

the veil, higher than those which Christ has been pleased to give us, and who seek for them by methods which Paul would have described as the rudiments of the world? Would it not be easy to find many Christians who make their salvation hinge on things which affect only the perishable part of our being, and interpose between themselves and heaven other mediators beside the One in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead?

The letter to the Colossians was sent from Rome. Would it not be well to send it back to its cradle?

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SOME GLEANINGS FROM ST. PETER'S
HARVEST-FIELD.

ST. PETER'S EPISTLES.

II.

ST. PETER IN SACRED HISTORY COMPARED WITH HIS
OWN SELF-DELINEATION IN HIS EPISTLES.

"The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ."—1 PETER v. 1.

I HAVE no intention at present of dwelling upon any of the ecclesiastical questions which no doubt underlie the opening part of this verse. The question of *Episcopacy* is one of *principle* and of *fact*, not of *name*. For all the sweet humility of tone and language, there is nothing inconsistent with apostolic majesty. For all the unconscious dignity, there is nothing of a pontiff's arrogance. Yet, as the voice rings out, gathering strength as it rises, we feel that no mere teacher of a congregation could have issued such a charge. Behind the idea of the pastoral life which he describes with such nervous brevity, is the consciousness of

a great office, and behind that the very words of Christ. "Tend the flock," he says, with one of those wonderfully pregnant aoristic imperatives,¹ which gather up the whole purpose of a life into one single act looked at as if past. And, as he utters the word, the voice of Christ is in his ear, as he heard it so many years before upon the shore of the Lake of Galilee, "Tend My sheep."²

Our subject however at present points to the characteristics of St. Peter in his Epistles as compared with the delineation of his words and deeds in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles.

1. In the Acts St. Peter appears as emphatically an orator. He had the passionate, impulsive nature, the stuff of which powerful speakers are made. Grace had added to this natural endowment that witchery of heaven which in a preacher is called unction. We all know that in really great sermons there is much which baffles the best reporters. The discourses preserved in the Acts are but faithful summaries of the line of argument which was adopted—in the case of St. Peter as of St. Paul, so characteristic and so strongly marked by peculiarities of language, that one is tempted to think of revision by the hand of the speaker.

In the discourses themselves, as developed and expanded before large and excited audiences, the Apostle spoke in his own language, the popular speech of the Jews of Palestine.³ He does not now enjoy the same advantage. He writes, or dictates, in Greek, which he cannot wield with such freedom. Indeed it was conjectured so long ago as by St. Jerome that Silvanus was employed by Peter as amanuensis and interpreter, and that to this we may attribute in some

¹ ποιμάνετε, 1 Pet. v. 2.

² John xxi. 17.

³ Not pure Hebrew, but Syro-Chaldaic. Many peculiarities might with equal propriety be termed either Hebraisms or Syriasms. See Winer, *Grammar of New Testament Diction*, Part i. § 3, and the authorities there quoted on peculiarities of the idiom of the N.T. manifestly derived from a non-Hellenic source.

degree the Pauline tinge which may be detected in the language.¹

The style of the Epistles is certainly that of an orator. He has the glow of thought, the wheels which catch fire by their own motion, the rush of accumulated synonyms. Not seldom he brings the hammer down three times on the anvil before he is content to leave off striking.² He finds lofty and sonorous epithets. Much has been tauntingly made of St. Luke's statement that Peter and John were "unlearned and ignorant men." But one who knew the Hebrew Bible and the version of the LXX. certainly, also, if we believe some critics, Philo and Josephus, was already in possession of a noble literature and a whole "sacred library." And St. Peter knew the Old Testament through and through. It is a snow through which we can continually track his footsteps. Even in the words before us, possibly a translation by himself or by Silvanus, we recognise the fire and passion which bowed assembled thousands. We see that his language, when the soul was at white heat, and when he was not fain to use a tongue not quite so familiar as his own, must have been ample, sonorous, picturesque, pathetic, tender, indignant, as the subject demanded.

Other oratorical features may be noted. He possesses the art of giving form to mental processes and clothing

¹ 1 Pet. v. 12. Possibly he did not enjoy the same advantage in the Second Epistle, which might account for certain obvious differences of style. The whole connexion of Silvanus with St. Paul is of deep interest in its bearing upon our Epistles. Silvanus was known as a faithful and attached follower of Paul to the *very* Churches which Peter addresses (1 Pet. i. 1; Acts xv. 37, 40; Gal. ii. 12, 13). He is connected with St. Paul in his earliest Epistles (1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1). We hear no more of him in Acts or St. Paul's Epistles until he reappears here and is honourably mentioned with Mark. Let us remember that St. Paul rebuked Peter in an Epistle to the Galatians, to whom among others the latter now writes (Gal. ii. 11, 14; 1 Pet. i. 1). Yet throughout both Epistles Peter offers attestation to Paul as a friend and writer of canonical Scripture (1 Pet. v. 12; 2 Pet. i. 12, iii. 15, 16), and here indicates that Silvanus, who had been faithful to Paul, was faithful to him also.

² 1 Pet. i. 4, 8, 19; ii. 4, 5; iii. 3; v. 19.

ideas with palpable shapes. "Gird up the loins of your mind"; "arm yourselves with the same mind"; "be clothed with humility"; "tend the flock of God."¹ The homely illustrations which the people love come readily to his hand—sometimes tender, as the new-born babe, whose whole little life is just a desiring of mother's milk and nothing else;² sometimes awful, with all its unadorned outspokenness,—“whose damnation *dozeth* not.”³ His righteous scorn can utter itself in a very plain proverb.⁴

The effective preacher must also have elevation and winningness. He must be able to bring the far-off sky a little nearer, and show us the sweet distance where earth melts away into the blue of heaven.⁵ His tone must have softness. He must not perpetually be shouting his dogma through a speaking-trumpet; his “doctrine must drop as the rain, his speech distil as the dew.” How soft a breathing, how tender a fall is there, when he speaks in Acts of “seasons of *refreshing*.”⁶ How gentle a lullaby for God's tired children there is in this—“the spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you.”⁷

In these respects the speaker in Acts might be the writer of the Epistles. The style is that of an orator.

3. Once more. Numbers of touches in St. Peter's Epistles presuppose incidents in the Gospels. They are natural as coming from one who had been in that peculiar relation. They are not obtrusive assertions; ⁸ they are latent.⁹

¹ 1 Pet. i. 13; iv. 1-v. 5; cf. 2 Pet. i. 9.

² 1 Pet. ii. 2.

³ 2 Pet. ii. 3.

⁴ 2 Pet. ii. 22.

⁵ 1 Pet. i. 4, 13.

⁶ *καίροι ἀναψύξεως*, Acts iii. 19. The *thought* in the verse—repentance, “that sins may be blotted out, so that there may come seasons of refreshing, and that He may send the Christ,” is exactly the doctrinal equivalent of “looking for and hastening on the coming of the day of God” (2 Pet. iii. 12), so poorly travestied by our latest rationalism.

⁷ *ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἀναπαύεται*, 1 Pet. iv. 4.

⁸ Hence for my present purpose I shall not refer to the mention of the Transfiguration, 2 Pet. i. 17, 18; but 2 Pet. i. 14 compared with John xxi. 18, 19 is an exact instance of a case in point.

⁹ So much so that the reference in 1 Pet. v. 5 (“Be clothed with humility)

For instance, the very name of Peter must have brought solemn thoughts to the Apostle's mind. With us men, names are only marks by which one member of the community is distinguished from another. But names given by God are not only connotative, they are essential and prophetic. One night Jacob wrestled in prayer until break of day; then the old nature of the crafty planner sank in the fires of agony, and from the ashes there rose a new man, with a new and noble nature, and a new and princely name as its expression—Israel.¹ When Andrew brought Simon his brother for the first time to Jesus, Jesus saw the strong man with his faith of granite under the fluid surface of that mobile nature. "Jesus looked upon him"—almost looked *into* him²—"and said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, Peter."³

Let us then turn to the great *Petrine* passage in the second chapter of this Epistle.⁴ There is, indeed, such a quick play of hallowed imagination round the passage quoted from Isaiah,⁵ that some of the colours elude our power of description. But all the radiance comes from "a living Stone," "living stones."⁶ That great thought of life, living, has ever a charm for Peter.⁷ Here we have it, "living stones" in relation to Christ. "Living stone," and that stone the corner stone; and that (to use another favourite *Petrine* word) *precious*,⁸ the very Koh-i-noor of God. "And for you that believe is all that preciousness"! In France

to Jesus "girding Himself with a towel and washing the disciples' feet" (John xiii. 4-8), with which Peter is so closely associated, has been until quite lately overlooked; at least, after diligent search in a good library, I can find no notice of the reference before Dean Alford. Once made, it has been invariably recognised.

¹ Gen. xxx. 11, 28.

² ἐμβλέψας αὐτῷ.

³ John i. 43.

⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 4-9.

⁵ Isa. xxviii. 16.

⁶ 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

⁷ "The Son of the living God," Matt. xvi. 16. "The Prince of life," Acts iii. 15. "The grace of life," 1 Pet. iii. 7, cf. v. 10. "A living hope," 1 Pet. i. 3.

⁸ 1 Pet. i. 7, 19; 2 Pet. i. 1, 4.

it is not unusual to call believers contemptuously "fossils" or "petrifications." Petrifications! We accept the word, but we are petrified into life.

Again. It is natural for pious old people to be most anxious about those whom they love in regard to those qualities in which their own deficiency has been proved in the day of trial. There were two graces in which Peter had been found wanting—steadfastness¹ and humility, especially the first. Think of the intense prayer at the close, with its rush of accumulated synonyms—"the God of all grace shall Himself perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you."² Remember the exhortation—"ye younger, be subject unto the elder. Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."³

How the words of Jesus would come back to his mind in relation to his ministry, we have already indicated.⁴

We have also adverted to the noble weight and urgency of meaning in the aoristic imperative, which would lead the pastor to look upon his work as one in the light of an eternal world. Of the two imperatives, the present is dispassionate, measured, and directly practical; the aoristic is emotional, stringent, unifying, almost prophetic; it throws a man forward, and places him in a position where he can take in the whole field as one. And the imperative is a favourite of Peter's yearning and forward-moving soul. Be ye such pastors, that when ye look back your whole life shall be gathered into one "tending," one great unbroken shepherd act.⁵

¹ For Peter's weakness, Matt. xiv. 30, 31; Mark xiv. 66, 67. His commission to *strengthen*, given, Luke xxii. 32; exercised, 1 Pet. v. 10, 11; 2 Pet. i. 13; ii. 14; iii. 16, 17.

² "Digna Petro oratio. Cf. Luke xxii. 32." Bengel. ³ 1 Pet. v. 6, 7.

⁴ To Peter in the Gospel, Jesus says βόσκει (John xxi. 15), ποιμαίνε, ver. 16, βόσκει, ver. 17. St. Peter in his Epistle says ποιμαίνατε, 1 Pet. v. 2.

⁵ See the beautiful aoristic imperative in 1 Pet. i. 13 (τελείως ἐλπισταί εἰ: "Make your whole life one act of hope"). See also i. 22; v. 5, 8.

In the text the writer of this Epistle indicates, in his unobtrusive way, that he was a spectator of the sufferings of Christ. To the pathos of that perfect death he has already devoted, in an earlier part of the Epistle, perhaps the fullest development which it has found anywhere outside the Gospels. "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps." The word "example" means literally, not probably the sketch of a picture to be closely followed, but merely a copy book² with head-lines for the child to follow with feeble fingers. The Passion is described for the benefit of "servants,"³ and made to yield a lesson for their lives of suffering. The whole picture unrolls itself again. There are three imperfections. "He was not resisting," "was not threatening," "was committing Himself."⁴ Then the one act: "Who bore our sins in His own Body up to and on the Tree,"⁵ Himself by His own personal endurance.⁶

This, as has been said, is probably the longest passage upon the death of Jesus outside the Gospels in the New Testament. Yet to modern feeling there is no doubt that it will seem rather sternly reserved. It is the declaration of an eye-witness who reveres truth too much to use words lightly, whose pathetic eloquence is restrained by a boundless reverence. With a view to his special purpose, the spiritual instruction of "servants," he chooses each hue and colour of his picture. A noble instinct gives severe sobriety to his language; orator as he is, and passionate as he is, this is holy ground, and he dare make no concession to mere rhetorical effect. Certainly he was an eye-witness. Much that he saw is recorded in the Gospel of St. Mark. The reviling and threatening he saw. To the last word in

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 20-25.

² ὑπογραμμών.

³ Accurately the word here (οἰκέται, ver. 18) should be so rendered, not "slaves."

⁴ ἀντιλοιδόρει, ἡπείλει, παρεδίδου (ver. 23).

⁵ ἀνῆρεγκεν ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον (ver. 24).

⁶ δὲ αὐτός (ver. 24).

which Jesus commended His soul to His Father, he makes significant allusion once and again.¹ But much he failed to see through his own fault, through the failure of his faith. The noble silence; the brave patience; the mockery in which He did not threaten; the cruel taunts to that gentle soul; the lurid weal upon the crushed flesh under the tremendous Roman thong, sharpened with bone or lead;² all that he saw. But he did not see the wounds, or the riven heart, or the flowing blood—only the cross and its burden in that lurid light, as the traveller might see a Calvary upon a southern peak some summer day. “The author of the First Epistle of Peter,” writes M. Renan, “*could* not have known the incident in St. Luke—‘when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit—’³ or he must have mentioned it.” In all probability, he *does* refer to it, as we have seen. M. Renan might as well have said that he did not know of the nails or spear; that he had not seen Pilate or Judas; that he knew nothing of that tender, pathetic look, when “the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.” But he who can cut exquisitely chiselled sentences for an academy may be unable to read the heart of a saint.

St. Peter, then, witnessed to those sufferings which he actually saw—witnessed them to the Christians of Pontus and of those other places which he mentions; to the furthest shores which his sails ever reached; witnesses them now to the millions who hear and read the New Testament, an abiding “witness of the sufferings of Christ.”

This witness is a principle that reaches far.

Each life and character is meant to become a living sacrifice. “Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also at once and finally with the same thought”⁴—the whole in-minding, in-thinking, from which

¹ Cf. Luke xxiii. 46, with 1 Pet. ii. 23; iv. 19.

² οὐ τῶ μῶλωπι (ver. 24).

³ Luke xxiii. 46.

⁴ 1 Pet. iv. 1.

actions flow¹—the same thought as Christ's. "Christianity is stamped with the image of the cross, and the whole life of each true Christian has something of the form and look of Christ crucified."²

The witness of Christian art is not wholly to be overlooked. It has been said that we have lost by substituting a literal representation for a symbol. But after all the crucifixion was a fact, not an idea; the symbol is for the world of ideas, the literal representation for the world of history. At every stage of culture the representation has its use. A few years ago, a Red Indian missionary did a great work in Minnesota. The story of the man's conversion was this. He saw a picture of Calvary in a book, in a house where he had idly wandered in. "Why was this?" he asked. "For you," was the answer. And one of the noblest of missionary lives was in the reply. Who shall say that the pictured page was not blessed to become a "witness of the sufferings of Christ"?

But, above all, the burden of all true preaching is Christ crucified. In the Eastern and Western Churches, where the spiritual has a tendency to become petrified in forms, the bishop wears a pectoral cross to remind him of the text. In the Latin Churches of the West, the preacher, before beginning his sermon, plants the cross or crucifix in the pulpit. This practice is too demonstrative for us, not to speak of other objections. But whether he expound the Old Testament or the New; whether his subject be a duty, a dogma, an emotion, prayer or service, work or sacrament; all should fit like bits of enamel into a cross, and the preacher, like St. Peter, should be "a witness of the sufferings of Christ."

Sure I am that the longer we study the Epistle the deeper will be our impression that we have been in connexion with the spirit of one who saw Christ. Of the glory

¹ *ἔννοια* (in Heb. iv. 12 in plural).

² À Lap.

that is to be revealed he was a partaker also, of the Pentecost, of the Second Advent, as of the Transfiguration. In those strange "spiritual exercises" which are sometimes so carnal; where so much is wrapped up in the *formula*, "as it is pious to suppose in meditation"—as if it were pious to suppose anything about the Lord of truth which is not true—there is one profound and beautiful thought. "If I am to meditate concerning the resurrection of Christ, I must ask for joy wherewith I may rejoice with Christ rejoicing."¹ Yes! For St. Peter begins with that burst of Easter joy, finding that hope is a flower which is rooted in Christ's grave, and blooms in His resurrection—"a hope living through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."² But, above all, he is a witness of Christ's sufferings. He saw them not merely as art displays them to the imagination. With a Vandyke upon the walls, we may be as worldly and godless as ever—as little moved to good as the selfish and cynical talkers round a rich table by the hues and odours of the clustered roses. He saw the cross, not thus, but as God would have us sinners see it, with its rebuke to sin,³ and the access to God which we may have by it.⁴ We have here only a leaflet, a few pages of dogma and duty to the pilgrim souls of the dispersion. But it is a true encyclical of one, called by millions "the first Pontiff," who died upon the Vatican, and never reigned there. We find in it Peter's own crucifix, blessed by him for all his spiritual children, which we may clasp with reverence, and "sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts."⁵

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¹ *Spiritual Exercises*, of Ignatius Loyola, pp. 28-143. ² 1 Pet. i. 3.

³ 1 Pet. iv. 1, 2.

⁴ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

⁵ 1 Pet. iii. 15.