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THE PETER OF HISTORY AND THE PETER
OF FICTION.

NO character in the New Testament is brought before us in such life-like colours, with all his virtues and faults, as that of Peter. He was frank and transparent, and always gave himself as he was, without any reserve.

We may distinguish three stages in his development. In the Gospels, the human nature of Simon appears most prominent; the Acts unfold the Divine mission of Peter in the founding of the Church, with a temporary relapse at Antioch (recorded by Paul); in his epistles we see the complete triumph of Divine grace. He was the strongest and the weakest of the twelve. He had all the excellences and all the defects of a sanguine temperament, being kind-hearted, quick, ardent, hopeful, impulsive, changeable, and apt to run from one extreme to another. He received from Christ the highest praise, and the severest censure. He was the first to confess Him as the Messiah of God, for which he received his new name of Peter, in prophetic anticipation of his commanding position in Church history; but he was also the first who tried to dissuade Him from entering the path of the cross to the crown, for which he brought upon himself the rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan." The rock of the Church had become a rock of offence, and a stumbling-block. He protested, in presumptive modesty, when Christ would wash his feet; and then, suddenly changing his mind, he wished not his feet only, but his hands and head to be washed. He cut off the ear of Malchus in carnal zeal for his Master, and in a few minutes afterwards forsook Him and fled. He solemnly promised to be faithful to Christ, though all should forsake Him; and yet, in the same night, betrayed him thrice. He was the first to cast off the Jewish prejudices against the unclean heathen, and to fraternise with the Gentile converts at Caesarea and at Antioch: but he was also the first to withdraw from them in cowardly fear of the narrow-minded Judaisers from Jerusalem,

for which inconsistency he had to submit to a humiliating homily from Paul.

But Peter was as quick in returning to his right position as in turning away from it. He most sincerely loved the Lord from the first, and felt no rest and peace till he found forgiveness. With all his weakness, he was a noble, generous soul, and of the greatest service in the Church. God overruled his very sins and inconsistencies for his humiliation and spiritual progress. And in his epistles we find the mature result of the work of purification, a spirit most humble, meek, gentle, tender, loving, and lovely. Almost every word and incident in the Gospel history connected with Peter, left its impress upon his epistles in the way of humble or thankful reminiscence and allusion. His new name "Rock" appears simply as a "stone" among other living stones in the temple of God built upon Christ, "the chief corner-stone."* His charge to his fellow-presbyters is the same which Christ gave to him after the resurrection, that they should be faithful "shepherds of the flock" under Christ the chief "shepherd and bishop of their souls." The record of his denial of Christ is as prominent in all the four Gospels as Paul's persecution of the Church is in the Acts, and it is most prominent—as it would seem under his own direction—in the Gospel of his pupil and "interpreter" Mark, which alone mentions the two cock-crows, thus doubling the guilt of the denial, and which records Christ's words of censure ("Satan"), but omits Christ's praise ("Rock"). Peter made as little effort to conceal his great sin as Paul. It served as a thorn in his flesh, and the remembrance kept him near the cross; while his recovery from the fall was a standing proof of the power and mercy of Christ, and a perpetual call to gratitude. And to the Christian Church ever since, the double story of Peter's denial and recovery has been an unfailing source of warning and comfort. Having turned again to his Lord, who prayed for him that his faith might not fail, he is still strengthening the brethren.†

As to his official position in the Church, Peter stood from the beginning at the head of the Jewish apostles, not in a partisan sense, but in a large-hearted spirit of moderation and comprehension. He never was a narrow, contracted, exclusive sectarian. After the vision at Joppa, and the conversion of Cornelius, he promptly changed his inherited view of the necessity of circumcision, and openly professed the change at Jerusalem, proclaiming the broad principle "that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him;" and that Jews and Gentiles alike are

* 1 Pet. ii. 4-8.—A striking instance of the impression of Christ's words without a trace of boastfulness and assumption of authority.

† Luke xxii. 31, 32.—Spoken in view of the approaching denial. This is the proper meaning of the passage which has been distorted by the Vatican Council into an argument for papal infallibility. Such application would logically imply also that every Pope must deny Christ, and be converted in order to strengthen the brethren.

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saved only "through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." He continued to be the head of the Jewish-Christian Church at large, and Paul himself represents him as the first among the three "pillars"—apostles of the circumcision. But he stood mediating between James, who represented the right wing of conservatism, and Paul, who commanded the left wing of the apostolic army. And this is precisely the position which Peter occupies in his epistles, which reproduce, to a great extent, the teaching of both Paul and James, and have therefore the character of a doctrinal Irenicum, as the Acts are a historical Irenicum, without violation of truth or fact.

THE PETER OF FICTION.

No character of the Bible—we may say, no character in all history—has been so much magnified, misrepresented, and misused for doctrinal and hierarchical ends, as the plain fisherman of Galilee who stands at the head of the apostolic college. Among the women of the Bible, the Virgin Mary has undergone a similar transformation for purposes of devotion, and been raised to the dignity of the queen of heaven. Peter as the vicar of Christ, and Mary as the mother of Christ, have in this idealised shape become, and are still, the ruling powers in the polity and worship of the largest branch of Christendom.

In both cases, the work of fiction began among the Judaising heretical sects of the second and third centuries, but was modified and carried forward by the Catholic, especially the Roman Church, in the third and fourth centuries.

1. *The Peter of the Ebionite fiction.* The historical basis is Peter's encounter with Simon Magus in Samaria, Paul's rebuke of Peter at Antioch, and the intense distrust and dislike of the Judaising party to Paul. These three undoubted facts, together with a singular confusion of *Simon Magus* with an old Sabinian deity, *Semo Sanous*, in Rome, furnished the material and prompted the motive to religious tendency-novels, written about and after the middle of the second century by ingenious semi-Gnostic Ebionites, either anonymously or under the fictitious name of Clement of Rome, the reputed successor of Peter. In these productions, Simon Peter appears as the great apostle of truth in conflict with Simon Magus, the pseudo-apostle of falsehood, the father of all heresies, and the Samaritan possessed by a demon; and Peter follows him step by step from Cæsarea Stratonis to Tyre, Sidon, Berytus, Antioch, and Rome, and before the tribunal of Nero, disputing with him and refuting his errors, until at last the impostor, in the daring act of mocking the ascension to heaven, meets a miserable end.

In the pseudo-Clementine Homilies, the name of Simon represents, among other heresies also, the free gospel of Paul, who is assailed as a false apostle and hated rebel against the authority of the Mosaic law. The same charges which the Judaisers brought against Paul, are here brought by Peter against Simon Magus, especially the assertion that one

may be saved by grace alone. His boasted vision of Christ, by which he professed to have been converted, is traced to a descriptive vision of the devil. The very words of Paul against Peter at Antioch, that he was "self-condemned" (Gal. ii. 11), are quoted as an accusation against God. In one word, Simon Magus is, in part at least, a malignant Judaising caricature of the apostle of the Gentiles.

2. *The Peter of the hierarchical fiction.* The orthodox version of the Peter-legend, as we find it partly in patristic notices of Irenæus, Origen, Tertullian, and Eusebius, partly in apocryphal productions, retains the general story of a conflict of Peter with Simon Magus in Antioch and Rome, but extracts from it its anti-Pauline poison; associates Paul, at the end of his life, with Peter, as the joint though secondary founder of the Roman Church; and crowns both with the martyr's crown in the Neronian persecution on the same day (the 29th of June), and in the same year, or a year apart, but in different localities, and in a different manner. Peter was crucified like his Master (though head downwards), either on the hill of Janiculum (where the Church S. Pietro in Montorio stands), or more probably on the Vatican (the scene of the Neronian circus and persecution); Paul, being a Roman citizen, was beheaded on the Ostian way, at the Three Fountains (Tre Fontane), outside of the city. They even walked together a part of the Appian Way to the place of execution. Caius (or Gaius), a Roman presbyter at the close of the second century, pointed to their monuments or trophies on the Vatican, and in the Via Ostia. The solemn burial of the remains of Peter in the catacombs of San Sebastian, and of Paul on the Via Ostia, took place 29th June, 258, according to the Kalendarium of the Roman Church from the time of Liberius. A hundred years later, the remains of Peter were permanently transferred to the Basilica of St. Peter on the Vatican, those of Paul to the Basilica of St. Paul (San Paolo fuori le mura) *outside* of the Porta Ostiensis (now Porta San Paolo).

The tradition of a twenty-five years' episcopate in Rome (preceded by a seven years' episcopate in Antioch) cannot be traced beyond the fourth century (Jerome), and arose, as already remarked, from chronological miscalculations in connection with the questionable statement of Justin Martyr concerning the arrival of Simon Magus in Rome under the reign of Claudius (41-54). The "Catalogus Liberianus," the oldest list of Popes (supposed to have been written before 366), extends the pontificate of Peter to twenty-five years, one month, nine days, and puts his death on June 29th, 65 (during the consulate of Nerva and Vestinus), which would date his departure from Jerusalem back to A.D. 40. Eusebius, in his "Greek Chronicle," as far as it is preserved, does not fix the number of years, but says, in his "Church History," that Peter came to Rome in the reign of Claudius to preach against the pestilential errors of Simon Magus. The Armenian translation of his "Chronicle" mentions "twenty" years; Jerome, in his translation, or paraphrase rather, "twenty-five" years, assuming without warrant that Peter left Jerusalem for Antioch

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and Rome in the second year of Claudius (A.D. 42; compare Acts xii. 17, which would rather point to the year 44), and died in the fourteenth or last year of Nero (68). Among modern Roman Catholic historians, there is no agreement as to the year of Peter's martyrdom: Baronius puts it in 69; Pagi and Alban Butler in 65; Möhler, Gams, and Alzog indefinitely between 66 and 68. In all these cases it must be assumed that the Neronian persecution was continued or renewed after 64, of which we have no historical evidence. It must also be assumed that Peter was conspicuously absent from his flock during most of the time, to superintend the churches in Asia Minor and in Syria, to preside at the Council of Jerusalem, to meet with Paul in Antioch, to travel about with his wife; and that he made very little impression there till 58, and even till 63, when Paul, writing to and from Rome, still entirely ignores him. Thus a chronological error is made to override stubborn facts. The famous saying that "no Pope shall see the (twenty-five) years of Peter," which had hitherto almost the force of law, has been falsified by the thirty-two years' reign of the first infallible Pope, Pius IX. (1846 to 1878).

On this tradition, and on the indisputable pre-eminence of Peter in the Gospels and the Acts, especially the words of Christ to him after the great confession (Matt. xvi. 18), is built the colossal fabric of the Papacy, with all its amazing pretensions to be the legitimate succession of a permanent primacy of honour and supremacy of jurisdiction in the Church of Christ, and, since 1870, with the additional claim of papal infallibility in all official utterances, doctrinal or moral. But the validity of this claim requires the fulfilment of three conditions:—

1. The presence of Peter in Rome. This may be admitted as an historical fact, and I for my part cannot believe it possible that such a rock-firm and world-wide structure as the Papacy could rest on the sand of mere fraud and error. It is the underlying fact which gives to fiction its vitality, and error is dangerous in proportion to the amount of truth which it embodies. But the fact of Peter's presence in Rome, whether for one year or twenty-five, cannot be of such fundamental importance as the Papacy assumes, otherwise we would certainly have some allusion to it in the New Testament. Moreover, even though Peter was in Rome, so was Paul, and shared with him on equal terms the apostolic supervision of the Roman congregations, as is very evident from his Epistle to the Romans.

2. The transferability of Peter's pre-eminence to a successor. This is derived from inference from the words of Christ: "Thou art Rock, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." This passage, recorded only by Matthew, is the exegetical rock of Romanism, and is *more frequently quoted* by popes and Papists than any other passage of the Scriptures. But admitting the reference of *petra* to Peter, the significance of this prophetic name evidently points to the peculiar mission of Peter in laying the foundation

of the Church once and for all time to come. He fulfilled it on the day of Pentecost and in the conversion of Cornelius; and in this pioneer work Peter can have no successor, any more than St. Paul in the conversion of the Gentiles, and John in the consolidation of the two branches of the Apostolic Church.

3. The actual transfer of this prerogative of Peter—not to the bishop of Jerusalem, or of Antioch, where he undoubtedly resided—but to the bishop of Rome, a place which he cannot be proved from the New Testament to have ever seen. Of such a transfer, history knows absolutely nothing. Clement, bishop of Rome, who first (about A.D. 95) makes mention of Peter's martyrdom, and Ignatius of Antioch, who, a few years later, alludes to Peter and Paul as exhorting the Romans, have not a word to say about the transfer. The very chronology and succession of the first popes is uncertain.

While the claims of the papacy cannot be proved from what we know of the historical Peter, there are, on the other hand, several undoubted facts in the real history of Peter which bear heavily against those claims, namely:—

(1.) That Peter was married (Matt. viii. 14); took his wife with him on his missionary tours (1 Cor. ix. 5); and, according to a possible interpretation of the "coëlect" (sister), mentions her in his first Epistle (chap. v. 13). Patristic tradition ascribes to him children, or at least a daughter (Petronilla). His wife is said to have suffered martyrdom in Rome before him. What right have the popes, in view of this example, to forbid clerical marriage? We pass by the equally striking contrast between the poverty of Peter, who had no silver nor gold (Acts iii. 6), and the gorgeous display of the triple-crowned papacy in the middle ages and even down to the recent collapse of the temporal power.

(2.) That in the Council at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 1-11) Peter appears simply as the first speaker and debater, not as president and judge (James presided), and assumes no special prerogative, least of all an infallibility of judgment. According to the Vatican theory, the whole question of circumcision ought to have been submitted to Peter rather than to a Council, and the decision ought to have gone out from him rather than from "the apostles, and elders, and brethren" (ver. 23).

(3.) That Peter was openly rebuked for inconsistency by a younger apostle at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11-14). Peter's conduct on that occasion is irreconcilable with his infallibility as to discipline; Paul's conduct is irreconcilable with Peter's alleged supremacy; and the whole scene, though perfectly plain, is so inconvenient to Roman and Romanising views, that it has been variously distorted by Patristic and Jesuit commentators even into a theatrical farce got up by the apostles for the more effectual refutation of the Judaisers!

(4.) That, while the greatest of Popes, from Leo. I. down to Leo. XIII., never cease to speak of their authority over all the bishops

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and all the Churches, Peter in his speeches in the Acts never does so, and his Epistles, far from assuming any superiority over his "fellow-elders," and over "the clergy" (by which he means the Christian people), breathe the spirit of sincerest humility, and contain a prophetic warning against the besetting sins of the Papacy,—filthy avarice and lordly ambition (1 Peter v. 1-3). Love of money and love of power are twin sisters, and either of them is "a root of all evil."

PHILIP SCHAFF.

JAMES OUTRAM, THE BAYARD OF INDIA.

WHEN Dr. Bisset was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Established Church of Scotland, he asked the eleventh Earl of Dalhousie, an elder of the Free Church of Scotland, for a note of introduction for a friend, to Lord Elgin, at that time Viceroy and Governor-General of India. "I think your strongest claim on the Indian Government," wrote the Earl, who was then Secretary for War, "is that you have trained such a general and statesman as Outram for the public service, and this I have mentioned to Lord Elgin." When eleven years of age, in 1814, James Outram had been sent to Dr. Bisset's school at Udney, near Aberdeen, where, like the young Clive at Drayton, but without his fierceness, he became famous for deeds of daring and high moral courage. If we except Sir Henry Durand, who outlived him by a few years, James Outram was the last of the great soldier-statesmen of the East India Company, as John Lawrence was of its civilians. He comes next to Henry Lawrence, and second only to him who has been described as probably the greatest Englishman ever sent to India. It is because he showed, with these three, the enduring distinction of being a Christian under all and above all his earthly honours and natural virtues, that it is right in these pages to commend to the study of the Churches the biography, "James Outram," which has just been written, with a soldier's dash and a "political's" experience, by Sir F. J. Goldsmid.*

We do so all the more because the inner Christian life of James Outram found very different modes of expression from theirs. Durand was an officer of such culture that he knew theology, which he used to discuss with his friend Judson, and he made Leighton's writings his constant companion. Henry Lawrence gave himself to Christ when a young lieutenant, and was ever, till he died, as ardent and open an evangelical as Charles Simeon himself. John Lawrence, after the Mutiny had anew revealed him to himself, never hesitated to put Christianity in the front in his most formal official documents. But Outram's hidden life

* James Outram: A Biography. By Major-Gen. Sir F. J. Goldsmid, C.B., K.C.S.I. Two volumes. London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1880.