasive manner to that of the stronger; that of the son to the Father's, that of the disciple to the Master's. Hence there is a recognizable type of character common to each family; and, in a less degree, yet perceptibly, to each school of thought, and to each religious denomination. It cannot be doubted that this principle of assimilation was at work in the school of Jesus, insensibly, yet surely, moulding the spiritual nature of his disciples. Susceptible souls, like theirs, could not be for so considerable a time under Christ's influence without imbibing his spirit in various directions; and, especially, in the direction of the virtues of truth, sincerity, and unflinch-

ing fidelity to duty. They had opportunities of witnessing their Master's many conflicts with the unbelieving and gain-saying people, priests and rulers of Judæa. They observed the calm, fearless, dignified way in which He rebuked their hypocrisy, confounded their tricks, answered their captious questions, and defied their threats, clamour, and violence. Men who had been spectators of such scenes could hardly fail to catch infection from the holy zeal and courage of Jesus, unless they were utterly devoid of the capacity of even appreciating such virtues, in which case they would never have joined Christ's society or remained in his company. We could not reasonably expect comparatively common men ever to equal the Incomparable One in courage; we should rather expect to find them to the last falling immeasurably behind Him in moral grandeur. But we should certainly expect men who had been with Jesus for years, to shew, on fitting occasion, some measure of their Master's spirit; the same devotion to truth, the same zeal for God, the same superiority to the fear of man, the same serenity and dignity of bearing in presence of the powers of this world; the same in kind and quality, if not in degree. And that is just what we do find in Peter and John before the Sanhedrin.

3. Fellowship with Jesus tended to foster in the Disciples moral courage by affording them the opportunity of getting their minds filled with his *sayings*. The words of Christ were living words, words that went into the conscience like arrows, and into the heart like coals of fire. Men who had heard these words spoken by his lips, and had given them lodgement in their minds, would not easily get rid of them. They might forget them for a season; they might sin against them under temptation: but there they would be still, coming to remembrance after shortcomings, causing feelings of self-condemnation, and rendering repetition of the offence difficult. The remark applies to Christ's words on

all subjects, but very specially to those we have at present in view. Such as these, viz., "Fear not them who kill the body, but fear him (Satan) who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven." "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or fathers, or mothers, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall inherit everlasting life." "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of the Father which speaketh in you." And so on, for we have not space to quote all the heart-stirring words of this kind, at once stern and comforting, which, treasured up in the memories of the Apostles, must have greatly helped to embolden them in the task of preaching truth to an unbelieving and hostile world.

4. A fourth respect in which fellowship with Jesus tended to foster in his Disciples the spirit of fidelity and courage is this; that, as the companions of the Son of Man, they were gradually becoming accustomed to *isolation*. The followers of Jesus were a *small* company. The "little flock" was one of the pet names the Master gave his companions. They were also a *lonely* company; like a flock of sheep in the wilderness. They were separated outwardly from society by their mode of life, which was that of wanderers moving about from place to place, and not tarrying long in any particular locality. They were, moreover, a *peculiar* people; peculiar in their thoughts, and in their habits; nonconformists in reference to several prevalent religious customs; above all, peculiar in their

attachment to One whom few understood or believed in. They were consequently a despised and disliked people. Fashion, custom, and the majority were not only not on their side, but were more or less decidedly hostile to them. In course of time men so situated will learn to bear being alone. They acquire by degrees the power to hold fast their convictions, and to pursue their own aims without being disturbed by the thought that public opinion is not in their favour; to do what they think right without being scared by censure; to have joy in themselves, and to do without much sympathy, while valuing the sympathy of all intelligent sincere well-wishers. By the time the men who had been with Jesus were called on to perform the duties of the apostolate, they had pretty thoroughly learnt this lesson. They had become crucified to the world's praise and blame, and concerned solely about serving their Lord. They feared not the face of priest or prince. They were elevated to a moral altitude from which all men appeared to be on a level, and the glory of man looked very paltry. The power, the pride, the prejudice, even the wisdom, of the world, before which most quail, they could regard with undaunted undazzled eye. They could dare to ask, Who or what are the principalities and powers of earth, the established beliefs and customs of nations, in comparison with the interests of the Divine Kingdom? All this, because they had been companions of Jesus, the solitary One, who was only not alone because the Father in heaven was ever with Him, nearest when men were furthest away.

5. One other circumstance connected with the companionship of the Disciples with Jesus, tending to account for their after heroism, remains to be noticed. During the time they were with Jesus the Apostles passed through a terrible crisis, more trying and perilous by far than any which afterwards befel or could possibly befall them. The great crisis

of their life was the awful time when their Master was crucified. In comparison with the tragic experience of that never to be forgotten day of blackness and darkness, how insignificant the tribulations of the present minor crisis in the fortunes of the two Apostles! Then all was at stake that was worth living for—faith, hope, the Divine kingdom, the object of a sincere if ignorant enthusiasm, the very character and credit of their beloved Lord. Now it is only their own personal safety that is involved. Their Master has risen from the dead and been exalted to glory, according to their firm and well grounded belief. By these events his righteousness has been vindicated, and the triumph of his cause ensured. There is nothing to shake faith either in the Kingdom or in the King; but merely a call for firmness in defence of a cause which they certainly know to be of God, and therefore destined to overcome all opposition, whatever may become of them. Men who had come safely through the former storm without suffering spiritual shipwreck, though not without temporary damage to the vessel, ran no risk of serious disaster from the present less violent gale. Warriors, whose Waterloo lies behind them, are not likely to play the coward in a petty skirmish.

On all these grounds it was to be expected that men, who had been companions of Jesus, would play a heroic part when placed in circumstances such as those indicated in the narrative. The boldness of Peter and John was the natural product of fellowship with Jesus. If, now, these characteristics were not exceptional and peculiar to the Apostles, but capable of being reproduced in the experience of Christians generally, we should be justified in finding therein the rationale of moral courage in all ages and circumstances of the Church. We might turn the observation of the Sanhedrists concerning the two Apostles at their bar, into a universal truth,—to the effect that, fellowship with Christ is the secret of Christian fidelity. The question therefore is:

Is such a fellowship now possible, or was it possible only for those who were contemporaries and companions of the Lord? Perhaps the truth here lies between two extremes. To assert the possibility of a fellowship with Christ now, in all respects similar to that of Peter and John, might savour of mystic extravagance. On the other hand, to deny the possibility of a fellowship in any respect similar to that of the Apostles, would be to set ourselves in opposition at once to experience and to reason. For it is certain that many men, of highly respected name in the Christian Church, have claimed to have had experience of a fellowship resembling that of the Apostles in its most marked characteristics; and the bearing of these men in positions of trial has been such as to justify the assertion, that heroic fidelity is the effect of intimate communion with the Lord and Head of the Church. Martyrdom and mystic fellowship with Christ have usually gone together; and, if we were to judge from the utterances of some martyrs and confessors, we might arrive at the conclusion that it is possible for a believing man, living in any age, to put himself in all respects, except that of mere bodily presence, in the position of the men who had been with Jesus. The rapturous utterances, however, of a Christian under tribulation, of a Samuel Rutherford for example, writing from the Bass Rock, ought to be taken perhaps with abatement. It must be allowed that, in some respects, we cannot now repeat the experience and enjoy the benefit of the companions of Jesus. The remark applies very specially to the second of the above mentioned particulars, the operation of the law of sympathy. We may surpass the Disciples in spiritual insight into the character of Christ; but we can hardly feel its power as intensely as they did who were eyewitnesses of its manifestations. It is one thing to see a brave, true, heroic life enacting itself on this earth, and, as we stand by the actor's side, to feel the holy passion

for righteousness, which is its animating motive, passing by contagion into our souls; another, and a very different thing, merely to read the story of such a life written in a book.

Yet, with all necessary deductions, it may soberly be affirmed that fellowship with Christ, after the manner of his companions, is still possible, and with similar practical effects. We who have not seen Christ in the flesh can *love* Him with intense affection. The affection needs for its genesis, not knowledge after the flesh, but knowledge of the Crucified, the consciousness of redemption. Witness Paul, whose knowledge of Jesus after the flesh was at most slight; possibly he had no such knowledge at all. Yet was he certainly not behind the chiefest of the Apostles in respect to his devotion to the person and cause of his Lord. That was due to the "faith-mysticism" by whose inspiration he was able to say, "I am crucified with Christ;" a faith-mysticism repeatable in our experience. We can also know Christ's *words* almost as well, in some respects even better, than his earthly companions. They are recorded in the Gospels with much fulness, in all their marvellous beauty, and depth, and many-sidedness. And they are still living words though written on the dead page. They are, indeed, too living for the comfort of many. Not a few Christians are actually afraid of Christ's words; hence they either dilute them with watery comments, to persuade themselves that his sterner sayings are not to be taken quite as He uttered them; or they deliberately ignore the austere side of his teaching, and confine their attention to the merely benevolent gracious aspects; so making it possible for them to subside into a comfortable Antinomianism, flattering themselves that they are "saved," while making no conscientious endeavour to live a truly Christian life according to the doctrine of the Saviour. Both classes bear emphatic, though unconscious, testimony to the power

of such sayings as we quoted in the earlier part of this paper over the conscience even at this late date. Their power is so great that the unfaithful cannot afford to come under its influence; it is necessary for their comfort that in this respect they should deliberately resolve not to be "with Jesus." Once more, it is possible for us to become partakers in Christ's *solitariness*, and so learn, like the Apostles, to bear isolation. We have but to consent to become his disciples, and to learn impartially the lessons He has to teach. No faithful disciple of Christ will find himself often in the crowd following fashion; he will often find himself alone, or in the minority, needing greatly the faculty of doing without the sympathy of numbers and of bearing criticism and contradiction. And every faithful disciple will be daily learning the needed art. Fidelity will not only isolate, but give strength to bear isolation. Another thing the faithful disciple will learn betimes, viz., the wisdom to know when to be peculiar. A most important virtue; for it is an utterly mistaken notion that Christian sanctity consists in indiscriminate singularity. It is a great part of Christian wisdom to know when to be singular; and unfortunately many are singular at the wrong time and in the wrong things, straining out gnats and swallowing camels. The disciple who is willing to be an impartial learner in Christ's school will at once acquire the power to stand alone and the skill to know when to stand alone. He will learn to be devout without superstition, holy without Pharisaism, temperate without asceticism, pure without precisianism, earnest without moroseness, firm in conviction without uncharitableness, uncompromising in fundamentals, and accommodating in all else; in a word, to be sober, righteous, and godly after the fashion of Jesus, not after the fashion of the world, whether religious or irreligious. And, let us add, all this is necessary in order to be a Christian of the true, heroic, primitive stamp,

soldierly in spirit, and able, when needful, to endure hardship. Such capacity is even yet needed, though it has to be exercised under new conditions and in novel forms. Courage figures as a cardinal virtue in the New Testament: "Add to your faith *bravery*," writes St. Peter; and cowardice is a correspondingly cardinal vice: St. John places *cowards* at the head of the black list of sinners whose place is the fiery lake. Courage is needed still. It is not possible even now to be a right good Christian by merely following fashion, even the best fashion going. Wherever there is a fashion there is a world; and, as the late Canon Kingsley shrewdly remarked, wherever there is a world, any kind of world—political, literary, commercial, gay, or religious—there is a good deal of the devil. Therefore at all times he who would be a Christian of the antique stamp, must cultivate the power of thinking and acting for himself, the art of steering by the star of eternal truth and duty, instead of coasting timorously along the shores of current opinion and established custom. And the way to acquire these accomplishments is to be "with Jesus."

One word now on the *apologetic* use of this incident in Apostolic history. It may be utilized for apologetic purposes in two ways. It contributes somewhat to the refutation of the Tübingen theory of the origin of the Book of Acts, according to which it is a literary invention in the interest of conciliation, constructed on the plan of making Peter, in the first part, act as like Paul as possible; and Paul, in the second part, as like Peter as possible; so bringing the two parties, Judaists and Universalists, together in the person of their heads. Now, granting the feasibility of the scheme, it may be assumed that the Writer, supposed to be a Paulinist, would take care to work out his plan so as not to compromise the standing or weaken the influence of Paul as an Apostle. Yet we find things in the Acts which do tend in that direction to a degree which excludes any

other motive in writing than a desire to record the facts as they were, whatever their apparent tendency. More than once the Writer relates incidents in which stress is laid on companionship with Jesus as a qualification for the apostleship.¹ How hard that requirement bore on the Apostle of the Gentiles, who had no such companionship! And here, in this narrative, we find emphasis laid on having been with Jesus, as tending to give to those who enjoyed the favour an exceptional position. The rulers meant it in a bad sense, doubtless; but believers would read the record in a good sense, and find in it the meaning that the men who had been with Jesus were invested with an altogether unique dignity and importance. How hard again upon Paul, who had to fight in his own defence on this very score against his bitter foes the Judaists! Surely a Paulinist author might have omitted these sections, or modified them, seeing he, *ex hypothesi*, took such liberties with historical truth!

The other apologetic use of this incident is to bring into doubt the foundation of the whole superstructure of Tübingen criticism, viz., the alleged radical contrariety between the original Apostles and Paul in their conception of Christianity. According to the theory the Eleven were, one and all, narrow Judaists. Now is that likely when we consider the principles enunciated in this paper as helping to explain the bearing of the two Apostles before the Sanhedrin? We remarked that, through close communion with their Master, they gradually imbibed his spirit of moral courage. But if there be any truth in this law of moral influence, and that there is few will question, its scope cannot be limited to the one virtue of courage. There were other things not less characteristic of Jesus than courage. There was, very notably, the universalistic spirit of his religion, admitted by Dr. Baur himself. Is it credible

¹ Acts i. 21; x. 41.

that the men who had followed Christ for years, utterly failed to catch the infection of that worldwide philanthropy, revealed not alone, or even chiefly, in words, but in looks, tones, actions, general bearing, in everything, in short, by which spirit is manifested? We cannot believe it. That the Companions of Jesus were in after days narrow Judaists is as incredible as that they were cowards; and both are alike incredible for the same reason, viz., because "they had been with Jesus."

A. B. BRUCE.

BRIEF NOTICES.

THE CAMBRIDGE BIBLE FOR SCHOOLS has been enriched by a *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* from the pen of Dr. Plumptre. It is not perhaps the most suitable class-book for boys and girls, for it deals with the most "questionable" of Scriptures in a most ingenious and speculative spirit; but of that surely those of us who are no longer boys or girls need not complain. *Students* of Ecclesiastes will be charmed to find Dr. Plumptre adopting the hypothesis of Hitzig and Tyler, and contending, with an originality which makes the hypothesis his own, that Koheleth was an Alexandrian Jew, familiar with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophies, who lived and wrote in the second century before Christ. And though I myself still hold to the Persian rather than to the Greek hypothesis of the book, and believe that Dr. Plumptre has claimed for the Epicurean or the Stoic philosophy many phrases so natural and inevitable that they were the common property of most schools of ancient thought, I am bound to admit that there are many passages in *The Preacher* which favour his view, and that he has illustrated them with an erudition and ingenuity which give them their full weight, and will compel every future commentator to deal with it. His critical and expository notes, too, are most valuable, whether his main hypothesis be accepted or refused; while the dissertations which precede or follow them gather up almost every conceivable illustration of the thoughts and spirit of the sacred writer from the literatures both of the ancient and of the modern world. In short, this little book is of far greater value than most of the