

THE DAILY STUDY BIBLE SERIES

1 PETER excerpt

from

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JAMES
AND
PETER

REVISED EDITION

Translated
with an Introduction and Interpretation
by
WILLIAM BARCLAY

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Daily Study Bible series has always had one aim--to convey the results of scholarship to the ordinary reader. A. S. Peake delighted in the saying that he was a "theological middleman", and I would be happy if the same could be said of me in regard to these volumes. And yet the primary aim of the series has never been academic. It could be summed up in the famous words of Richard of Chichester's prayer--to enable men and women "to know Jesus Christ more clearly, to love him more dearly, and to follow him more nearly".

It is all of twenty years since the first volume of The Daily Study Bible was published. The series was the brain-child of the late Rev. Andrew McCosh, M.A., S.T.M., the then Secretary and Manager of the Committee on Publications of the Church of Scotland, and of the late Rev. R. G. Macdonald, O.B.E., M.A., D.D., its Convener.

It is a great joy to me to know that all through the years The Daily Study Bible has been used at home and abroad, by minister, by missionary, by student and by layman, and that it has been translated into many different languages. Now, after so many printings, it has become necessary to renew the printer's type and the opportunity has been taken to restyle the books, to correct some errors in the text and to remove some references which have become outdated. At the same time, the Biblical quotations within the text have been changed to use the Revised Standard Version, but my own original translation of the New Testament passages has been retained at the beginning of each daily section.

There is one debt which I would be sadly lacking in courtesy if I did not acknowledge. The work of revision and correction has been done entirely by the Rev. James Martin, M.A., B.D., minister of High Carntyne Church, Glasgow. Had it not been for him this task would never have been undertaken, and it is impossible for me to thank him enough for the selfless toil he has put into the revision of these books.

It is my prayer that God may continue to use The Daily Study Bible to enable men better to understand His word.

Glasgow WILLIAM BARCLAY

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INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER

THE CATHOLIC OR GENERAL EPISTLES

First Peter belongs to that group of New Testament letters which are known as the Catholic or General Epistles. Two explanations of that title have been offered.

(i) It is suggested that these letters were so called because they were addressed to the Church at large, in contradistinction to the Pauline letters which were addressed to individual churches. But that is not so. James is addressed to a definite, though widely scattered, community. It is written to the twelve tribes who are scattered abroad (Jas. 1:1). It needs no argument that Second and Third John are addressed to definite communities; and, although First John has no specific address, it is clearly written with the needs and perils of a particular community in mind. First Peter itself is written to the strangers scattered abroad through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1Pet. 1:1). It is true that these General Epistles have a wider range than the letters of Paul; at the same time, they all have a definite community in mind.

(ii) So we must turn to the second explanation--that these letters were called Catholic or General because they were accepted as Scripture by the whole Church in contradistinction to that large number of letters which enjoyed a local and temporary authority but never universally ranked as Scripture. At the time when these letters were being written there was an outbreak of letter-writing in the Church. We still possess many of the letters which were then written--the letter of Clement of Rome to Corinth, the letter of Barnabas, the letters of Ignatius and the letters of Polycarp. All were regarded as very precious in the Churches to which they were written but were never regarded as having authority throughout the Church; on the other hand the Catholic or General Epistles gradually won a place in Scripture and were accepted by the whole Church. Here is the true explanation of their title.

THE LOVELY LETTER

Of all the General Epistles it is probably true that First Peter is the best known and loved, and the most read. No one has ever been in any doubt about its charm. Moffatt writes of it: "The beautiful spirit of the pastoral shines through any translation of the Greek text. 'Affectionate, loving, lowly, humble,' are Izaak Walton's quaternion of adjectives for the Epistles of James, John and Peter, but it is First Peter which deserves them preeminently." It is written out of the love of a pastor's heart to help people who were going through it and on whom worse things were still to come. "The key-note," says Moffatt, "is steady encouragement to endurance in conduct and innocence in character." It has been said that its distinctive characteristic is warmth. E. J. Goodspeed wrote: "First Peter is one of the most moving pieces of persecution literature." To this day it is one of the easiest letters in the New Testament to read, for it has never lost its winsome appeal to the human heart.

THE MODERN DOUBT

Until a comparatively short time ago few would have raised any doubts about the authenticity of First Peter. Renan, who was by no means a conservative critic, wrote of it: "The First Epistle is one of the writings of the New Testament which are most anciently and most unanimously cited as genuine." But in recent times the Petrine authorship of the letter has been widely questioned. The commentary by F. W. Beare, published in 1947, goes the length of saying, "There can be no possible doubt that 'Peter' is a pseudonym." That is to say, Beare has no doubt that someone else wrote this letter under the name of Peter. We shall go on in fairness to investigate that view; but first we shall set out the traditional view--which we ourselves unhesitatingly accept--of the date and authorship of this letter. This is that First Peter was written from Rome by Peter himself, about the year A.D. 67, in the days immediately following the first persecution of the Christians by Nero, to the Christians in those parts of Asia Minor named in the address. What is the evidence for this early date and, therefore, for the Petrine authorship?

THE SECOND COMING

When we go to the letter we find that expectation of the second coming of Christ is in the very forefront of its thought. Christians are being kept for the salvation which is to be revealed at the last time (1Pet. 1:5). Those who keep the faith will be saved from the coming judgment (1Pet. 1:7). Christians are to hope for the grace which will come at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1Pet. 1:13). The day of visitation is expected (1Pet. 2:12). The end of all things is at hand (1Pet. 4:7). Those who suffer with Christ will also rejoice with Christ when his glory is revealed (1Pet. 4:13). Judgment is to begin at the house of God (1Pet. 4:17). The writer himself is sure that he will be a sharer in the glory to come (1Pet. 5:1). When the Chief Shepherd shall appear the faithful Christian will receive a crown of glory (1Pet. 5:4).

From beginning to end of the letter the second coming is in the forefront of the writer's mind. It is the motive for steadfastness in the faith, for the loyal living of the Christian life and for gallant endurance amidst the sufferings which have come and will come upon them.

It would be untrue to say that the second coming ever dropped out of Christian belief, but it did recede from the forefront of Christian belief as the years passed on and Christ did not return. It is, for instance, significant that in Ephesians, one of Paul's latest letters, there is no mention of it. On this ground it is reasonable to suppose that First Peter is early and comes from the days when the Christians vividly expected the return of their Lord at any moment.

SIMPLICITY OF ORGANIZATION

It is clear that First Peter comes from a time when the organization of the Church is very simple. There is no mention of deacons; nor of the episkopos (GSN1985), the bishop, who begins to emerge in the Pastoral Epistles and becomes prominent in Ignatius' letters in the first half of the second century. The only Church officials mentioned are the elders. "I exhort the elders among you as a fellow-elder" (1Pet. 5:1). On this ground, also, it is reasonable to suppose that First Peter comes from an early date.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE EARLY CHURCH

What is most significant of all is that the theology of First Peter is the theology of the very early church. E. G. Selwyn has made a detailed study of this; and he has proved beyond all question that the theological ideas of First Peter are exactly the same as those we meet in the recorded sermons of Peter in the early chapters of Acts.

The preaching of the early church was based on five main ideas. One of the greatest contributions of C. H. Dodd to New Testament scholarship was his formulation of these. They form the framework of all the sermons of the early church, as recorded in Acts; and they are the foundation of the thought of all the New Testament writers. The summary of these basic ideas has been given the name Kerugma (GSN2782), which means the announcement or the proclamation of a herald.

These are the fundamental ideas which the Church in its first days heralded forth. We shall take them one by one and shall set down after each, first, the references in the early chapters of Acts and, second, the references in First Peter; and we will make the significant discovery that the basic ideas of the sermons of the early church and the theology of First Peter are precisely the same. We are not claiming, of course, that the sermons in Acts are verbatim reports of what was actually preached, but we believe that they give correctly the substance of the message of the first preachers.

(i) The age of fulfilment has dawned; the Messianic age has begun. This is God's last word. A new order is being inaugurated and the elect are summoned to join the new community. Ac.2:14-16; Ac.3:12-26; Ac.4:8-12; Ac.10:34-43; 1Pet. 1:3; 1Pet. 1:10-12; 1Pet. 4:7.

(ii) This new age has come through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, all of which are in direct fulfilment of the prophecies of the Old Testament and are, therefore, the result of the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. Ac.2:20-31; Ac.3:13-14; Ac.10:43; 1Pet. 1:20-21.

(iii) By virtue of the resurrection Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God and is the Messianic head of the new Israel. Ac.2:22-26; Ac.3:13; Ac.4:11; Ac.5:30-31; Ac.10:39-42; 1Pet. 1:21; 1Pet. 2:7; 1Pet. 2:24; 1Pet. 3:22.

(iv) These Messianic events will shortly reach their consummation in the return of Christ in glory and the judgment of the living and the dead. Ac.3:19-23; Ac.10:42; 1Pet. 1:5,7,13; 1Pet. 4:5,13; 1Pet. 17-18; 1Pet. 5:1,4.

(v) These facts are made the grounds for an appeal for repentance, and the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of eternal life. Ac.2:38-39; Ac.3:19; Ac.5:31; Ac.10:43; 1Pet. 1:13-25; 1Pet. 2:1-3; 1Pet. 4:1-5.

These declarations are the five main planks in the edifice of early Christian preaching, as recorded for us in the sermons of Peter in the early chapters of Acts. They are also the dominant ideas in First Peter. The correspondence is so close and so consistent that we almost certainly with entire probability see the same hand and mind in both.

QUOTATIONS FROM THE FATHERS

We may add another point to our evidence that First Peter is early; very early the fathers and preachers of the Church begin to quote it. The first person to quote First Peter by name is Irenaeus, who lived from A.D. 130 until well into the next century. He twice quotes 1Pet. 1:8: "Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy." And he once quotes 1Pet. 2:16, with its command not to use liberty as a cloak for maliciousness. But even before this the fathers of the Church are quoting Peter without mentioning his name. Clement of Rome, writing about A.D. 95, speaks of "the precious blood of Christ," an unusual phrase which may well come from Peter's statement that we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (1Pet. 1:19). Polycarp, who was martyred in A.D. 155, continuously quotes Peter without using his name. We may select three passages to show how closely he gives Peter's words.

Wherefore, girding up your loins, serve God in fear ... believing on him who raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and gave him glory (Polycarp, To the Philippians 2: 1).

Therefore, gird up your minds...through him you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory (1Pet. 1:13,21).

Christ Jesus who bare our sins in his own body on the tree, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth (Polycarp 8: 1).

He committed no sin; no guile was found on his life... He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree (1Pet. 2:22,24).

Having your conversation blameless among the Gentiles (Polycarp 10: 2).

Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles (1Pet. 2:12).

There can be no doubt that Polycarp is quoting Peter, although he does not name him. It takes some time for a book to acquire such an authority and familiarity that it can be quoted almost unconsciously, its language woven into the language of the Church. Once again we see that First Peter must be a very early book.

THE EXCELLENCE OF THE GREEK

If, however, we are defending the Petrine authorship of this letter, there is one problem we must face--and that is the excellence of the Greek. It seems impossible that it should be the work of a Galilaeen fisherman. New Testament scholars are at one in praising the Greek of this letter. F. W. Beare writes: "The epistle is quite obviously the work of a man of letters, skilled in all the devices of rhetoric, and able to draw on an extensive, and even learned, vocabulary. He is a stylist of no ordinary capacity, and he writes some of the best Greek in the whole New Testament, far smoother and more literary than that of the highly-trained Paul." Moffatt speaks of this letter's "plastic language and love of metaphor." Mayor says that First Peter has no equal in the New Testament for "sustained stateliness of rhythm." Bigg has likened certain of First Peter's phrases to the writing of Thucydides. Selwyn has spoken of First Peter's "Euripidean tenderness" and of its ability to coin compound words as Aeschylus might have done. The Greek of First Peter is not entirely unworthy to be set beside that of the masters of the language. It is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine Peter using the Greek language like that.

The letter itself supplies the solution to this problem. In the concluding short section Peter himself says, "By Silvanus...I have written briefly" (1Pet. 5:12). By Silvanus--*dia* (GSN1223) *Silouanou* (GSN4610)--is an unusual phrase. The Greek means that Silvanus was Peter's agent in the writing of the letter; it means that he was more than merely Peter's stenographer.

Let us approach this from two angles. First, let us enquire what we know about Silvanus. (The evidence is set out more fully in our study section on 1Pet. 5:12). In all probability he is the same person as the Silvanus of Paul's letters and the Silas of Acts, Silas being a shortened and more familiar form of Silvanus. When we examine these passages, we find that Silas or Silvanus was no ordinary person but a leading figure in the life and counsels of the early church.

He was a prophet (Ac.15:32); he was one of the "chief among the brethren" at the council of Jerusalem and one of the two chosen to deliver the decisions of the council to the Church at Antioch (Ac.15:22,27). He was Paul's chosen companion in the second missionary journey, and was with Paul both in Philippi and in Corinth (Ac.15:37-40; Ac.16:19,25,29; Ac.18:5; 2Cor.1:19). He was associated with Paul in the initial greetings of 1 and 2 Thessalonians (1Th.1:1; 2Th.1:1). He was a Roman citizen (Ac.16:37).

Silvanus, then, was a notable man in the early church; he was not so much the assistant as the colleague of Paul; and, since he was a Roman citizen, there is at least a possibility that he was a man of an education and culture such as Peter could never have enjoyed.

Now let us add our second line of thought. In a missionary situation, when a missionary can speak a language well enough but cannot write it very well, it is quite common for him to do one of two things in order to send a message to his people. He either writes it out in as good a style as he can, and then gets a native speaker of the language to correct his mistakes and to polish his style; or, if he has a native colleague whom he can fully trust, he tells him what he wishes said, leaves him to put the message into written form and then vets the result.

We can well imagine that this was the part Silvanus played in the writing of First Peter. Either he corrected and polished Peter's necessarily inadequate Greek; or he wrote in his own words what Peter wanted said, with Peter setting the final product and adding the last personal paragraph to it.

The thought is that of Peter; but the style is that of Silvanus. And so, although the Greek is so excellent, there is no necessity to deny that the letter comes from Peter himself.

THE RECIPIENTS OF THE LETTER

The recipients of the letter are the exiles (a Christian is always a sojourner on the earth) scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

Almost all of these words had a double significance. They stood for ancient kingdoms and they stood for Roman provinces to which the ancient names had been given; and the ancient kingdoms and the new provinces did not always cover the same territory. Pontus was never a province. It had originally been the kingdom of Mithradates and part of it was incorporated in Bithynia and part of it in Galatia. Galatia had originally been the kingdom of the Gauls in the area of the three cities Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tavium, but the Romans had expanded it into a much larger unit of administration, including sections of Phrygia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, and Isauria. The kingdom of Cappadocia had become a Roman

province in A.D. 17 in practically its original form. Asia was not the continent of Asia as we use the term. It had been an independent kingdom, whose last king, Attalus the Third, had bequeathed it as a gift to Rome in 133 B.C. It embraced the centre of Asia minor and was bounded on the north by Bithynia, on the south by Lycia, and on the east by Phrygia and Galatia. In popular language it was that part of Asia Minor which lay along the shores of the Aegean Sea.

We do not know why these particular districts were picked out; but this much is certain--they embraced a large area with a very large population; and the fact that they are all mentioned is one of the greatest proofs of the immense missionary activity of the early church, apart altogether from the missionary activities of Paul.

All these districts lie in the north-east corner of Asia Minor. Why they are named as a group and why they are named in this particular order, we do not know. But a glance at the map will show that, if the bearer of this letter--who may well have been Silvanus--sailed from Italy and landed at Sinope in north-east Asia Minor, a journey through these provinces would be a circular tour which would take him back to Sinope. From Sinope in Bithynia he would go south to Galatia, further south to Cappadocia, west to Asia, north again to Bithynia, and then east to arrive back in Sinope.

It is clear from the letter itself that its recipients were mainly Gentiles. There is no mention of any question of the law, a question which always arose when there was a Jewish background. Their previous condition had been one of fleshly passion (1Pet. 1:14; 1Pet. 4:3-4) which fits gentiles far better than Jews. Previously they had been no people--Gentiles outside the covenant--but now they are the people of God (1Pet. 2:9-10).

The form of his name which Peter uses also shows that this letter was intended for Gentiles for Peter is a Greek name. Paul calls him Cephas (1Cor.1:12; 1Cor.3:22; 1Cor.9:5; 1Cor.15:5; Gal.1:18; Gal.2:9,11,14); among his fellow Jews, he was known as Simeon (Ac.15:14), which is the name by which he is called in Second Peter (2Pet. 1:1). Since he uses his Greek name here, it is likely that he was writing to Greek people.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES BEHIND THE LETTER

That this letter was written in a time when persecution threatened, is abundantly clear. They are in the midst of various trials (1Pet. 1:6). They are likely to be falsely accused as evil-doers (1Pet. 3:16). A fiery ordeal is going to try them (1Pet. 4:12). When they suffer, they are to commit themselves to God (1Pet. 4:19). They may well have to suffer for righteousness' sake (1Pet. 3:14). They are sharing in the afflictions which the Christian brotherhood throughout the

world is called upon to endure (1Pet. 5:9). At the back of this letter there are fiery trial, a campaign of slander and suffering for the sake of Christ. Can we identify this situation?

There was a time when the Christians had little to fear from the Roman government. In Acts it is repeatedly the Roman magistrates and the Roman soldiers and officials who save Paul from the fury of Jews and pagans alike. As Gibbon had it, the tribunal of the pagan magistrate proved the most assured refuge against the fury of the synagogue. The reason was that in the early days the Roman government was not able to distinguish between Jews and Christians. Within the empire Judaism was what was called a *religio licita*, a permitted religion, and Jews had full liberty to worship in their own way. It was not that the Jews did not try to enlighten the Romans to the true facts of the situation; they did so in Corinth, for example (Ac.18:12-17). But for some time the Romans simply regarded the Christians as a Jewish sect and, therefore, did not molest them.

The change came in the days of Nero and we can trace almost every detail of the story. On 19th July, A.D. 64, the great fire of Rome broke out. Rome, a city of narrow streets and high wooden tenements, was in real danger of being wiped out. The fire burned for three days and three nights, was checked, and then broke out again with redoubled violence. The Roman populace had no doubt who was responsible and put the blame on the Emperor. Nero had a passion for building; and they believed so that he had deliberately taken steps to obliterate Rome that he might build it again. Nero's responsibility must remain for ever in doubt; but it is certain that he watched the raging inferno from the tower of Maecenas and expressed himself as charmed with the flower and loveliness of the flames. It was freely said that those who tried to extinguish the fire were deliberately hindered and that men were seen to rekindle it again, when it was likely to subside. The people were overwhelmed. The ancient landmarks and the ancestral shrines had vanished; the Temple of Luna, the Ara Maxima, the great altar, the Temple of Jupiter Stator, the shrine of Vesta, their very household gods were gone. They were homeless and, in Farrar's phrase, there was "a hopeless brotherhood of wretchedness."

The resentment of the people was bitter. Nero had to divert suspicion from himself; a scapegoat had to be found. The Christians were made the scapegoat. Tacitus, the Roman historian, tells the story (Annals 15.44):

Neither human assistance in the shape of imperial gifts, nor attempts to appease the gods, could remove the sinister report that the fire was due to Nero's own orders. And, so, in the hope of dissipating the rumour, he falsely diverted the charge on to a set of people to whom the vulgar gave the name of Chrestians, and who were detested for the abominations they perpetrated. The founder of

the sect, one Christus by name, had been executed by Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius; and the dangerous superstition, though put down for the moment, broke out again, not only in Judaea, the original home of the pest, but even in Rome, where everything shameful and horrible collects and is practised.

Clearly Tacitus had no doubt that the Christians were not to blame for the fire and that Nero was simply choosing them to be the scapegoats for his own crime.

Why did Nero pick on the Christians and how was it possible even to suggest that they were responsible for the fire of Rome? There are two possible answers.

(i) The Christians were already the victims of certain slanders.

(a) They were in the popular mind connected with the Jews. Antisemitism is no new thing and it was easy for the Roman mob to attach any crime to the Jews and, therefore, to the Christians.

(b) The Lord's Supper was secret, at least in a sense. It was open only to the members of the Church. And certain phrases connected with it were fruitful sources of pagan slanders, phrases about eating someone's body and drinking someone's blood. That was enough to produce a rumour that the Christians were cannibals. In time the rumour grew until it became a story that the Christians killed and ate a Gentile, or a newly born child. At the Lord's Table the Christians gave each other the kiss of peace (1Pet. 5:14). Their meeting was called the Agape (GSN0026), the Love Feast. That was enough for stories to spread that the Christian meetings were orgies of vice.

(e) It was always a charge against the Christians that they "tampered with family relationships." There was this much truth in such a charge that Christianity did indeed become a sword to split families, when some members of a family became Christian and some did not. A religion which split homes was bound to be unpopular.

(d) It was the case that the Christians spoke of a coming day when the world would dissolve in flames. Many a Christian preacher must have been heard preaching of the second coming and the fiery dissolution of all things (Ac.2:19-20). It would not be difficult to put the blame for the fire on to people who spoke like that.

There was abundant material which could be perverted into false charges against the Christians by anyone maliciously disposed to victimise them.

(ii) The Jewish faith had always appealed especially to women because of its moral standards in a world where chastity did not exist. There were, therefore, many well-born women who had embraced the Jewish faith. The Jews did not

hesitate to work upon these women to influence their husbands against the Christians. We get a definite example of that in what happened to Paul and his company in Antioch of Pisidia. There it was through such women that the Jews stirred up action against Paul (Ac.13:50). Two of Nero's court favourites were Jewish proselytes. There was Aliturus, his favourite actor; and there was Poppaea, his mistress. It is very likely that the Jews through them influenced Nero to take action against the Christians.

In any event, the blame for the fire was attached to the Christians and a savage outbreak of persecution occurred. Nor was it simply persecution by legal means. What Tacitus called an *ingens multitudo*, a huge multitude, of Christians perished in the most sadistic ways. Nero rolled the Christians in pitch, set light to them and used them as living torches to light his gardens. He sewed them up in the skins of wild animals and set his hunting-dogs upon them, to tear them limb from limb while they still lived.

Tacitus writes:

Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burned, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserve extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for, it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty that they were being destroyed (Tacitus, *Annals* 15: 44).

The same terrible story is told by the later Christian historian, Sulipicius Severus, in his *Chronicle*:

In the meantime, the number of Christians being now very large, it happened that Rome was destroyed by fire, while Nero was stationed at Antium. But the opinion of all cast the odium of causing the fire upon the emperor, and he was believed in this way to have sought for the glory of building a new city. And, in fact, Nero could not, by any means he tried, escape from the charge that the fire had been caused by his orders. He, therefore, turned the accusation against the Christians and the most cruel tortures were accordingly inflicted upon the innocent. Nay, even new kinds of death were invented so that, being covered in the skins of wild beasts, they perished by being devoured by dogs, while many were crucified, or slain by fire, and not a few were set apart for this purpose, that, when the day came to a close, they should be consumed to serve for light during the night. In this way, cruelty first began to be manifested against the Christians. Afterwards, too, their religion was prohibited by laws which were

enacted; and by edicts openly set forth it was proclaimed unlawful to be a Christian.

It is true that this persecution was confined originally to Rome; but the gateway to persecution had been opened and in every place they were ready victims for the mob.

Moffatt writes:

After the Neronian wave had passed over the capital, the wash of it was felt on the far shores of the provinces; the dramatic publicity of the punishment must have spread the name of Christian *urbi et orbi*, far and wide, over the entire empire; the provincials would soon hear of it, and when they desired a similar outburst at the expense of the loyal Christians, all that they needed was a proconsul to gratify their wishes and some outstanding disciple to serve as a victim.

For ever after the Christians were to live under threat. The mobs of the Roman cities knew what had happened in Rome and there were always these slanderous stories against the Christians. There were times when the mob loved blood and there were many governors ready to pander to their blood-lust. It was not Roman law but lynch law which threatened the Christians.

From now on the Christian was in peril of his life. For years nothing might happen; then some spark might set off the explosion; and the terror would break out. That is the situation at the back of First Peter; and it is in face of it that Peter calls his people to hope and to courage and to that lovely Christian living which alone can give the lie to the slanders with which they are attacked and which are the grounds for taking measures against them. First Peter was written to meet no theological heresy; it was written to strengthen men and women in jeopardy of their lives.

THE DOUBTS

We have set out in full the arguments which go to prove that Peter is really the author of the first letter which bears his name. But, as we have said, not a few first-class scholars have felt that it cannot have been his work. We ourselves accept the view that Peter is the author of the letter; but in fairness we set out the other side, largely as it is presented in the chapter on First Peter in *The Primitive Church* by B. H. Streeter

STRANGE SILENCES

Bigg writes in his introduction: "There is no book in the New Testament which has earlier, better, or stronger attestation (than First Peter). It is true that

Eusebius, the great fourth century scholar and historian of the Church, classes First Peter among the books universally accepted in the early church as part of scripture" (Eusebius: Ecclesiastical History 3.25.2). But certain things are to be noted.

(a) Eusebius adduces certain quotations from earlier writers to prove his contention that First Peter was universally accepted. This he never does in connection with the gospels or the letters of Paul; and the very fact that he feels called upon to produce his evidence in the case of First Peter might be held to indicate that in it he felt some necessity to prove his point, a necessity which did not exist in connection with the other books. Was there a doubt in Eusebius' own mind? Or, were there people who had to be convinced? Was the universal acceptance of First Peter not so unanimous after all?

(b) In his book, *The Canon of the New Testament*, Westcott noted that, although no one in the early church questions the right of First Peter to be part of the New Testament, surprisingly few of the early fathers quote it and, still more surprising, very few of the early fathers in the west and in Rome quote it. Tertullian is an immense quoter of scripture. In his writings there are 7,258 quotations from the New Testament, but only 2 of them are from First Peter. If Peter wrote this letter and wrote it in Rome, we would expect it to be well known and largely used in the Church of the west.

(c) The earliest known official list of New Testament books is the Muratorian Canon, so called after Cardinal Muratori who discovered it. It is the official list of New Testament books as accepted in the Church at Rome about the year A.D. 170. It is an extraordinary fact that First Peter does not appear at all. It can be fairly argued that the Muratorian Canon, as we possess it, is defective and that it may originally have contained a reference to First Peter. But that argument is seriously weakened by the next consideration.

(d) It is a fact that First Peter was still not in the New Testament of the Syrian Church as late as A.D. 373. It did not get in until the Syriac version of the New Testament known as the Peshitto was made about A.D. 400. We know that it was Tatian who brought the New Testament books to the Syriac-speaking Church; and he brought them to Syria from Rome when he went to Edessa and founded the Church there in A.D. 172. It could, therefore, be argued that the Muratorian Canon is correct as we possess it and that First Peter was not part of the Roman Church's New Testament as late as A.D. 170. This would be a very surprising fact if Peter wrote it--and actually wrote it at Rome.

When all these facts are put together, it does seem that there are some strange silences in regard to First Peter and that its attestation may not be as strong as is usually assumed.

FIRST PETER AND EPHESIANS

Further, there is definitely some connection between First Peter and Ephesians. There are many close parallels of thought and expression between the two and we select the following specimens of this similarity.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1Pet. 1:3).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph.1:3).

Therefore, gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1Pet. 1:13).

Stand, therefore, having girded your loins with truth (Eph.6:14).

Jesus Christ, was destined before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake (1Pet. 1:20).

Even as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world (Eph.1:4).

Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God, with angels and authorities and powers subject to him (1Pet. 3:22).

God made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority, and power and dominion (Eph.1:20-21).

In addition, the injunctions to slaves, husbands and wives in First Peter and Ephesians are very similar.

The argument is put forward that First Peter is quoting Ephesians. Although Ephesians must have been written somewhere about A.D. 64, Paul's letters were not collected and edited until about A.D. 90. If, then, Peter was also writing in A.D. 64, how could he know Ephesians?

This is an argument to which there is more than one reply. (a) The injunctions to slaves, husbands and wives are part of the standardized ethical teaching given to all converts in all churches. Peter was not borrowing from Paul; both were using common stock. (b) All the similarities quoted can well be explained from the fact that certain phrases and lines of thought were universal in the early church. For instance, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," was part of the universal devotional language of the early church, which both Peter and Paul would know and use without any borrowing from each other. (c) Even if there

was mutual borrowing, it is by no means certain that First Peter borrowed from Ephesians; the borrowing might well have been the other way round and probably was, for First Peter is much simpler than Ephesians. (d) Lastly, even if First Peter borrowed from Ephesians, if Peter and Paul were in Rome at the same time, it is perfectly possible that Peter could have seen a copy of Ephesians before it was sent to Asia Minor, and he might well have discussed its ideas with Paul.

The argument that First Peter must be late because it quotes from Ephesians seems to us very uncertain and insecure, and probably mistaken.

YOUR FELLOW-ELDER

It is objected that Peter could not well have written the sentence: "The elders among you I exhort, as a fellow-elder" (1Pet. 5:1). It is maintained that Peter could not have called himself an elder. He was an apostle whose function was quite different from that of an elder. The apostle was characteristically a man whose work and authority were not confined to any one congregation, but whose writ ran throughout the Church at large; whereas the elder was the governing official of the local congregation.

That is perfectly true. But it must be remembered that amongst the Jews there was no office more universally honoured than that of elder. The elder had the respect of the whole community and to him the community looked for guidance in its problems and justice in its disputes. Peter, as a Jew, would feel nothing out of place in calling himself an elder; and in so doing he would avoid the conscious claim of authority that the title of apostle might have implied, and graciously and courteously identify himself with the people to whom he spoke.

A WITNESS OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

It is objected that Peter could not honestly have called himself a witness of Christ's sufferings, for after the arrest in the garden all the disciples forsook Jesus and fled (Matt.26:56) and, apart from the beloved disciple, none was a witness of the Cross (Jn.19:26-27). A witness of the resurrection Peter could call himself, and indeed to be such was the function of an apostle (Ac.1:22), but a witness of the Cross he was not. In a sense that is undeniable. And yet Peter is not here claiming to be a witness of the crucifixion, but to be a witness of the sufferings of Christ. He did see Christ suffer, in his continual rejection by men, in the poignant moments of the Last Supper, in the agony in the garden and in that moment when, after he had denied him, Jesus turned and looked on him (Lk.22:61). It is an insensitive and pedestrian criticism which denies to Peter the right to say that he had been a witness of the sufferings of Christ.

PERSECUTION FOR THE NAME

The main argument for a late date for First Peter is drawn from its references to persecution. It is argued that First Peter implies that it was already a crime to be a Christian and that Christians were brought before the courts, not for any crime but for the bare fact of their faith. First Peter speaks about being reproached for the name of Christ (1Pet. 4:14); it speaks of suffering as a Christian (1Pet. 4:16). It is argued that this stage of persecution was not reached until after A.D. 100, and that prior to that date their persecution was on the score of alleged evil-doing, as in the time of Nero.

There is no doubt that this was the law by A.D. 112. At that time Pliny was governor of Bithynia. He was a personal friend of the Emperor Trajan and he had a way of referring all his difficulties to Trajan for solution. He wrote to the Emperor to tell how he dealt with the Christians. Pliny was well aware that they were law-abiding citizens to whose practices no crimes were attached. They told him that "they had been accustomed to assemble on a fixed day before daylight, and sing by turns a hymn to Christ as God; that they had bound themselves with an oath, not for any crime, but to commit neither theft, nor robbery, nor adultery, nor to break their word, and not to deny a deposit when demanded." Pliny accepted all this; but, when they were brought before him, he asked only one question. "I have asked them whether they were Christians. Those who confessed I asked a second and a third time, threatening punishment. Those who persisted I ordered to be led away to execution." Their sole crime was that of being a Christian.

Trajan replied that this was the correct proceeding and that anyone who denied being a Christian and proved it by sacrificing to the gods was immediately to be set free. From the letters it is clear that there was a good deal of information being laid against the Christians; and Trajan laid it down that no anonymous letters of information were to be accepted or acted upon (Pliny: Letters 96 and 97).

It is argued that this stage of persecution did not emerge until the time of Trajan; and that First Peter, therefore, implies a situation which must be as late as Trajan's time.

The only way in which we can settle this is to sketch the progress of persecution and the reason for it in the Roman Empire. We may do so by setting out one basic fact and three developments from it.

(i) Under the Roman system, religions were divided into two kinds. There were those which were *religiones licitae*, permitted religions; these were recognized by the state and it was open to any man to practise them. There were *religiones*

illicitae; these were forbidden by the state and it was illegal for any man to practise them on pain of automatic prosecution as a criminal. It is to be noted that Roman toleration was very wide; and that any religion which did not affect public morality and civil order was certain to be permitted.

(ii) Judaism was a *religio licita*; and in the very early days the Romans, not unnaturally, did not know the difference between Judaism and Christianity. Christianity, as far as they were concerned, was merely a sect of Judaism and any tension and hostility between the two was a private quarrel which was no concern of the Roman government. Because of that in the very early days Christianity was under no danger of persecution. It enjoyed the same freedom of worship as Judaism enjoyed because it was assumed to be a *religio licita*.

(iii) The action of Nero changed the situation. However it came about, and most likely it was by the deliberate action of the Jews, the Roman government discovered that Judaism and Christianity were different. It is true that Nero first persecuted the Christians, not for being Christians, but for burning Rome. But the fact remains that Christianity had been discovered by the government to be a separate religion.

(iv) The consequence was immediate and inevitable. Christianity was at once a prohibited religion and immediately, *ipso facto*, every Christian became an outlaw. In the Roman historian, Suetonius, we have direct evidence that this was precisely what happened. He gives a kind of list of the legislative reforms initiated by Nero:

During his reign many abuses were severely punished and put down, and not a few new laws were made; a limit was set to expenditures; the public banquets were confined to a distribution of food; the sale of any kind of cooked viands in the taverns was forbidden, with the exception of pulse and vegetables, whereas, before, every kind of dainty was exposed for sale. Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition. He put an end to the diversions of the chariot-drivers, who from immunity of long standing claimed the right of ranging at large and amusing themselves by cheating and robbing the people. The pantomimic actors and their partisans were banished from the city.

We have quoted that passage in full because it is proof that by the time of Nero the punishment of Christians had become an ordinary police affair. It is abundantly clear that we do not need to wait until the time of Trajan for the mere fact of being a Christian to be a crime. Any time after Nero a Christian was liable to punishment and death simply for the name he bore,

This does not mean that persecution was constant and consistent; but it does mean that any Christian was liable to execution at any time, purely as a police matter. In one area a Christian might live a whole lifetime at peace; in another there might be outbreaks of persecution every few months. It depended very largely on two things. It depended on the governor himself who might either leave the Christians unmolested or equally set the processes of the law in action against them. It depended on informers. The governor might not wish to act against the Christians, but if information was laid against a Christian he had to; and there were times when the mob were out for blood, information was laid and Christians were butchered to make a Roman holiday.

To compare small things with great, the legal position of the Christians and the attitude of the Roman law can be paralleled in Britain today. There are certain actions which are illegal--to take a very small example, parking a car partly on the pavement--but which for long enough may be permitted. But if the police authorities decide to institute a drive against such an action, or if it develops into too blatant a breaking of the law, or if someone lays a complaint and information, the law will go into action and due penalty and punishment will be exacted. That was the position of the Christians in the empire all of whom were technically outlaws. In actual fact no action might be taken against them; but a kind of sword of Damocles was for ever suspended over them. None knew when information would be laid against him; none knew when a governor would take action; none knew when he might have to die. And that situation obtained consistently after the action of Nero. Up to that time the Roman authorities had not realized that Christianity was a new religion; but from then on the Christian was automatically an outlaw.

Let us, then, look at the situation as depicted in First Peter. Peter's people are undergoing various trials (1Pet. 1:6). Their faith is liable to be tried as metal is tested with fire (1Pet. 1:7). Clearly they are undergoing a campaign of slander in which ignorant and baseless charges are being maliciously directed against them (1Pet. 2:12; 1Pet. 2:15; 1Pet. 3:16; 1Pet. 4:4). At this very moment they are in the midst of an outbreak of persecution because they are Christians (1Pet. 4:12,14,16; 1Pet. 5:9). Such suffering is only to be expected and they must not be surprised at it (1Pet. 4:12). In any event it gives them the happiness of suffering for righteousness' sake (1Pet. 3:14,17), and of being sharers in the sufferings of Christ (1Pet. 4:13). There is no need to come down to the time of Trajan for this situation. It is one in which Christians daily found themselves in every part of the empire at any time after their true status had been disclosed by the action of Nero. The persecution situation in First Peter does not in any way compel us to date it after the lifetime of Peter.

HONOUR THE KING

But we must proceed with the arguments of those who cannot hold the Petrine authorship. It is argued that in the situation which obtained in the time of Nero, Peter could never have written: "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right.... Fear God. Honour the emperor." (1Pet. 2:13-17). The fact is, however, that this is precisely the point of view expressed in Rom.13:1-7. The whole teaching of the New Testament, except only in the Revelation in which Rome is damned, is that the Christian must be a loyal citizen and must demonstrate the falsity of the charges made against him by the excellence of his behaviour as such. (1Pet. 2:15). Even in times of persecution the Christian fully acknowledged his obligation to be a good citizen; and his only defence against persecution was to show by the excellence of his citizenship that he did not deserve such treatment. It is by no means impossible that Peter should have written like that.

A SERMON AND A PASTORAL

What is the view of those who cannot believe that First Peter is the work of Peter himself?

First of all, it is suggested that the initial address (1Pet. 1:1-2), and the closing greetings and salutations (1Pet. 5:12-14) are later additions and no part of the original letter.

It is then suggested that First Peter as it stands is composed of two separate and quite different works. In 1Pet. 4:11 we find a doxology. The natural place for a doxology is at the end; and it is suggested that 1Pet. 1:3-25; 1Pet. 2-3; 1Pet. 4:1-11 is the first of the two works of which the letter is composed. It is further suggested that this part of First Peter was originally a baptismal sermon. There is indeed in it a reference to the baptism which saves us (1Pet. 3:21); and the advice to slaves, wives and husbands (1Pet. 2:18-25; 1Pet. 3:1-7) would be entirely relevant to those who were entering the Christian Church from paganism and setting out on the newness of the Christian life.

It is suggested that the second part of the letter, 1Pet. 4:12-19; 1Pet. 5:1-11, contains the substance of a pastoral letter, written to strengthen and comfort during a time of persecution (1Pet. 4:12-19). At such a time the elders were very important; on them the resistance power of the Church depended. The writer of this pastoral fears that greed and arrogance are creeping in (1Pet. 5:1-3), and he urges them faithfully to perform their high task (1Pet. 5:4).

On this view First Peter is composed of two separate works--a baptismal sermon, and a pastoral letter written in time of persecution and neither has anything to do with Peter.

ASIA MINOR, NOT ROME

If First Peter is a baptismal sermon and a pastoral letter in time of persecution, where is its place of origin? If the letter is not Peter's, there is no necessity to connect it with Rome; and, in any event, it appears that the Roman Church did not know or use First Peter. Let us put together certain facts.

(a) Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1Pet. 1:1) are all in Asia Minor and all centred in Sinope.

(b) The first extensive quoter of First Peter is Polycarp bishop of Smyrna, and Smyrna is in Asia Minor.

(c) Certain phrases in First Peter immediately turn our thoughts to parallel phrases in other parts of the New Testament. In 1Pet. 5:13 the Church is called "she that is elect," and in 2Jn.13 the Church is also described as an "elect sister." 1Pet. 1:8 speaks of Jesus Christ, "without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy." This turns our thoughts very naturally to Jesus' saying to Thomas in the Fourth Gospel: "Blessed are those who have not seen, and believe" (Jn.20:29). First Peter urges the elders to tend, that is, to shepherd, the flock of God (1Pet. 5:2). That turns our thoughts to Jesus' injunction to Peter to feed his lambs and his sheep (Jn.21:15-17), and to Paul's farewell injunction to the elders of Ephesus to take heed to the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made them guardians (Ac.20:28). All this is to say that the memories First Peter awakens are of the Fourth Gospel, the Letters of John and of Paul at Ephesus. The Fourth Gospel and the Letters of John were most probably written at Ephesus, and Ephesus is in Asia Minor.

It seems that in the case of First Peter all roads lead to Asia Minor.

THE OCCASION OF THE PUBLICATION OF FIRST PETER

Assuming that First Peter has its origin in Asia Minor, can we suggest an occasion for its writing? It was written at a time of persecution. We know from Pliny's letters that in Bithynia about A.D. 112 there was a serious persecution of the Christians and Bithynia is one of the provinces named in the address. We may well conjecture that it was to give courage to the Christians then that First Peter was issued. It may be that at that time someone in a church in Asia Minor came upon these two documents and sent them out under the name of Peter. This would not be looked upon as forgery. Both in Jewish and in Greek practice it was the regular custom to attach books to the name of the great writers of the past.

THE AUTHOR OF FIRST PETER

If Peter did not write First Peter, is it possible to guess at the author? Let us reconstruct some of his essential qualifications. On our previous assumption, he must come from Asia Minor. On the basis of First Peter itself, he must be an elder and an eye-witness of the sufferings of Christ (1Pet. 5:1). Is there anyone who fits these requirements? Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis about A.D. 170, who spent his life collecting all the information he could about the early days of the Church, tells of his methods and his sources: "Nor shall I hesitate, along with my own interpretations, to set down for thee whatsoever I learned with care and remembered with care from the elders, guaranteeing its truth.... Furthermore, if anyone chanced to arrive who had been really a follower of the elders, I would enquire as to the sayings of the elders--as to what Andrew or Peter said, or Philip, or Thomas or James, or John or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples, also as to what Aristion or the Presbyter John, the Lord's disciples say. For I supposed that things out of books would not be of such use to me as the utterances of a living voice which was still with us." Here we have an elder called Aristion who was a disciple of the Lord and, therefore, a witness of his sufferings. Is there anything to connect him with First Peter?

ARISTION OF SMYRNA

When we turn to the Apostolic Constitutions we find that one of the first bishops of Smyrna was called Ariston--which is the same name as Aristion. Now who is the great quoter of First Peter? None other than Polycarp, a later Bishop of Smyrna. What more natural than that Polycarp should quote what might well have been the devotional classic of his own Church?

Let us turn to the letters to the Seven Churches in the Revelation and read the letter to Smyrna: "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev.2:10). Can this be the very same persecution as that which originally lay behind First Peter? And was it for this persecution that Aristion, the Bishop of Smyrna, first wrote the pastoral letter which was afterwards to become a part of First Peter?

Such is the suggestion of B. H. Streeter. He thinks that First Peter is composed of a baptismal sermon and a pastoral letter written by Aristion, Bishop of Smyrna. Originally the pastoral letter was written to comfort and strengthen the people of Smyrna in A.D. 90 when the persecution mentioned in the Revelation threatened the Church. These writings of Aristion became the devotional classics and the cherished possessions of the Church at Smyrna. Rather more than twenty years later a much wider and more far-reaching persecution broke out in Bithynia and spread throughout northern Asia Minor. Someone remembered the letter and the

sermon of Aristion, felt that they were the very thing the Church needed in her time of trial, and sent them out under the name of Peter, the great apostle.

AN APOSTLE'S LETTER

We have stated in full both views of the origin, date and authorship of First Peter. There is no doubt of the ingenuity of the theory which B. H. Streeter has produced nor that those who favour a later date have produced arguments which have to be considered. For our own part, however, we see no reason to doubt that the letter is the work of Peter himself, and that it was written not long after the great fire of Rome and the first persecution of the Christians with the object of encouraging the Christians of Asia Minor to stand fast when the onrushing tide of persecution sought to engulf them and take their faith away.

1 PETER

THE GREAT INHERITANCE

1Pet. 1:1-2

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's Chosen People, who are scattered as exiles throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. I am an apostle, and you are chosen, according to the fore-knowledge of God, through the consecration of the Spirit, for obedience and to be sprinkled by the blood of Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

It happens again and again in the New Testament that the true greatness of a passage lies not only on the surface and in what is actually said, but in the ideas and the convictions which lie behind it. That is particularly so here.

It is clear that this letter was written to people who were Gentiles. They have been released from the futile way of life which they had learned from their fathers (1Pet. 1:18). Those who were once not a people had become nothing less than the people of God (1Pet. 2:10). In previous times they had walked after the will and the lusts of the Gentiles (1Pet. 4:3). But the outstanding thing about this passage is that it takes words and conceptions which had originally applied only to the Jews, the Chosen Nation, and applies them to the Gentiles, who had once been believed to be outside the mercy of God. Once it had been said that "God created the Gentiles to be fuel for the fires of Hell." Once it had been said that, just as the best of the snakes must be crushed, so even the best of the Gentiles must be destroyed. Once it had been said that God loved only Israel of all nations upon the earth. But now the mercy, the privileges, and the grace of God have gone out to all the earth and to all men, even to those who could never have expected them.

(i) Peter calls the people to whom he writes the elect, God's Chosen People, Once that had been a title which belonged to Israel alone: "You are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth" (Deut.7:6; compare Deut.14:2). The prophet speaks of "Israel, my chosen" (Isa.45:4). The Psalmist speaks of "the sons of Jacob, his chosen ones" (Ps.105:6; Ps.105:43).

But the nation of Israel failed in the purposes of God, for, when he sent his Son into the world, they rejected and crucified him. When Jesus spoke the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, he said that the inheritance of Israel was to be taken from them and given to others (Matt.21:41; Mk.12:9; Lk.20:16). That is the basis of the great New Testament conception of the Christian Church as the true Israel, the new Israel, the Israel of God (compare Gal.6:16). All the privileges which had once belonged to Israel now belonged to the Christian Church. The mercy of God has gone out to the ends of the earth, and all nations have seen the glory and experienced the grace of God.

(ii) There is another word here which once belonged exclusively to Israel. The address literally reads: "To the elect strangers of the Diaspora throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia." Diaspora (GSN1290), literally the dispersion, was the technical name for the Jews scattered in exile in all the countries outside the bounds of Palestine. Sometimes in their troubled history the Jews had been forcibly deported from their native land; sometimes they had gone of their own free will to work, and often to prosper, in other lands. Those exiled Jews were called the Diaspora (GSN1290). But now the real Diaspora is not the Jewish nation; it is the Christian Church scattered abroad throughout the provinces of the Roman Empire and the nations of the world. Once the people who had been different from others were the Jews; now the people who are different are the Christians. They are the people whose King is God, whose home is eternity, and who are exiles in the world.

THE CHOSEN OF GOD AND THE EXILES OF ETERNITY

1Pet. 1:1-2 (continued)

What we have just been saying means that the two great titles of which we have been thinking belong to us who are Christians.

(i) We are the Chosen People of God. There is uplift here. Surely there can be no greater compliment and privilege in all the world than to be chosen by God. The word *eklektos* (GSN1588) can describe anything that is specially chosen; it can describe specially chosen fruit, articles specially chosen because they are so outstandingly well made, picked troops specially chosen for some great exploit.

We have the honour of being specially chosen by God. But there is also challenge and responsibility here. God always chooses for service. The honour which he gives a man is that of being used for his purposes. It was precisely there that the Jews failed, and we have to see to it that the tragedy of a like failure does not mark our lives.

(ii) We are the exiles of eternity. This is never to say that we must withdraw from the world, but that in the real sense we must be at the same time both in the world and not of it. It has been wisely said that the Christian must be apart from the world but never aloof from it. Wherever the exiled Jew settled, his eyes were towards Jerusalem. In foreign countries his synagogues were so built that, when the worshipper entered, he was facing towards Jerusalem. However useful a citizen of his adopted country the Jew was, his greatest loyalty was to Jerusalem.

The Greek word for such a sojourner in a strange land is *paroikos* (GSN3941). A *paroikos* was a man who was in a strange land and whose thoughts ever turned home. Such a sojourning was called a *paroikia* (GSN3940); and *paroikia* is the direct derivation of the English word *parish*. The Christians in any place are a group of people whose eyes are turned to God and whose loyalty is beyond. "Here," said the writer to the Hebrews, "we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come" (Heb.13:14).

We must repeat that this does not mean withdrawal from the world; but it does mean that the Christian sees all things in the light of eternity and life as a journey towards God. It is this which decides the importance which he attaches to anything; it is this which dictates his conduct. It is the touchstone and the dynamic of his life.

There is a famous unwritten saying of Jesus: "The world is a bridge. The wise man will pass over it, but he will not build his house upon it." This is the thought which is behind the famous passage in The Epistle to Diognetus, one of the best-known works of the post-apostolic age: "Christians are not marked out from the rest of mankind by their country or their speech or their customs.... They dwell in cities both Greek and barbarian, each as his lot is cast, following the customs of the region in clothing and in food and in the outward things of life generally; yet they manifest the wonderful and openly paradoxical character of their own state. They inhabit the lands of their birth, but as temporary residents thereof; they take their share of all responsibilities as citizens, and endure all disabilities as aliens. Every foreign land is their native land, and every native land a foreign land.... They pass their days upon earth, but their citizenship is in heaven."

It would be wrong to think that this makes the Christian a bad citizen of the land in which he lives. It is because he sees all things in the light of eternity that he is

the best of all citizens, for it is only in the light of eternity that the true values of things can be seen.

We, as Christians, are the Chosen People of God; we are the exiles of eternity. Therein lie both our priceless privilege and our inescapable responsibility.

THE THREE GREAT FACTS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

1Pet. 1:1-2 (continued)

In 1Pet. 1:2 we are confronted with the three great facts of the Christian life.

(i) The Christian is chosen according to the foreknowledge of God. C. E. B. Cranfield has a fine comment on this phrase: "If all our attention is concentrated on the hostility or indifference of the world or the exiguousness of our own progress in the Christian life, we may well be discouraged. At such times we need to be reminded that our election is according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. The Church is not just a human organization--though, of course, it is that. Its origin lies, not in the will of the flesh, in the idealism of men, in human aspirations and plans, but in the eternal purpose of God." When we are discouraged we may well remind ourselves that the Christian Church came into being according to the purpose and plan of God and, if it is true to him, it can never ultimately fail.

(ii) The Christian is chosen to be consecrated by the Spirit. Luther said: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him." For the Christian the Holy Spirit is essential to every part of the Christian life and every step in it. It is the Holy Spirit who awakens within us the first faint longings for God and goodness. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts us of our sin and leads us to the Cross where that sin is forgiven. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to be freed from the sins which have us in their grip and to gain the virtues which are the fruit of the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the assurance that our sins are forgiven and that Jesus Christ is Lord. The beginning, the middle and the end of the Christian life are the work of the Holy Spirit.

(iii) The Christian is chosen for obedience and for sprinkling by the blood of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament there are three occasions when sprinkling with blood is mentioned. It may well be that all three were present in Peter's mind and that all three have something to contribute to the thought behind these words.

(a) When a leper had been healed, he was sprinkled with the blood of a bird (Lev.14:1-7). Sprinkling with blood is, therefore, the symbol of cleansing. By the sacrifice of Christ, the Christian is cleansed from sin.

(b) Sprinkling with blood was part of the ritual of the setting apart of Aaron and the priests (Exo.29:20-21; Lev.8:30). It was the sign of setting apart for the service of God. The Christian is specially set apart for the service of God, not only within the Temple, but also within the world.

(c) The great picture of the sprinkling comes from the covenant relationship between Israel and God. In the covenant, God, of his own gracious will, approached Israel that they might be his people and that he might be their God. But that relationship depended on the Israelites accepting the conditions of the covenant and obeying the law. Obedience was a necessary condition of the covenant, and failure in obedience meant failure of the covenant relationship between God and Israel. So the book of the covenant was read to Israel and the people pledged themselves: "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do." As a token of this relationship of obedience between the people and God, Moses took half the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkled it on the altar, and half the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkled it on the people (Exo.24:1-8). Sprinkling was for obedience.

Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ the Christian is called into a new relationship with God, in which the sins of the past are forgiven and he is pledged to obedience in the time to come.

It is in the purpose of God that the Christian is called. It is by the work of the Holy Spirit that his life is hallowed towards God. It is by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ that he is cleansed from past sin and dedicated to future obedience to God.

THE REBIRTH OF THE CHRISTIAN

1Pet. 1:3-5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his great mercy, has brought about in us that rebirth which leads to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, an inheritance imperishable, undefilable, and unfading, kept safe in heaven for us, who are protected by the power of God through faith, until there comes that deliverance which is ready to be revealed at the last time.

It will take us a long time to appropriate the riches of this passage, for there are few passages in the New Testament where more of the great fundamental Christian ideas come together.

It begins with a doxology to God--but a doxology with a difference. For a Jew the commonest of all beginnings to prayer was, "Blessed art thou, O God." The Christian takes over that prayer--but with a difference. His prayer begins,

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He is not praying to a distant, unknown God; he is praying to the God who is like Jesus and to whom, through Jesus Christ, he may come with childlike confidence.

This passage begins with the idea of rebirth; the Christian is a man who has been reborn; begotten again by God to a new kind of life. Whatever else this means, it means that, when a man becomes a Christian, there comes into his life a change so radical that the only thing that can be said is that life has begun all over again for him. This idea of rebirth runs all through the New Testament. Let us try to collect what it says about it.

(i) The Christian rebirth happens by the will and by the act of God (Jn.1:13; Jas. 1:18). It is not something which a man achieves any more than he achieves his physical birth.

(ii) Another way to put that is to say that this rebirth is the work of the Spirit (Jn.3:1-15). It happens to a man, not by his own effort, but when he yields himself to be possessed and re-created by the Spirit within him.

(iii) It happens by the word of truth (Jas. 1:18; 1Pet. 1:23). In the beginning it was the word of God which created heaven and earth and all that is in them. God spoke and the chaos became a world, and the world was equipped with and for life. It is the creative word of God in Jesus Christ which brings about this rebirth in a man's life.

(iv) The result of this rebirth is that the man who is reborn becomes the first fruits of a new creation (Jas. 1:18). It lifts him out of this world of space and time, of change and decay, of sin and defeat, and brings him here and now into touch with eternity and eternal life.

(v) When a man is reborn, it is to a living hope (1Pet. 1:3). Paul describes the heathen world as being without hope (Eph.2:12). Sophocles wrote: "Not to be born at all--that is by far the best fortune; the second best is as soon as one is born with all speed to return thither whence one has come." To the heathen the world was a place where all things faded and decayed; it might be pleasant enough in itself but it was leading out into nothing but an endless dark. To the ancient world the Christian characteristic was hope. That hope came from two things. (a) The Christian felt that he had been born, not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed (1Pet. 1:23). He had something of the very seed of God in him and, therefore, had in him a life which neither time nor eternity could destroy. (b) It came from the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1Pet. 1:3). The Christian had for ever beside him--even more, was one with--this Jesus Christ who had conquered even death and, therefore, there was nothing of which he need be afraid.

(vi) The rebirth of the Christian is a rebirth to righteousness (1Jn.2:29; 1Jn.3:9; 1Jn.5:18). In this rebirth he is cleansed from himself, the sins which shackle him and the habits which bind him; and he is given a power which enables him to walk in righteousness. That is not to say that the man who is reborn will never sin; but it is to say that every time he falls he will be given the power and the grace to rise again.

(vii) The rebirth of the Christian is a rebirth to love (1Jn.4:7). Because the life of God is in him, he is cleansed from the essential unforgiving bitterness of the self-centred life and there is in him something of the forgiving and sacrificial love of God.

(viii) Finally, the rebirth of the Christian is rebirth to victory (1Jn.5:4). Life ceases to be defeat and begins to be victory, over self and sin and circumstances. Because the life of God is in him, the Christian has learned the secret of victorious living.

THE GREAT INHERITANCE

1Pet. 1:3-5 (continued)

Further, the Christian has entered into a great inheritance (kleronomia, GSN2817). Here is a word with a great history; for it is the word which is regularly used in the Greek Old Testament for the inheritance of Canaan, the Promised Land. Again and again the Old Testament speaks of the land which God had given his people for an inheritance to possess (Deut.15:4; Deut.19:10). To us inheritance tends to mean something which in the future we shall possess; as the Bible uses the word, it rather means a secure possession. To the Jew the great settled possession was the Promised Land.

But the Christian inheritance is even greater. Peter uses three words with three great pictures behind them to describe it. It is imperishable (aphthartos, GSN0862). The word does mean imperishable but it can also mean unravaged by any invading army. Many and many a time Palestine had been ravaged by the armies of the aliens; it had been fought over and blasted and destroyed. But the Christian possesses a peace and a joy, which no invading army can ravage and destroy. It is undefilable. The word is amiantos (GSN0283), and the verb miainein (GSN3392), from which this adjective comes, means to pollute with impious impurity. Many and many a time Palestine had been rendered impure by false worship of false gods (Jer.2:7; Jer.2:23; Jer.3:2; Eze.20:43). The defiling things had often left their touch even on the Promised Land; but the Christian has a purity which the sin of the world cannot infect. It is unfading (amarantos, GSN0263). In the Promised Land, as in any land, even the loveliest flower fades and the loveliest blossom dies. But the Christian is lifted into a world where there

is no change and decay and where his peace and joy are untouched by the chances and the changes of life.

What, then, is this wonderful inheritance which the reborn Christian possesses? There may be many secondary answers to that question but there is only one primary answer--the inheritance of the Christian is God himself. The Psalmist said, "The Lord is my chosen portion... I have a goodly heritage" (Ps.16:5). God is his portion for ever (Ps.73:23-26). "The Lord," said the prophet, "is my portion; therefore I will hope in him" (Lam.3:24).

It is because the Christian possesses God and is possessed by God that he has the inheritance which is imperishable, undefilable and which can never fade away.

PROTECTED IN TIME AND SAFE IN ETERNITY

1Pet. 1:3-5 (continued)

The inheritance of the Christian, the full joy of God, is waiting for him in heaven; and of that Peter has two great things to say.

(i) On our journey through this world to eternity we are protected by the power of God through faith. The word which Peter uses for protect (phrourein, GSN5432) is a military word. It means that our life is garrisoned by God and that he stands sentinel over us all our days. The man who has faith never doubts, even when he cannot see him, that God is standing within the shadows keeping watch upon his own. It is not that God saves us from the troubles and the sorrows and the problems of life; but he enables us to conquer them and march on.

(ii) The final salvation will be revealed at the last time. Here we have two conceptions which are at the very basis of New Testament thought.

The New Testament frequently speaks of the last day or days, or the last time. At the back of this is the way the Jews divided all time into two ages--the present age, which is wholly under the domination of evil and the age to come, which will be the golden age of God. In between came the day of the Lord during which the world would be destroyed and remade and judgment would come. It is this in between time which is the last days or the last time, that time when the world as we know it will come to an end.

It is not given to us to know when that time will come nor what will happen then. But we can gather together what the New Testament says about these last days.

(i) The Christians believed that they were already living in the last days. "It is the last hour," says John to his people (1Jn.2:18). The writer to the Hebrews speaks of the fullness of the revelation which has come to men in Christ in these last days (Heb.1:2). As the first Christians saw it, God had already invaded time and the end was hastening on.

(ii) The last times were to be times of the pouring out of God's Spirit upon men (Ac.2:17). The early Christians saw that being fulfilled in Pentecost and in the Spirit-filled Church.

(iii) It was the regular conviction of the early Christians that before the end the powers of evil would make a final assault and that all kinds of false teachers would arise (2Tim.3:1; 1Jn.2:18; Jd.18).

(iv) The dead would be resurrected. It is Jesus' promise that at the last time he will raise up his own (Jn.6:39-40,44; Jn.6:54; Jn.11:24).

(v) Inevitably it would be a time of judgment when God's justice would be exercised and his enemies find their just condemnation and punishment (Jn.12:48; Jas. 5:3).

Such are the ideas which are in the minds of the New Testament writers when they use this phrase the last times or the last days.

Clearly for many a man such a time will be a time of terror; but for the Christian there is, not terror, but deliverance. The word *sozein* (GSN4982) means to save in far more than a theological sense. It is the regular word for to rescue from danger and to heal in sickness. Charles Bigg in his commentary points out that in the New Testament *sozein* (GSN4982), to save, and *soteria* (GSN4991), salvation, have four different, but closely related, spheres of meaning. (a) They describe deliverance from danger (Matt.8:25). (b) They describe deliverance from disease (Matt.9:21). (c) They describe deliverance from the condemnation of God (Matt.10:22; Matt.24:13). (d) They describe deliverance from the disease and power of sin (Matt.1:21). Salvation is a many-sided thing. In it there is deliverance from danger, deliverance from disease, deliverance from condemnation and deliverance from sin. And it is that, and nothing less than that, to which the Christian can look forward at the end.

THE SECRET OF ENDURANCE

1Pet. 1:6-7

Herein you rejoice, even if it is at present necessary that for a brief time you should be grieved by all kinds of trials, for the object of these trials is that your

tried and tested faith, more precious than gold which perishes though it is tested by the fire, may win praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ shall appear.

Peter comes to the actual situation in life in which his readers found themselves. Their Christianity had always made them unpopular, but now they were facing almost certain persecution. Soon the storm was going to break and life was going to be an agonizing thing. In face of that threatening situation Peter in effect reminds them of three reasons why they can stand anything that may come upon them.

(i) They can stand anything because of what they are able to look forward to. At the end there is for them the magnificent inheritance, life with God. In fact this is how Westcott understands the phrase, "in the last time" (en (GSN1722) kairo (GSN2540) eschato, GSN2078). We have taken it to mean in the time when the world as we know it will come to an end; but the Greek can mean when the worst comes to the worst. It is then, says Westcott, when things have reached their limit, that the saving power of Christ will be displayed.

In any event, the ultimate meaning is the same. For the Christian persecution and trouble are not the end; beyond lies the glory; and in the hope of that glory he can endure anything that life brings to him. It sometimes happens that a man has to undergo a painful operation or course of treatment; but he gladly accepts the pain and the discomfort because of the renewed health and strength which lie beyond. It is one of the basic facts of life that a man can endure anything so long as he has something to look forward to--and the Christian can look forward to the ultimate joy.

(ii) They can stand anything that comes if they remember that every trial is, in fact, a test. Before gold is pure it has to be tested in the fire. The trials which come to a man test his faith and out of them that faith can emerge stronger than ever it was before. The rigours which the athlete has to undergo are not meant to make him collapse but to make him able to develop more strength and staying-power. In this world trials are not meant to take the strength out of us, but to put the strength into us.

In this connection there is something most suggestive in the language Peter uses. He says that the Christian for the moment may well have to undergo various trials. The Greek is *poikilos* (GSN4164), which literally means many-coloured. Peter uses that word only one other time and it is to describe the grace of God (1Pet. 4:10). Our troubles may be many-coloured, but so is the grace of God; there is no colour in the human situation which that grace cannot match. There is a grace to match every trial and there is no trial without its grace.

(iii) They can stand anything, because at the end of it, when Jesus Christ appears, they will receive from him praise and glory and honour. Again and again in this life we make our biggest efforts and do our best work, not for pay or profit, but in order to see the light in someone's eyes and to hear his word of praise. These things mean more than anything else in the world. The Christian knows that, if he endures, he will in the end hear the Master's "Well done!"

Here is the recipe for endurance when life is hard and faith is difficult. We can stand up to things because of the greatness to which we can look forward, because every trial is another test to strengthen and to purify our faith, and because at the end of it Jesus Christ is waiting to say, "Well done!" to all his faithful servants.

UNSEEN BUT NOT UNKNOWN

1Pet. 1:8-9

Although you never knew him, you love him; although you do not see him, you believe in him. And you rejoice with unspeakable and glorious joy because you are receiving that which faith must end in--the salvation of your souls.

Peter is drawing an implicit contrast between himself and his readers. It was his great privilege to have known Jesus in the days of his flesh. His readers had not had that joy; but, although they never knew Jesus in the flesh, they love him; and although they do not see him with the bodily eye, they believe. And that belief brings to them a joy beyond speech and clad with glory, for even here and now it makes them certain of the ultimate welfare of their souls.

E. G. Selwyn in his commentary distinguishes four stages in man's apprehension of Christ.

(i) The first is the stage of hope and desire, the stage of those who throughout the ages dreamed of the coming of the King. As Jesus himself said to his disciples, "Many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it" (Lk.10:23-24). There were the days of longings and expectations which were never fully realized.

(ii) The second stage came to those who knew Christ in the flesh. That is what Peter is thinking about here. That is what he was thinking about when he said to Cornelius, "We are witnesses to all that he did, both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem" (Ac.10:39). There were those who walked with Jesus and on whose witness our knowledge of his life and the words depends.

(iii) There are those in every nation and time who see Jesus with the eye of faith. Jesus said to Thomas, "Have you believed because you have seen me?"

Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believe" (Jn.20:29). This way of seeing Jesus is possible only because he is not someone who lived and died and exists now only as a figure in a book but someone who lived and died and is alive for evermore. It has been said that "no apostle ever remembered Jesus." That is to say, Jesus is not only a memory; he is a person whom we can meet.

(iv) There is the beatific vision. It was John's confidence that we shall see him as he is (1Jn.3:2). "Now," said Paul, "we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face" (1Cor.13:12). If the eye of faith endures, the day will come when it will be the eye of sight, and we shall see face to face and know even as we are known.

Jesus, these eyes have never seen That radiant form of thine; The veil of sense hangs dark between Thy blessed face and mine.

I see thee not, I hear thee not, Yet art thou oft with me; And earth hath ne'er so dear a spot As where I meet with thee.

Yet, though I have not seen, and still Must rest in faith alone, I love thee, dearest Lord, and will, Unseen but not unknown.

When death these mortal eyes shall seal, And still this throbbing heart, The rending veil shall thee reveal All glorious as thou art.

THE FORETELLING OF THE GLORY

1Pet. 1:10-12

Prophets, who prophesied about the grace which was to come to you, enquired and searched concerning that salvation, seeking to find out when and how the Spirit of Christ within them, testifying in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and to the glories which must follow them, was telling them that it would come. It was revealed to them that the ministry which they were exercising in these things was not for themselves but for you, things which have now been proclaimed to you through those who preached the gospel to you through the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, things of which the angels long to catch a glimpse.

Here again we have a rich passage. The wonder of the salvation which was to come to men in Christ was such that the prophets searched and enquired about it; and even the angels were eager to catch a glimpse of it. Few passages have more to tell us about how the prophets wrote and about how they were inspired.

(i) We are told two things about the prophets. First, they searched and enquired about the salvation which was to come. Second, the Spirit of Christ told them about Christ. Here we have the great truth that inspiration depends on two

things--the searching mind of man and the revealing Spirit of God. It used sometimes to be said that the men who wrote Scripture were pens in the hands of God or flutes into which his Spirit breathed or lyres across which his Spirit moved. That is to say, they were held to be nothing more than almost unconscious instruments in God's hands. But this passage tells us that God's truth comes only to the man who searches for it. In inspiration there is an element which is human and an element which is divine; it is the product at one and the same time of the search of man's mind and the revelation of God's Spirit.

Further, this passage tells us that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, was always operative in this world. Wherever men have glimpsed beauty, wherever they have laid hold on truth, wherever they have had longings for God, the Spirit of Christ was there. Never has there been any time in any nation when the Spirit of Christ was not moving men to seek God and guiding them to find him. Sometimes they have been blind and deaf, sometimes they have misinterpreted that guidance, sometimes they have grasped but fragments of it, but always that revealing Spirit has been there to guide the searching mind.

(ii) This passage tells us that the prophets spoke of the sufferings and the glory of Christ. Such passages as Ps.22 and Isa.52:13-15; Isa.53:1-12 found their consummation and fulfilment in the sufferings of Christ. Such passages as Ps.2, Ps.16:8-11, Ps.110, found their fulfilment in the glory and the triumph of Christ. We need not think that the prophets foresaw the actual man Jesus. What they did foresee was that one would come some day in whom their dreams and visions would all be fulfilled.

(iii) This passage tells us for whom the prophets spoke. It was the message of the glorious deliverance of God that they brought to men. That was a deliverance which they themselves never experienced. Sometimes God gives a man a vision, but says to the man himself, "Not yet!" He took Moses to Pisgah and showed him the Promised Land and said to him, "I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there" (Deut.34:14). Someone tells of watching one night at dusk a blind lamplighter lighting the lamps. He tapped his way from lamp-post to lamp-post bringing to others a light which he himself would never see. As the prophets knew, it is a great gift to receive the vision, even if the consummation of the vision is for others still to come.

THE MESSAGE OF THE PREACHER

1Pet. 1:10-12 (continued)

This passage tells us not only of the visions of the prophets but also of the message of the preacher. It was the preachers who brought the message of salvation to the readers of Peter's letter.

(i) It tells us that preaching is the announcement of salvation. Preaching may at different times have many notes and many aspects, but fundamentally it is the proclamation of the gospel, the good news. The preacher may at times have to warn, threaten and condemn; he may have to remind men of the judgment and the wrath of God; but basically, beyond all else, his message is the announcement of salvation.

(ii) It tells us that preaching is through the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. The preacher's message is not his own; it is given to him. He brings, not his own opinions and even prejudices; he brings the truth as given him by the Holy Spirit. Like the prophet he will have to search and enquire; he will have to study and to learn; but he must then wait for the guidance of the Spirit to come to him.

(iii) It tells us that the preacher's message is of things of which the angels long to catch a glimpse. There is no excuse for triviality in preaching. There is no excuse for an earthbound and unlovely message without interest or thrill. The salvation of God is a tremendous thing.

It is with the message of salvation and the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ that the preacher must ever appear before men.

THE NECESSARY VIRILITY OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

1Pet. 1:13

So, then, gird up the loins of your mind; be sober; come to a final decision to place your hope on the grace which is going to be brought to you at the revealing of Jesus Christ.

Peter has been talking about the greatness and the glory to which the Christian may look forward; but the Christian can never be lost in dreams of the future; he must always be virile in the battle of the present. So Peter sends out three challenges to his people.

(i) He tells them to gird up the loins of their mind. This is a deliberately vivid phrase. In the east men wore long flowing robes which hindered fast progress or strenuous action. Round the waist they wore a broad belt or girdle; and when strenuous action was necessary they shortened the long robe by pulling it up within the belt in order to give them freedom of movement. The English equivalent of the phrase would be to roll up one's sleeves or to take off one's jacket. Peter is telling his people that they must be ready for the most strenuous

mental endeavour. They must never be content with a flabby and unexamined faith; they must set to and think things out and think them through. It may be that they will have to discard some things. It may be that they will make mistakes. But what they are left with will be theirs in such a way that nothing and nobody can ever take it away from them.

(ii) He tells them to be sober. The Greek word, like the English, can have two meanings. It can mean that they must refrain from drunkenness in the literal sense of the term; and it can also mean that they must be steady in their minds. They must become intoxicated neither with intoxicating liquor nor with intoxicating thoughts; they must preserve a balanced judgment. It is easy for the Christian to be carried away with this, that, or the next sudden enthusiasm and to become readily intoxicated with the latest fashion and the newest craze. Peter is appealing to them to maintain the essential steadiness of the man who knows what he believes.

(iii) He tells them to set their hope on the grace which is going to be given to them when Jesus Christ comes. It is the great characteristic of the Christian that he lives in hope; and because he lives in hope he can endure the trials of the present. Any man can endure struggle and effort and toil, if he is certain that it is all leading somewhere. That is why the athlete accepts his training and the student his study. For the Christian the best is always still to come. He can live with gratitude for all the mercies of the past, with resolution to meet the challenge of the present and with the certain hope that in Christ the best is yet to be.

THE CHRISTLESS LIFE AND THE CHRIST-FILLED LIFE

1Pet. 1:14-25

Be obedient children. Do not continue to live a life which matches the desires of the days of your former ignorance, but show yourselves holy in all your conduct of life as he who called you is holy, because it stands written: "You must be holy, because I am holy." If you address as Father him who judges each man according to his work with complete impartiality, conduct yourselves with reverence throughout the time of your sojourn in this world; for you know that it was not by perishable things, by silver or gold, that you were rescued from the futile way of life which you learned from your fathers, but it was by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. It was before the creation of the world that he was predestined to his work; it is at the end of the ages that he has appeared, for the sake of you who through him believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope might be in God. Now that you have purified your souls by obedience to the truth--a purification that must issue in a brotherly love that is sincere--love each

other heartily and steadfastly, for you have been reborn, not of mortal but of immortal seed, through the living and abiding word of God, for, "All flesh is grass, and its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever." And that is the word, the good news of which was brought to you.

There are three great lines of approach in this passage and we look at them one by one.

1. JESUS CHRIST REDEEMER AND LORD

It has great things to say about Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Lord.

(i) Jesus Christ is the emancipator, through whom men are delivered from the bondage of sin and death; he is the lamb without blemish and without spot (1Pet. 1:19). When Peter spoke like that of Jesus, his mind was going back to two Old Testament pictures--to Isa.53, with its picture of the Suffering Servant, through whose suffering the people were saved and healed and above all to the picture of the Passover Lamb (Exo.12:5). On that memorable night when they left the slavery of Egypt, the children of Israel were bidden to take a lamb and slay it and mark their doorposts with its blood; and, when the angel of death went through the land slaying the first-born sons of the Egyptians, he passed over every house so marked. In that picture of the Passover Lamb there are the twin thoughts of emancipation from slavery and deliverance from death. No matter how we interpret it, it cost the life and death of Jesus Christ to liberate men from their bondage to sin and to death.

(ii) Jesus Christ is the eternal purpose of God. It was before the creation of the world that he was predestined for the work which was given him to do (1Pet. 1:20). Here is a great thought. Sometimes we tend to think of God as first Creator and then Redeemer, as having created the world and then, when things went wrong, finding a way to rescue it through Jesus Christ. But here we have the vision of a God who was Redeemer before he was Creator. His redeeming purpose was not an emergency measure to which he was compelled when things went wrong. It goes back before creation.

(iii) Peter has a connection of thought which is universal in the New Testament. Jesus Christ is not only the lamb who was slain; he is the resurrected and triumphant one to whom God gave glory. The New Testament thinkers seldom separate the Cross and the Resurrection; they seldom think of the sacrifice of Christ without thinking of his triumph. Edward Rogers, in *That they might have Life*, tells us that on one occasion he went carefully through the whole story of the Passion and the Resurrection in order to find a way to represent it dramatically, and goes on, "I began to feel that there was something subtly and

tragically wrong in any emphasis on the agony of the Cross which dimmed the brightness of the Resurrection, any suggestion that it was endured pain rather than overcoming love which secured man's salvation." He asks where the eyes of the Christian turn at the beginning of Lent. What do we dominantly see? "Is it the darkness that covered the earth at noon, swirling round the pain and anguish of the Cross? Or is it the dazzling, mysterious early-morning brightness that shone from an empty tomb?" He continues, "There are forms of most earnest and devoted evangelical preaching and theological writing which convey the impression that somehow the Crucifixion has overshadowed the Resurrection and that the whole purpose of God in Christ was completed on Calvary. The truth, which is obscured only at grave spiritual peril, is that the Crucifixion cannot be interpreted and understood save in the light of the Resurrection."

Through his death Jesus emancipated men from their bondage to slavery and death; but through his Resurrection he gives them a life which is as glorious and indestructible as his own. Through this triumphant Resurrection we have faith and hope in God (1Pet. 1:21).

In this passage we see Jesus the great emancipator at the cost of Calvary; We see Jesus the eternal redeeming purpose of God; We see Jesus the triumphant victor over death and the glorious Lord of life, the giver of life which death cannot touch and the bringer of hope which nothing can take away.

2. THE CHRISTLESS LIFE

Peter picks out three characteristics of the Christless life.

(i) It is the life of ignorance (1Pet. 1:14). The pagan world was always haunted by the unknowability of God; at best men could but grope after his mystery. "It is hard," said Plato, "to investigate and to find the framer and the father of the universe; and, if one did find him, it would be impossible to express him in terms which all could understand." Even for the philosopher, to find God is difficult; and for the ordinary man, to understand him is impossible. Aristotle spoke of God as the supreme cause, by all men dreamed of and by no man known. The ancient world did not doubt that there was a God or gods but it believed that such gods as there were were quite unknowable and totally uninterested in men and the universe. In a world without Christ God was mystery and power but never love; there was no one to whom men could raise their hands for help or their eyes for hope.

(ii) It is the life dominated by desire (1Pet. 1:14). As we read the records of that world into which Christianity came we cannot but be appalled at the sheer fleshliness of life within it. There was desperate poverty at the lower end of the social scale; but at the top we read of banquets which cost thousands of pounds,

where peacocks' brains and nightingales' tongues were served and where the Emperor Vitellius set on the table at one banquet two thousand fish and seven thousand birds. Chastity was forgotten. Martial speaks of a woman who had reached her tenth husband; Juvenal of a woman who had eight husbands in five years; and Jerome tells us that in Rome there was one woman who was married to her twenty-third husband, she herself being his twenty-first wife. Both in Greece and in Rome homosexual practices were so common that they had come to be looked on as natural. It was a world mastered by desire, whose aim was to find newer and wilder ways of gratifying its lusts.

(iii) It was a life characterized by futility. Its basic trouble was that it was not going anywhere. Catullus writes to his Lesbia pleading for the delights of love. He pleads with her to seize the moment with its fleeting joys. "Suns can rise and set again; but once our brief light is dead, there is nothing left but one long night from which we never shall awake." If a man was to die like a dog, why should he not live like a dog? Life was a futile business with a few brief years in the light of the sun and then an eternal nothingness. There was nothing for which to live and nothing for which to die. Life must always be futile when there is nothing on the other side of death.

3. THE CHRIST-FILLED LIFE

Peter finds three characteristics of the Christ-filled life and for each he finds compelling reasons.

(i) The Christ-filled life is the life of obedience and of holiness (1Pet. 1:14-16). To be chosen by God is to enter, not only into great privilege, but also into great responsibility. Peter remembers the ancient command at the very heart of all Hebrew religion. It was God's insistence to his people that they must be holy because he was holy (Lev.11:44; Lev.19:2; Lev.20:7; Lev.20:26). The word for holy is *hagios* (GSN0040) whose root meaning is different. The Temple is *hagios* (GSN0040) because it is different from other buildings; the Sabbath is *hagios* (GSN0040) because it is different from other days; the Christian is *hagios* (GSN0040) because he is different from other men. The Christian is God's man by God's choice. He is chosen for a task in the world and for a destiny in eternity. He is chosen to live for God in time and with him in eternity. In the world he must obey his law and reproduce his life. There is laid on the Christian the task of being different.

(ii) The Christ-filled life is the life of reverence (1Pet. 1:17-21). Reverence is the attitude of mind of the man who is always aware that he is in the presence of God. In these five verses Peter picks out three reasons for this Christian reverence. (a) The Christian is a sojourner in this world. Life for him is lived in the shadow of eternity; he thinks all the time, not only of where he is but also of

where he is going. (b) He is going to God; true, he can call God Father, but that very God whom he calls Father is also he who judges every man with strict impartiality. The Christian is a man for whom there is a day of reckoning. He is a man with a destiny to win or to lose. Life in this world becomes of tremendous importance because it is leading to the life beyond. (c) The Christian must live life in reverence, because it cost so much, nothing less than the life and death of Jesus Christ. Since, then, life is of such surpassing value, it cannot be wasted or thrown away. No honourable man squanders what is of infinite human worth.

(iii) The Christ-filled life is the life of brotherly love. It must issue in a love for the brethren which is sincere and hearty and steadfast. The Christian is a man who is reborn, not of mortal, but of immortal seed. That may mean either of two things. It may mean that the remaking of the Christian is due to no human agency but to the agency of God, another way of saying what John said when he spoke of those "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn.1:13). More probably it means that the Christian is remade by the entry into him of the seed of the word; and the picture is that of the Parable of the Sower (Matt.13:1-9). The quotation which Peter makes is from Isa.40:6-8 and the second interpretation fits that better. However we take it, the meaning is that the Christian is remade. Because he is reborn, the life of God is in him. The great characteristic of the life of God is love, and so the Christian must show that divine love for men.

The Christian is the man who lives the Christ-filled life, the life that is different, never forgets the infinity of its obligation, and is made beautiful by the love of the God who gave it birth.

WHAT TO LOSE AND WHAT TO YEARN FOR

1Pet. 2:1-3

Strip off, therefore, all the evil of the heathen world and all deceitfulness, acts of hypocrisy and feelings of envy, and all gossiping disparagements of other people, and, like newly-born babes, yearn for the unadulterated milk of the word, so that by it you may grow up until you reach salvation. You are bound to do this if you have tasted that the Lord is kind.

No Christian can stay the way he is; and Peter urges his people to have done with evil things and to set their hearts on that which alone can nourish life.

There are things which must be stripped off. *Apotheisthai* (compare GSN0595) is the verb for stripping off one's clothes. There are things of which the Christian must divest himself as he would strip off a soiled garment.

He must strip off all the evil of the heathen world. The word for evil is kakia (GSN2549); it is the most general word for wickedness and includes all the wicked ways of the Christless world. The other words are illustrations and manifestations of this kakia (GSN2549); and it is to be noted that they are all faults of character which hurt the great Christian virtue of brotherly love. There can be no brotherly love so long as these evil things exist.

There is deceitfulness (dolos, GSN1388). Dolos is the trickery of the man who is out to deceive others to attain his own ends, the vice of the man whose motives are never pure.

There is hypocrisy (hupokrisis, GSN5272). Hupokrites (GSN5273) (hypocrite) is a word with a curious history. It is the noun from the verb hupokrinesthai (GSN5271) which means to answer; a hupokrites (GSN5273) begins by being an answerer. Then it comes to mean an actor, the man who takes part in the question and answer of the stage. Next it comes to mean a hypocrite, a man who all the time is acting a part and concealing his real motives. The hypocrite is the man whose alleged Christian profession is for his own profit and prestige and not for the service and glory of Christ.

There is envy (phthonos, GSN5355). It may well be said that envy is the last sin to die. It reared its ugly head even in the apostolic band. The other ten were envious of James and John, when they seemed to steal a march upon them in the matter of precedence in the coming Kingdom (Mk.10:41). Even at the last supper the disciples were disputing about who should occupy the seats of greatest honour (Lk.22:24). So long as self remains active within a man's heart there will be envy in his life. E. G. Selwyn calls envy "the constant plague of all voluntary organisations, not least religious organisations." C. E. B. Cranfield says that "we do not have to be engaged in what is called 'church work' very long to discover what a perennial source of trouble envy is."

There is gossiping disparagement (katalalia, GSN2636). Katalalia is a word with a definite flavour. It means evil-speaking; it is almost always the fruit of envy in the heart; and it usually takes place when its victim is not there to defend himself. Few things are so attractive as hearing or repeating spicy gossip. Disparaging gossip is something which everyone admits to be wrong and which at the same time almost everyone enjoys; and yet there is nothing more productive of heartbreak and nothing is so destructive of brotherly love and Christian unity.

These, then, are the things which the reborn man must strip off for, if he continues to allow them to have a grip upon his life, the unity of the brethren must be injured.

THAT ON WHICH TO SET THE HEART

1Pet. 2:1-3 (continued)

But there is something on which the Christian must set his heart. He must yearn for the unadulterated milk of the word. This is a phrase about whose meaning there is some difficulty. The difficulty is with the word *logikos* (GSN3050) which with the King James Version we have translated of the word. The English Revised Version translates it *spiritual*, and in the margin gives the alternative translation *reasonable*. Moffatt has *spiritual*, as has the Revised Standard Version.

Logikos (GSN3050) is the adjective from the noun *logos* (GSN3056) and the difficulty is that it has three perfectly possible translations.

(a) *Logos* (GSN3056) is the great Stoic word for the reason which guides the universe; *logikos* (GSN3050) is a favourite Stoic word which describes what has to do with this divine reason which is the governor of all things. If this is the word's connection, clearly *spiritual* is the meaning.

(b) *Logos* (GSN3056) is the normal Greek word for mind or reason; therefore, *logikos* (GSN3050) often means *reasonable* or *intelligent*. It is in that way that the King James Version translates it in Rom.12:1, where it speaks of our *reasonable* service.

(c) *Logos* (GSN3056) is the Greek for word, and *logikos* (GSN3050) means belonging to the Lord. This is the sense in which the King James Version takes it, and we think it is correct. Peter has just been talking about the word of God which abides forever (1Pet. 1:23-25). It is the word of God which is in his mind; and we think that what he means here is that the Christian must desire with his whole heart the nourishment which comes from the word of God, for by that nourishment he can grow until he reaches salvation itself. In face of all the evil of the heathen world the Christian must strengthen his soul with the pure food of the word of God.

This food of the word is unadulterated (*adolos*, GSN0097). That is to say, there is not the slightest admixture of anything evil in it. *Adolos* (GSN0097) is an almost technical word to describe corn (American: grain) that is entirely free from chaff or dust or useless or harmful matter. In all human wisdom there is some admixture of what is either useless or harmful; the word of God alone is altogether good.

The Christian is to yearn for this milk of the word; yearn is *epipothein* (GSN1971) which is a strong word. It is the word which is used for the hart longing for the waterbrooks (Ps.42:1), and for the Psalmist longing for the salvation of the Lord

(Ps.119:174). For the sincere Christian, to study God's word is not a labour but a delight, for he knows that there his heart will find the nourishment for which it longs.

The metaphor of the Christian as a baby and the word of God as the milk whereby he is nourished is common in the New Testament. Paul thinks of himself as the nurse who cares for the infant Christians of Thessalonica (1Th.2:7). He thinks of himself as feeding the Corinthians with milk for they are not yet at the stage of meat (1Cor.3:2); and the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews blames his people for being still at the stage of milk when they should have gone on to maturity (Heb.5:12; Heb.6:2). To symbolize the rebirth of baptism in the early church, the newly baptized Christian was clothed in white robes, and sometimes he was fed with milk as if he was a little child. It is this nourishment with the milk of the word which makes a Christian grow up and grow on until he reaches salvation.

Peter finishes this introduction with an allusion to Ps.34:8. "You are bound to do this," he writes, "if you have tasted the kindness of God." Here is something of the greatest significance. The fact that God is gracious is not an excuse for us to do as we like, depending on him to overlook it; it lays on us an obligation to toil towards deserving his graciousness and love. The kindness of God is not an excuse for laziness in the Christian life; it is the greatest of all incentives to effort.

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

1Pet. 2:4-10

Come to him, the living stone, rejected by men but chosen and precious with God, and be yourselves, like living stones, built into a spiritual house until you become a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices, which are well-pleasing to God through Jesus Christ; for there is a passage in Scripture which says, "Behold, I place in Zion a stone, chosen, a cornerstone, precious, and he who believes in him shall not be put to shame." So, then, there is preciousness in that stone to you who believe; but, to those who disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected has become the headstone of the corner, and a stone over which they will stumble, and a rock over which they will trip. They stumble because they disobey the word--a fate for which they were appointed. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people dedicated to God, a nation for him specially to possess that you might tell forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his glorious light, you, who were once not a people and are now the people of the Lord, you who were once without mercy and have now found mercy.

Peter sets before us the nature and the function of the Church. There is so much in the passage that we divide it into four sections.

1. THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED

Much is made of the idea of the stone. Three Old Testament passages are symbolically used; let us look at them one by one.

(i) The beginning of the whole matter goes back to the words of Jesus himself. One of the most illuminating parables he ever told was the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen. In it he told how the wicked husbandmen killed servant after servant and in the end even murdered the son. He was showing how the nation of Israel had again and again refused to listen to the prophets and had persecuted them, and how this refusal was to reach its climax with his own death. But beyond the death he saw the triumph and he told of that triumph in words taken from the Psalms: "The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; this was the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes" (Matt.21:42; Mk.12:10; Lk.20:17).

That is a quotation from Ps.118:22. In the original it is a reference to the nation of Israel. A. K. Kirkpatrick writes of it: "Israel is 'the head corner-stone.' The powers of the world flung it aside as useless, but God destined it for the most honourable and important place in the building of his kingdom in the world. The words express Israel's consciousness of its mission and destiny in the purpose of God." Jesus took these words and applied them to himself. It looked as if he was utterly rejected by men; but in the purpose of God he was the corner-stone of the edifice of the Kingdom, honoured above all.

(ii) In the Old Testament there are other references to this symbolic stone, and the early Christian writers used them for their purposes. The first is in Isa.28:16: "Therefore, thus says the Lord God, Behold I am laying in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation; he who believes will not be in haste." Again the reference is to Israel. The sure and precious stone is God's unfailing relationship to his people, a relationship which was to culminate in the coming of the Messiah. Once again the early Christian writers took this passage and applied it to Jesus Christ as the precious and immovable foundation stone of God.

(iii) The second of these other passages is also from Isaiah: "But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary, and a stone of offence, and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Isa.8:13-14). Its meaning is that God is offering his lordship to the people of Israel; that to those who accept him he will become a sanctuary and a

salvation, but to those who reject him he will become a terror and a destruction. Again the early Christian writers took this passage and applied it to Jesus. To those who accept him Jesus is Saviour and Friend; to those who reject him he is judgment and condemnation.

(iv) For the understanding of this passage, we have to take in a New Testament reference to these Old Testament ones. It is hardly possible that Peter could speak of Jesus as the corner-stone and of Christians as being built into a spiritual house, united in him, without thinking of Jesus' own words to himself. When he made his great confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus said to him, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church" (Matt.16:18). It is on the faith of the loyal believer that the Church is built.

These are the origins of the pictures in this passage.

2. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

From this passage we learn three things about the very nature of the Church.

(i) The Christian is likened to a living stone and the Church to a living edifice into which he is built (1Pet. 2:5). Clearly that means that Christianity is community; the individual Christian finds his true place only when he is built into that edifice. "Solitary religion" is ruled out as an impossibility. C. E. B. Cranfield writes: "The free-lance Christian, who would be a Christian but is too superior to belong to the visible Church upon earth in one of its forms, is simply a contradiction in terms."

There is a famous story from Sparta. A Spartan king boasted to a visiting monarch about the walls of Sparta. The visiting monarch looked around and could see no walls. He said to the Spartan king, "Where are these walls about which you boast so much?" His host pointed at his bodyguard of magnificent troops. "These," he said, "are the walls of Sparta, every man a brick."

The point is clear. So long as a brick lies by itself it is useless; it becomes of use only when it is incorporated into a building. So it is with the individual Christian. To realize his destiny he must not remain alone, but must be built into the fabric of the Church.

Suppose that in time of war a man says, "I wish to serve my country and to defend her from her enemies." If he tries to carry out that resolution alone, he can accomplish nothing. He can be effective in that purpose only by standing shoulder to shoulder with others of like mind. It is so with the Church. Individualistic Christianity is an absurdity; Christianity is community within the fellowship of the Church.

(ii) Christians are a holy priesthood (1Pet. 2:5). There are two great characteristics of the priest.

(a) He is the man who himself has access to God and whose task it is to bring others to him. In the ancient world this access to God was the privilege of the professional priests, and in particular of the High Priest who alone could enter into the Holy of Holies. Through Jesus Christ, the new and living way, access to God becomes the privilege of every Christian, however simple he may be. Further, the Latin word for priest is pontifex, which means bridge-builder; the priest is the man who builds a bridge for others to come to God; and the Christian has the duty and the privilege of bringing others to that Saviour whom he himself has found and loves.

(b) The priest is the man who brings an offering to God. The Christian also must continuously bring his offerings to God. Under the old dispensation the offerings brought were animal sacrifices; but the sacrifices of the Christian are spiritual sacrifices. He makes his work an offering to God. Everything is done for God; and so even the meanest task is clad with glory. The Christian makes his worship an offering to God; and so the worship of God's house becomes, not a burden but a joy. The Christian makes himself an offering to God. "Present your bodies," said Paul, "as a living sacrifice to God" (Rom.12:1). What God desires most of all is the love of our hearts and the service of our lives. That is the perfect sacrifice which every Christian must make.

(iii) The function of the Church is to tell forth the excellencies of God. That is to say, it is to witness to men concerning the mighty acts of God. By his very life, even more than by his words, the Christian is to be a witness of what God in Christ has done for him.

3. THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH

In 1Pet. 2:9 we read of the things to which the Christian is a witness.

(i) God has called the Christian out of darkness into his glorious light. The Christian is called out of darkness into light. When a man comes to know Jesus Christ, he comes to know God. No longer does he need to guess and to grope. "He who has seen me," said Jesus, "has seen the Father" (Jn.14:9). In Jesus is the light of the knowledge of God. When a man comes to know Jesus, he comes to know goodness. In Christ he has a standard by which all actions and motives may be tested. When a man comes to know Jesus Christ, he comes to know the way. Life is no longer a trackless road without a star to guide. In Christ the way becomes clear. When a man comes to know Jesus Christ, he comes to know power. It would be little use to know God without the power to serve him. It would be little use to know goodness and yet be helpless to attain to it. It would

be little use to see the right way and be quite unable to take it. In Jesus Christ there is both the vision and the power.

(ii) God has made those who were not a people into the people of God. Here Peter is quoting from Hos.1:6,9,10; Hos.2:1; Hos.2:23). This means that the Christian is called out of insignificance into significance. It continually happens in this world that a man's greatness lies not in himself but in what has been given him to do. The Christian's greatness lies in the fact that God has chosen him to be his man and to do his work in the world. No Christian can be ordinary, for he is a man of God.

(iii) The Christian is called out of no mercy, into mercy. The great characteristic of non-Christian religion is the fear of God. The Christian has discovered the love of God and knows that he need no longer fear him, because it is well with his soul.

4. THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

In 1Pet. 2:9 Peter uses a whole series of phrases which are a summary of the functions of the Church. He calls the Christians "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people dedicated to God, a nation for him specially to possess." Peter is steeped in the Old Testament and these phrases are all great description of the people of Israel. They come from two main sources. In Isa.43:21 Isaiah hears God say, "The people whom I formed for myself." But even more in Exo.19:5-6 the voice of God is heard: "Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all people; for all the earth is mine: and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." The great promises which God made to his people Israel are being fulfilled to the Church, the new Israel. Every one of these titles is full of meaning.

(i) Christians are a chosen people. Here we are back to the covenant idea. Exo.19:5-6 is from the passage which describes how God entered into his covenant with Israel. In the covenant he offered a special relationship with himself to Israel; but it depended on the people of Israel accepting the conditions of the covenant and keeping the law. That relationship would hold only "if you will obey my voice, and keep my covenant" (Exo.19:5).

From this we learn that the Christian is chosen for three things. (a) He is chosen for privilege. In Jesus Christ there is offered to him a new and intimate fellowship with God. God has become his friend and he has become God's friend. (b) He is chosen for obedience. Privilege brings with it responsibility. The Christian is chosen in order that he may become the obedient child of God. He is chosen not to do as he likes but to do as God likes. (c) He is chosen for service. His honour is that he is the servant of God. His privilege is that he will be used

for the purposes of God. But he can be so used only when he brings to God the obedience he desires. Chosen for privilege, chosen for obedience, chosen for service--these three great facts go hand in hand.

(ii) Christians are a royal priesthood. We have already seen that this means that every Christian has the right of access to God; and that he must offer his work, his worship and himself to God.

(iii) Christians are what the Revised Standard Version calls a holy nation. We have already seen that the basic meaning of *hagios* (GSN0040) (holy) is different. The Christian has been chosen that he may be different from other men. That difference lies in the fact that he is dedicated to God's will and to God's service. Other people may follow the standards of the world but for him the only standards are God's. A man need not even start on the Christian way unless he realizes that it will compel him to be different from other people.

(iv) Christians are a people for God specially to possess. It frequently happens that the value of a thing lies in the fact that some one has possessed it. A very ordinary thing acquires a new value, if it has been possessed by some famous person. In any museum we find quite ordinary things--clothes, a walking-stick, a pen, books, pieces of furniture--which are of value only because they were once possessed by some great person. It is so with the Christian. The Christian may be a very ordinary person but he acquires a new value because he belongs to God.

REASONS FOR RIGHT LIVING

1Pet. 2:11-12

Beloved, I urge you, as strangers and sojourners, to abstain from the fleshly desires which carry on their campaign against the soul. Make your conduct amongst the Gentiles fine, so that in every matter in which they slander you as evil-doers, they may see from your fine deeds what you are really like and glorify God on the day when he will visit the earth.

The basic commandment in this passage is that the Christian should abstain from fleshly desires. It is of the greatest importance that we should see what Peter means by this. The phrases sins of the flesh and, fleshly, desires have become much narrowed in meaning in modern usage. For us they usually mean sexual sin; but in the New Testament they are much wider than that. Paul's list of the sins of the flesh in Gal.5:19-21, includes "immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like." There are far more than bodily sins here.

In the New Testament, flesh stands for far more than the physical nature of man. It stands for human nature apart from God; it means unredeemed human nature; it means life lived without the standards, the help, the grace and the influence of Christ. Fleshly desires and sins of the flesh, therefore, include not only the grosser sins but all that is characteristic of fallen human nature. From these sins and desires the Christian must abstain. As Peter sees it, there are two reasons for this abstinence.

(i) The Christian must abstain from these sins because he is a stranger and a pilgrim. The words are *paroikos* (GSN3941) and *parepidemos* (GSN3927). They are quite common Greek words and they describe someone who is only temporarily resident in a place and whose home is somewhere else. They are used to describe the patriarchs in their wanderings, and especially Abraham who went out not knowing where he was to go and whose search was for the city whose maker and builder is God (Heb.11:9,13). They are used to describe the children of Israel when they were slaves and strangers in the land of Egypt before they entered into the Promised Land (Ac.7:6).

These words give us two great truths about the Christian. (a) There is a real sense in which he is a stranger in the world; and because of that he cannot accept the world's laws and ways and standards. Others may accept them; but the Christian is a citizen of the Kingdom of God and it is by the laws of that Kingdom that he must direct his life. He must take his full share of responsibility for living upon earth, but his citizenship is in heaven and the laws of heaven are paramount for him. (b) The Christian is not a permanent resident upon earth; he is on the way to the country which is beyond. He must therefore, do nothing which would keep him from reaching his ultimate goal. He must never become so entangled in the world that he cannot escape from its grip; he must never so soil himself as to be unfit to enter the presence of the holy God to whom he is going.

THE GREATEST ANSWER AND DEFENCE

1Pet. 2:11-12 (continued)

(ii) But there was for Peter another and even more practical reason why the Christian must abstain from fleshly desires. The early church was under fire. Slandorous charges were continually being made against the Christians; and the only effective way to refute them was to live lives so lovely that they would be seen to be obviously untrue.

To modern ears the King James Version can be a little misleading. It speaks about "having your conversation honest among the Gentiles." That sounds to us as if it meant that the Christian must always speak the truth, but the word

translated conversation is anastrophe (GSN0391), which means a man's whole conduct, not simply his talk. That is, in fact, what conversation did mean in the seventeenth century. The word translated honest is kalos (GSN2570). In Greek there are two words for good There is agathos (GSN0018), which simply means good in quality; and there is kalos (GSN2570), which means not only good but also lovely, fine, attractive, winsome. That is what honestus means in Latin. So, what Peter is saying is that the Christian must make his whole way of life so lovely and so good to look upon that the slanders of his heathen enemies may be demonstrated to be false.

Here is timeless truth. Whether we like it or not, every Christian is an advertisement for Christianity; by his life he either commends it to others or makes them think less of it. The strongest missionary force in the world is a Christian life.

In the early church this demonstration of the loveliness of the Christian life was supremely necessary, because of the slanders the heathen deliberately cast on the Christian Church. Let us see what some of these slanders were.

(i) In the beginning Christianity was closely connected with the Jews. By race Jesus was a Jew; Paul was a Jew; Christianity was cradled in Judaism; and inevitably many of its early converts were Jews. For a time Christianity was regarded merely as a sect of Judaism. Antisemitism is no new thing. Friedlander gives a selection of the slanders which were repeated against the Jews in his Roman Life and Manners under the Early Empire. "According to Tacitus they (the Jews) taught their proselytes above all to despise the gods, to renounce their fatherland, to disregard parents, children, brothers and sisters. According to Juvenal, Moses taught the Jews not to show anyone the way, nor to guide the thirsty traveller to the spring, except he were a Jew. Apion declares that, in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Jews every year fattened a Greek, and having solemnly offered him up as a sacrifice on a fixed day in a certain forest, ate his entrails and swore eternal hostility to the Greeks." These were the things which the heathen had persuaded themselves were true about the Jews, and inevitably the Christians shared in this odium.

(ii) Apart from these slanders attached to the Jews, there were slanders directed particularly against the Christians themselves. They were accused of cannibalism. This accusation took its rise from a perversion of the words of the Last Supper, "This is my body. This cup is the new covenant in my blood." The Christians were accused of killing and eating a child at their feasts.

They were also accused of immorality and even of incest. This accusation took its rise from the fact that they called their meeting the Agape (GSN0026), the Love

Feast. The heathen perverted that name to mean that the Christian feasts were sensual orgies at which shameless deeds were done.

The Christians were accused of damaging trade. Such was the charge of the silversmiths of Ephesus (Ac.19:21-41).

They were accused of "tampering with family relationships" because often homes were, in fact, broken up when some members of the family became Christians and others did not.

They were accused of turning slaves against their masters, and Christianity indeed did give to every man a new sense of worth and dignity.

They were accused of "hatred of mankind" and indeed the Christian did speak as if the world and the Church were entirely opposed to each other.

Above all they were accused of disloyalty to Caesar, for no Christian would worship the Emperor's godhead and burn his pinch of incense and declare that Caesar was Lord, for to him Jesus Christ and no other was Lord.

Such were the charges which were directed against the Christians. To Peter there was only one way to refute them and that was so to live that their Christian life demonstrated that they were unfounded. When Plato was told that a certain man had been making certain slanderous charges against him, his answer was: "I will live in such a way that no one will believe what he says." That was Peter's solution.

Jesus himself had said--and doubtless the saying was in Peter's mind: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt.5:16). This was a line of thought which the Jews knew well. In one of the books written between the Old and the New Testaments it says: "If ye work that which is good, my children, both men and angels shall bless you; and God shall be glorified among the Gentiles through you, and the devil shall flee from you" (The Testament of Naphtali 8: 4).

The striking fact of history is that by their lives the Christians actually did defeat the slanders of the heathen. In the early part of the third century Celsus made the most famous and the most systematic attack of all upon the Christians in which he accused them of ignorance and foolishness and superstition and all kinds of things--but never of immorality. In the first half of the fourth century, Eusebius, the great Church historian, could write: "But the splendour of the catholic and only true Church, which is always the same, grew in magnitude and power, and reflected its piety and simplicity and freedom, and the modesty and purity of its inspired life and philosophy to every nation both of Greeks and barbarians. At the same time the slanderous accusations which had been

brought against the whole Church also vanished, and there remained our teaching alone, which has prevailed over all, and which is acknowledged to be superior to all in dignity and temperance, and in divine and philosophical doctrines. So that none of them now ventures to affix a base calumny upon our faith, or any such slander as our ancient enemies formerly delighted to utter" (Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History, 4.7.15). It is true that the terrors of persecution were not even then ended, for the Christians would never admit that Caesar was Lord; but the excellence of their lives had silenced the calumnies against the Church.

Here is our challenge and our inspiration. It is by the loveliness of our daily life and conduct that we must commend Christianity to those who do not believe.

THE DUTY OF THE CHRISTIAN

1Pet. 2:13-15

Submit to every human institution for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king, who has the first place, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of those whose deeds are evil and the praise of those whose deeds are good, for it is the will of God that by so doing you should muzzle the ignorance of foolish men.

1. AS A CITIZEN

Peter looks at the duty of the Christian within the different spheres of his life; and he begins with his duty as a citizen of the country in which he happens to live.

Nothing is further from the thought of the New Testament than any kind of anarchy. Jesus had said, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's" (Matt.22:21). Paul was certain that those who governed the nation were sent by God and held their responsibility from him, and were, therefore, no terror to the man who lived an honourable life (Rom.13:17). In the Pastoral Epistles the Christian is instructed to pray for kings and all in authority (1Tim.2:2). The instruction of the New Testament is that the Christian must be a good and useful citizen of the country in which his life is set.

It has been said that fear built the cities and that men huddled behind a wall in order to be safe. Men join themselves together and agree to live under certain laws, so that the good man may have peace to do his work and go about his business and the evil man may be restrained and kept from his evil-doing. According to the New Testament life is meant by God to be an ordered business and the state is divinely appointed to provide and to maintain that order.

The New Testament view is perfectly logical and just. It holds that a man cannot accept the privileges which the state provides without also accepting the responsibilities and the duties which it demands. He cannot in honour and decency take everything and give nothing.

How are we to translate this into modern terms? C. E. B. Cranfield has well pointed out that there is a fundamental difference between the state in New Testament times and the state as we in Britain know it. In New Testament times the state was authoritarian. The ruler was an absolute ruler; and the sole duty of the citizen was to render absolute obedience and to pay taxes (Rom.13:6-7). Under these conditions the keynote was bound to be subjection to the state. But we live in a democracy; and in a democracy something far more than unquestioning subjection becomes necessary. Government is not only government of the people; it is also for the people and by the people. The demand of the New Testament is that the Christian should fulfil his responsibility to the state. In the authoritarian state that consisted solely in submission. But what is that obligation in the very different circumstances of a democracy?

In any state there must be a certain subjection. As C. E. B. Cranfield puts it, there must be "a voluntary subordination of oneself to others, putting the interest and welfare of others above one's own, preferring to give rather than to get, to serve rather than to be served." But in a democratic state the keynote must be not subjection but cooperation, for the duty of the citizen is not only to submit to be ruled but to take a necessary share in ruling. Hence, if the Christian is to fulfil his duty to the state, he must take his part in its government. He must also take his part in local government and in the life of the trade union or association connected with his trade, craft, or profession. It is tragic that so few Christians really fulfil their obligation to the state and the society in which they live.

It remains to say that the Christian has a higher obligation than even his obligation to the state. While he must render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's, he must also render to God the things which are God's. He must on occasion make it quite clear that he must listen to God rather than to men (Ac.4:19; Ac.5:29). There may be times, therefore, when the Christian will fulfil his highest duty to the state by refusing to obey it and by insisting on obeying God. By so doing, at least he will witness to the truth, and at best he may lead the state to take the Christian way.

THE DUTY OF THE CHRISTIAN

1Pet. 2:16

You must live as free men, yet not using your freedom as a cloak for evil, but as the slaves of God.

2. IN SOCIETY

Any great Christian doctrine can be perverted into an excuse for evil. The doctrine of grace can be perverted into an excuse for sinning to one's heart's content. The doctrine of the love of God can be sentimentalized into an excuse for breaking his law. The doctrine of the life to come can be perverted into an excuse for neglecting life in this world. And there is no doctrine so easy to pervert as that of Christian freedom.

There are hints in the New Testament that it was frequently so perverted. Paul tells the Galatians that they have been called to liberty but they must not use that liberty as an occasion for the flesh to do as it wills (Gal.5:13). In Second Peter we read of those who promise others liberty and are themselves the slaves of corruption (2Pet. 2:19). Even the great pagan thinkers saw quite clearly that perfect freedom is, in fact, the product of perfect obedience. Seneca said, "No one is free who is the slave of his body," and, "Liberty consists in obeying God." Cicero said, "We are the servants of the laws that we may be able to be free." Plutarch insisted that every bad man is a slave; and Epictetus declared that no bad man can ever be free.

We may put it this way. Christian freedom is always conditioned by Christian responsibility. Christian responsibility is always conditioned by Christian love. Christian love is the reflection of God's love. And, therefore, Christian liberty can rightly be summed up in Augustine's memorable phrase: "Love God, and do what you like."

The Christian is free because he is the slave of God. Christian freedom does not mean being free to do as we like; it means being free to do as we ought.

In this matter we have to return to the great central truth which we have already seen. Christianity is community. The Christian is not an isolated unit; he is a member of a community and within that community his freedom operates. Christian freedom therefore is the freedom to serve. Only in Christ is a man so freed from self and sin that he can become as good as he ought to be. Freedom comes when a man receives Christ as king of his heart and Lord of his life.

A SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN DUTY

1Pet. 2:17

Honour all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honour the king.

Here is what we might call a four-point summary of Christian duty.

(i) Honour all men. To us this may seem hardly needing to be said; but when Peter wrote this letter it was something quite new. There were 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire, everyone of whom was considered in law to be, not a person, but a thing, with no rights whatever. In effect, Peter is saying, "Remember the rights of human personality and the dignity of every man." It is still possible to treat people as things. An employer may treat his employees as so many human machines for producing so much work. Even in a welfare state, where the aim is to do so much for their physical welfare, there is a very real danger that people may be regarded as numbers on a form or as cards in a filing system.

John Lawrence in his book, *Hard Facts, A Christian Looks at the World*, says that one of the greatest needs in the welfare state is "to see through the files and forms in triplicate to God's creatures who are at the other end of the chain of organization." The danger is that we fail to see men and women as persons. This matter comes nearer home. When we regard anyone as existing solely to minister to our comfort or to further our plans, we are in effect regarding them, not as persons, but as things. The most tragic danger of all is that we may come to regard those who are nearest and dearest to us as existing for our convenience--and that is to treat them as things.

(ii) Love the brotherhood. Within the Christian community this respect for every man turns to something warmer and closer; it turns to love. The dominant atmosphere of the Church must always be love. One of the truest definitions of the Church is that it is "the extension of the family." The Church is the larger family of God and its bond must be love. As the Psalmist had it (Ps.133:1):

Behold, how good a thing it is,
And how becoming well,
Together such as brethren are
In unity to dwell!

(iii) Fear God. The writer of the proverbs has it: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov.1:7). It may well be that the translation should be, not that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge but that the fear of the Lord is the principal part, the very foundation of knowledge. Fear here does not mean terror; it means awe and reverence. It is the simple fact of life that we will never reverence men until we reverence God. It is only when God is given his proper place in the centre that all other things take their proper place.

(iv) Honour the king. Of the four injunctions of this verse this is the most amazing, for, if it was really Peter who wrote this letter, the king in question is none other than Nero. It is the teaching of the New Testament that the ruler is

sent by God to preserve order among men and that he must be respected, even when he is a Nero.

THE DUTY OF THE CHRISTIAN AS A SERVANT

1Pet. 2:18-25

Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and equitable, but also to those who are perverse, for it is a real sign of grace when a man bears pains in unjust suffering because of his consciousness of God. It is to live like this that you were called, because Christ too suffered for us, leaving behind him an example that we should follow in his steps. He did no sin nor was any guile found in his mouth. When he was insulted, he did not return insult for insult. When he suffered, he uttered no threats, but he committed himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might depart from sins and live to righteousness. With his stripes you have been healed, for you were straying away like sheep but now you have turned to the Shepherd and Watchman of your souls.

Here is the passage which would be relevant to by far the greatest number of the readers of this letter, for Peter writes to servants and slaves, and they formed by far the greatest part of the early church. The word Peter uses for servants is not *douloi* (GSN1401), which is the commonest word for slaves, but *oiketai* (GSN3610), the word for the household and domestic slaves.

To understand the real meaning of what Peter is saying we must understand something of the nature of slavery in the time of the early church. In the Roman Empire there were as many as 60,000,000 slaves, Slavery began with Roman conquests, slaves being originally mainly prisoners taken in war, and in very early times Rome had few slaves but by New Testament times slaves were counted by the million.

It was by no means only menial tasks which were performed by slaves. Doctors, teachers, musicians, actors, secretaries, stewards were slaves. In fact, all the work of Rome was done by slaves. Roman attitude was that there was no point in being master of the world and doing one's own work. Let the slaves do that and let the citizens live in pampered idleness. The supply of slaves would never run out.

Slaves were not allowed to marry; but they cohabited; and the children born of such a partnership were the property of the master, not of the parents, just as the lambs born to the sheep belonged to the owner of the flock, and not to the sheep.

It would be wrong to think that the lot of slaves was always wretched and unhappy, and that they were always treated with cruelty. Many slaves were loved and trusted members of the family; but one great inescapable fact dominated the whole situation. In Roman law a slave was not a person but a thing; and he had absolutely no legal rights whatsoever. For that reason there could be no such thing as justice where a slave was concerned. Aristotle writes, "There can be no friendship nor justice towards inanimate things; indeed, not even towards a horse or an ox, nor yet towards a slave as a slave. For master and slave have nothing in common; a slave is a living tool, just as a tool is an inanimate slave." Varro divides the instruments of agriculture into three classes-- the articulate, the inarticulate and the mute, "the articulate comprising the slaves, the inarticulate comprising the cattle, and the mute comprising the vehicles." The only difference between a slave and a beast or a farmyard cart was that a slave happened to be able to speak. Peter Chrysologus sums the matter up: "Whatever a master does to a slave, undeservedly, in anger, willingly, unwillingly, in forgetfulness, after careful thought, knowingly, unknowingly, is judgment, justice and law." In regard to a slave, his master's will, and even his master's caprice, was the only law.

The dominant fact in the life of a slave was that, even if he was well treated, he remained a thing. He did not possess even the elementary rights of a person and for him justice did not even exist.

THE PERIL OF THE NEW SITUATION

1Pet. 2:18-25 (continued)

Into this situation came Christianity with its message that every man was precious in the sight of God. The result was that within the Church the social barriers were broken down. Callistus, one of the earliest bishops of Rome, was a slave; and Perpetua, the aristocrat, and Felicitas, the slave-girl, met martyrdom hand in hand. The great majority of the early Christians were humble folk and many of them were slaves. It was quite possible in the early days that the slave should be the president of the congregation and the master a member of it. This was a new and revolutionary situation. It had its glory and it had its dangers. In this passage Peter is urging the slave to be a good slave and a faithful workman; for he sees two dangers.

(i) Suppose both master and servant became Christians; there arose the danger that the slave might presume upon the new relationship and make an excuse for shirking his work, assuming that since he and his master were both Christians, he could get away with anything. That situation is by no means at an end. There are still people who trade on the goodwill of a Christian master and think that the fact that both they and their employers are Christians gives them a right to

dispense with discipline and punishment. But Peter is quite clear. The relationship between Christian and Christian does not abolish the relationship between man and man. The Christian must, indeed, be a better workman than anyone else. His Christianity is not a reason for claiming exemption from discipline; it should bring him under self-discipline and make him more conscientious than anyone else.

(ii) There was the danger that the new dignity which Christianity brought him would make the slave rebel and seek to abolish slavery altogether. Some students are puzzled that no New Testament writer ever pleads for the abolition of slavery or even says in so many words that it is wrong. The reason was simple. To have encouraged the slaves to rise against their masters would have been the way to speedy disaster. There had been such revolts before and they had always been quickly and savagely crushed. In any event, such teaching would merely have gained for Christianity the reputation of being a subversive religion. There are some things which cannot happen quickly; there are some situations in which the leaven has to work and in which haste is the surest way to delay the desired end. The leaven of Christianity had to work in the world for many generations before the abolition of slavery became a practical possibility. Peter was concerned that Christian slaves should demonstrate to the world that their Christianity did not make them disgruntled rebels but rather workmen who had found a new inspiration towards doing an honest day's work. It will still often happen that, when some situation cannot at the time be changed, the Christian duty is to be Christian within that situation and to accept what cannot be changed until the leaven has worked.

THE NEW ATTITUDE TO WORK

1Pet. 2:18-25 (continued)

But Christianity did not leave the matter in that merely negative form. It introduced three great new principles into a man's attitude as a servant and a workman.

(i) Christianity introduced a new relationship between master and man. When Paul sent the runaway slave Onesimus back to Philemon, he did not for a moment suggest that Philemon should set Onesimus free. He did not suggest that Philemon should cease to be the master and that Onesimus should cease to be the slave. What he did say was that Philemon must receive Onesimus not now as a servant, but as a brother beloved (Phm.16). Christianity did not abolish social differences; but it introduced a new relationship of brotherhood in which these other differences were overpassed and transformed. Where there is real brotherhood, it does not matter if you call one man master and the other servant. There is between them a bond which transforms the necessary

differences which the circumstances of life make necessary. The solution of the world's problems lies in the new relationship between man and man.

(ii) Christianity introduced a new attitude to work. It is the conviction of the New Testament that all work must be done for Jesus Christ. Paul writes: "Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col.3:17). "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1Cor.10:31). In the Christian ideal work is not done for an earthly master or for personal prestige or to make so much money; it is done for God. It is, of course, true that a man must work in order to earn a wage and he must work to satisfy a master; but beyond that there is for the Christian the conviction that his work must be done well enough to be able to show it to God without shame.

(iii) But when these great ideals were set against the situation in the early church--and the situation does not entirely change--one great question arose. Suppose a man has the Christian attitude to men and to work and is treated with injustice, insult and injury--what then? Peter's great answer is that this is exactly what happened to Jesus. He was none other than the Suffering Servant. 1Pet. 2:21-25 are full of reminiscences and quotations of Isa.53, the supreme picture of the Suffering Servant of God, which came to life in Jesus. He was without sin and yet he was insulted and he suffered; but he accepted the insults and the suffering with serene love and bore them for the sins of mankind.

In so doing he left us an example that we should follow in his steps (1Pet. 2:21). The word Peter uses for example is very vivid. It is *hupogrammos* (G5261), a word which comes from the way in which children were taught to write in the ancient world. *Hupogrammos* (G5261) can mean two things--an outline sketch which the learner had to fill in or the copyhead of copperplate handwriting in a writing exercise book which the child had to copy out on the lines below. Jesus gave us the pattern which we have to follow. If we have to suffer insult and injustice and injury, we have only to go through what he has already gone through. It may be that at the back of Peter's mind there was a glimpse of a tremendous truth. That suffering of Jesus was for the sake of man's sin; he suffered in order to bring men back to God. And it may be that, when the Christian suffers insult and injury with uncomplaining steadfastness and unflinching love, he shows such a life to others as will lead them to God.

TWO PRECIOUS NAMES FOR GOD

1. THE SHEPHERD OF THE SOULS OF MEN

1Pet. 2:18-25 (continued)

In the last verse of this chapter we come upon two of the great names for God--the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls--as the King James Version has it.

(i) God is the Shepherd of the souls of men. The Greek is *poimen* (GSN4166) and shepherd is one of the oldest descriptions of God. The Psalmist has it in the best-loved of all the Psalms: "The Lord is my shepherd" (Ps.23:1). Isaiah has it: "He will feed his flock like a shepherd: he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young" (Isa.40:11).

The great king whom God was going to send to Israel would be the shepherd of his people. Ezekiel hears the promise of God: "And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them; he shall feed them, and be their shepherd" (Eze.34:23; Eze.37:24).

This was the title which Jesus took to himself when he called himself the Good Shepherd and when he said that the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (Jn.10:1-18). To Jesus the men and women who did not know God and who were waiting for what he could give them were like sheep without a shepherd (Mk.6:34). The great privilege given to the servant and the minister of Christ is to shepherd the flock of God (Jn.21:16; 1Pet. 5:2).

It may be difficult for those of us who live in an industrial civilization to grasp the greatness of this picture; but in the East the picture would be very vivid, particularly in Judaea, where there was a narrow central plateau which held danger on either side. It was on this narrow tableland that the sheep grazed. Grass was sparse; there were no protecting walls; and the sheep wandered. The shepherd, therefore, had to be ceaselessly and sleeplessly on the watch lest harm should come to his flock.

In *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* Sir George Adam Smith describes the shepherd of Judaea. "With us, sheep are often left to themselves; but I do not remember ever to have seen in the East a flock of sheep without a shepherd. In such a landscape as Judaea, where a day's pasture is thinly scattered over an unfenced track of country, covered with delusive paths, still frequented by wild beasts, and rolling off into the desert, the man and his character are indispensable. On some high moor, across which at night the hyenas howl, when you meet him, sleepless, far-sighted, weather-beaten, armed, leaning upon his staff, and looking out over his scattered sheep, everyone of them on his heart, you understand why the shepherd of Judaea sprang to the front in his people's history; why they gave his name to their king, and made him the symbol of providence; why Christ took him as the type of self-sacrifice."

This word shepherd tells us most vividly of the ceaseless vigilance and the self-sacrificing love of God for us who are his flock. "We are his people and the sheep of his pasture" (Ps.100:3).

TWO PRECIOUS NAMES FOR GOD

2. THE GUARDIAN OF OUR SOULS

1Pet. 2:18-25 (continued)

(ii) The King James Version speaks of God as the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls; but nowadays Bishop is an inadequate and misleading translation of the Greek (episkopos, GSN1985).

Episkopos (GSN1985) is a word with a great history. In Homer's Iliad, Hector, the great champion of the Trojans, is called the episkopos (GSN1985) who, during his lifetime, guarded the city of Troy and kept safe its noble wives and infants. Episkopos (GSN1985) is used of the gods who are the guardians of the treaties which men make and of the agreements to which men come, and who are the protectors of house and home. Justice, for instance, is the episkopos (GSN1985), who sees to it that a man shall pay the price for the wrong that he has done.

In Plato's Laws the Guardians of the state are those whose duty it is to oversee the games, the feeding and the education of the children that "they may be sound of hand and foot, and may in no wise, if possible, get their natures warped by their habits." The people whom Plato calls market-stewards are the episkopoi (GSN1985) who "supervise personal conduct, keeping an eye on temperate and outrageous behaviour, so as to punish him who needs punishment."

In Athenian law and administration the episkopoi (GSN1985) were governors and administrators and inspectors sent out to subject states to see that law and order and loyalty were observed. In Rhodes the main magistrates were five episkopoi (GSN1985) who presided over the good government and the law and order of the state.

Episkopos (GSN1985) is, therefore, a many-sided but always a noble word. It means the protector of public safety; the guardian of honour and honesty; the overseer of right education and of public morals; the administrator of public law and order.

So, then, to call God the episkopos (GSN1985) of our souls is to call him our Guardian, our Protector, our Guide, and our Director.

God is the Shepherd and the Guardian of our souls. In his love he cares for us; in his power he protects us; and in his wisdom he guides us in the right way.

6

THE SILENT PREACHING OF A LOVELY LIFE

1Pet. 3:1-2

Likewise, you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that, if there are any who refuse to believe the word, they may be won for Christ without a word because they have seen your pure and reverent behaviour.

Peter turns to the domestic problems which Christianity inevitably produced. It was inevitable that one marriage partner might be won for Christ, while the other remained untouched by the appeal of the gospel; and such a situation inevitably had difficulties.

It may seem strange that Peter's advice to wives is six times as long as that to husbands. This is because the wife's position was far more difficult than that of the husband. If a husband became a Christian, he would automatically bring his wife with him into the Church and there would be no problem. But if a wife became a Christian while her husband did not, she was taking a step which was unprecedented and which produced the acutest problems.

In every sphere of ancient civilization, women had no rights at all. Under Jewish law a woman was a thing; she was owned by her husband in exactly the same way as he owned his sheep and his goats: on no account could she leave him, although he could dismiss her at any moment. For a wife to change her religion while her husband did not was unthinkable.

In Greek civilization the duty of the woman was "to remain indoors and to be obedient to her husband." It was the sign of a good woman that she must see as little, hear as little and ask as little as possible. She had no kind of independent existence and no kind of mind of her own, and her husband could divorce her almost at caprice, so long as he returned her dowry.

Under Roman law a woman had no rights. In law she remained for ever a child. When she was under her father she was under the patria potestas, the father's power, which gave the father the right even of life and death over her; and when she married she passed equally into the power of her husband. She was entirely subject to her husband and completely at his mercy. Cato the Censor, the typical ancient Roman, wrote: "If you were to catch your wife in an act of infidelity, you can kill her with impunity without a trial." Roman matrons were prohibited from drinking wine, and Egnatius beat his wife to death when he

found her doing so. Sulpicius Gallus dismissed his wife because she had once appeared in the streets without a veil. Antistius Vetus divorced his wife because he saw her secretly speaking to a freed woman in public. Publius Sempronius Sophus divorced his wife because once she went to the public games. The whole attitude of ancient civilization was that no woman could dare take any decision for herself.

What, then, must have been the problems of the wife who became a Christian while her husband remained faithful to the ancestral gods? It is almost impossible for us to realize what life must have been for the wife who was brave enough to become a Christian.

What, then, is Peter's advice in such a case? We must first note what he does not advise.

He does not advise the wife to leave her husband. In this he takes exactly the same attitude as Paul takes (1Cor.7:13-16). Both Paul and Peter are quite sure that the Christian wife must remain with the heathen husband so long as he does not send her away. Peter does not tell the wife to preach or to argue. He does not tell her to insist that there is no difference between slave and freeman, Gentile and Jew, male and female, but that all are the same in the presence of the Christ whom she has come to know.

He tells her something very simple--nothing else than to be a good wife. It is by the silent preaching of the loveliness of her life that she must break down the barriers of prejudice and hostility, and win her husband for her new Master.

She must be submissive. It is not a spineless submission that is meant but, as someone has finely put it, a "voluntary selflessness." it is the submission which is based on the death of pride and the desire to serve. It is the submission not of fear but of perfect love.

She must be pure. There must be in her life a lovely chastity and fidelity founded on love.

She must be reverent. She must live in the conviction that the whole world is the Temple of God and that all life is lived in the presence of Christ.

THE TRUE ADORNMENT

1Pet. 3:3-6

Let not your adornment be an outward thing of braided hair and ornaments of gold and wearing of robes, but let it be an adornment of the inward personality of the heart, wrought by the unfading loveliness of a gentle and quiet spirit,

which is very precious in the sight of God. For it was thus in days of old the holy women, who placed their hopes in God, adorned themselves in submission to their husbands. It was thus that Sara obeyed Abraham calling him, "Lord." And you have become her children, if you do good, and if you do not become a prey to fluttering fears.

Bengel speaks of "the labour bestowed on dress which consumes much time." Such labour is no modern thing. We have already seen that in the ancient world women had no part in public life whatsoever; they had nothing to pass their time; for that reason it was sometimes argued that they must be allowed an interest in dress and adornment. Cato the Censor insisted on simplicity; Lucius Valerius answered: "Why should men grudge women their ornaments and their dress? Women cannot hold public offices, or priesthoods, or gain triumphs; they have no public occupations. What, then, can they do but devote their time to adornment and to dress?" Undue interest in self-adornment was then, as it still is, a sign that the person who indulged in it had no greater things to occupy her mind.

The ancient moralists condemned undue luxury as much as the Christian teachers did. Quintilian, the Roman master of oratory, wrote: "A tasteful and magnificent dress, as the Greek poet tells us, lends added dignity to the wearer: but effeminate and luxurious apparel fails to adorn the body, and only reveals the sordidness of the mind." Epictetus, the philosopher, thinking of the narrow life to which women were condemned in the ancient world, said, "Immediately after they are fourteen, women are called 'ladies' by men. And so, when they see that they have nothing else than to be bedfellows of men, they begin to beautify themselves and put all their hopes on that. It is, therefore, worthwhile for us to take pains to make them understand that they are honoured for nothing else but only for appearing modest and self-respecting." Epictetus and Peter agree.

There is at least one passage in the Old Testament which lists the various items of female adornment and threatens the day of judgment in which they will be destroyed. The passage is Isa.3:18-24. It speaks of the "finery of the anklets, the headbands and the crescents; the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarfs; the headdresses, the armllets, the sashes, the perfume boxes and the amulets; the signet rings and nose rings; the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks and the handbags; the garments of gauze, the linen garments, the turbans and the veils."

In the world of the Greeks and the Romans it is interesting to collect the references to personal adornments. There were as many ways of dressing the hair as there were bees in Hybca. Hair was waved and dyed, sometimes black, more often auburn. Wigs were worn, especially blonde wigs, which are found

even in the Christian catacombs; and hair to manufacture them was imported from Germany, and even from as far away as India. Hairbands, pins and combs were made of ivory, and boxwood, and tortoiseshell; and sometimes of gold, studded with gems.

Purple was the favourite colour for clothes. One pound weight of the best Tyrian purple wool, strained twice through, cost 1,000 denarii, 43.50 British pounds. A tyrian cloak of the best purple cost well over 100 British pounds. In one year silks, pearls, scents and jewellery were imported from India to the value of 1,000,000 British pounds. Similar imports of luxury came from Arabia.

Diamonds, emeralds, topazes, opals and the sardonyx were favourite stones. Struma Nonius had a ring valued at 21,250 British pounds. Pearls were loved most of all. Julius Caesar bought for Servilia a pearl which cost him 65,250 British pounds. Earrings were made of pearls and Seneca spoke of women with two or three fortunes in their ears. Slippers were encrusted with them; Nero even had a room whose walls were covered with them. Pliny saw Lollia Paulina, wife of Caligula, wearing a dress so covered with pearls and emeralds that it had cost 450,000 British pounds.

Christianity came into a world of luxury and decadence combined.

In face of all this Peter pleads for the graces which adorn the heart, which are precious in the sight of God. These were the jewels which adorned the holy women of old. Isaiah had called Sara the mother of God's faithful people (Isa.51:2); and if Christian wives are adorned with the same graces of modesty, humility and chastity, they too will be her daughters and will be within the family of the faithful people of God.

A Christian wife of those times lived in a society where she would be tempted to senseless extravagance and where she might well go in fear of the caprices of her heathen husband; but she must live in selfless service, in goodness and in serene trust. That would be the best sermon she could preach to win her husband for Christ. There are few passages where the value of a lovely Christian life is so vividly stressed.

THE HUSBAND'S OBLIGATION

1Pet. 3:7

Likewise, you husbands, live understandingly with your wives, remembering that women are the weaker sex and assigning honour to them as fellow-heirs of the grace of life, so that there may be no barrier to your prayers.

Short as this passage is, it has in it much of the very essence of the Christian ethic. That ethic is what may be called a reciprocal ethic. It never places all the responsibility on one side. If it speaks of the duties of slaves, it speaks also of the obligations of masters. If it speaks of the duty of children, it speaks also of the obligations of parents (compare Eph.6:1-9; Col.3:20-25; Col.4:1). Peter has just laid down the duty of wives; now he lays down the duty of husbands. A marriage must be based on reciprocal obligation. A marriage in which all the privileges are on one side and all the obligations on the other is bound to be imperfect with every chance of failure. This was a new conception in the ancient world. We have already noted the woman's total lack of rights then and quoted Cato's statement of the rights of the husband. But we did not finish that quotation and we do so now: "If you were to catch your wife in an act of infidelity, you can kill her with impunity without a trial; but, if she were to catch you, she would not venture to touch you with her finger and, indeed, she has no right." In the Roman moral code all the obligation was on the wife and all the privilege with the husband. The Christian ethic never grants a privilege without a corresponding obligation.

What are the obligations of the husband?

(i) He must be understanding. He must be considerate and sensitive to the feelings of his wife. Somerset Maugham's mother was a very beautiful woman with the world at her feet but his father was unhandsome. Someone once asked her: "Why do you remain faithful to that ugly little man you married?" Her answer was: "Because he never hurts me." Understanding and considerateness had forged an unbreakable bond. The cruelty which is hardest to bear is often not deliberate but the product of sheer thoughtlessness.

(ii) He must be chivalrous. He must remember that women are the weaker sex and treat them with courtesy. In the ancient world chivalry to women was well-nigh unknown. It was, and still is, no uncommon sight in the East to see the man riding on a donkey while the woman trudged by his side. It was Christianity which introduced chivalry into the relationship between men and women.

(iii) He must remember that the woman has equal spiritual rights. She is a fellow-heir of the grace of life. Women did not share in the worship of the Greeks and the Romans. Even in the Jewish synagogue they had no share in the service, and in the orthodox synagogue still have none. When they were admitted to the synagogue at all, they were segregated from the men and hidden behind a screen. Here in Christianity emerged the revolutionary principle that women had equal spiritual rights and with that the relationship between the sexes was changed.

(iv) Unless a man fulfils these obligations, there is a barrier between his prayers and God. As Bigg puts it: "The sighs of the injured wife come between the husband's prayers and God's hearing." Here is a great truth. Our relationships with God can never be right, if our relationships with our fellow-men are wrong. It is when we are at one with each other that we are at one with him.

THE MARKS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (1)

1Pet. 3:8-12

Finally, you must all be of one mind; you must have sympathy with each other and you must live in brotherly love; you must be compassionate and humble; you must not return evil for evil, nor insult for insult; on the contrary, you must return blessing; for it was to give and to inherit blessing that you were called.

He that would love life, And see good days, Let him keep his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking guile: Let him turn away from evil and do right; Let him seek peace, and pursue it, For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, And his ears are open to their prayer; But the face of the Lord is against those that do evil.

Peter, as it were, gathers together the great qualities of the Christian life.

(i) Right in the forefront he sets Christian unity. It is worth while to collect together the great New Testament passages about unity, in order to see how great a place it occupies in New Testament thought. The basis of the whole matter is in the words of Jesus who prayed for his people that they might all be one, as he and his Father were one (Jn.17:21-23). In the thrilling early days of the Church this prayer was fulfilled, for they were all of one heart and of soul (Ac.4:32). Over and over again Paul exhorts men to this unity and prays for it. He reminds the Christians of Rome that, though they are many, they are one body, and he pleads with them to be of one mind (Rom.12:4; Rom.12:16). In writing to the Christians of Corinth, he uses the same picture of the Christians as members of one body in spite of all their differing qualities and gifts (1Cor.12:12-31). He pleads with the quarrelling Corinthians that there should be no divisions among them and that they should be perfectly joined together in the same mind (1Cor.1:10). He tells them that strifes and divisions are fleshly things, marks that they are living on purely human standards, without the mind of Christ (1Cor.3:3). Because they have partaken of the one bread, they must be one body (1Cor.10:17). He tells them that they must be of one mind and must live in peace (2Cor.13:11). In Christ Jesus the dividing walls are down, and Jew and Greek are united into one (Eph.2:13-14). Christians must maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, remembering that there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all (Eph.4:3-6). The Philippians must stand

fast in one spirit, striving together with one mind for the faith of the gospel; they will make Paul's happiness complete, if they have the same love and have one accord and one mind; the quarrelling Euodias and Syntyche are urged to be of one mind in the Lord (Php.1:27; Php.2:2; Php.4:2).

All through the New Testament rings this plea for Christian unity. It is more than a plea; it is an announcement that no man can live the Christian life unless in his personal relationships he is at unity with his fellow-men; and that the Church cannot be truly Christian if there are divisions within it. It is tragic to realize how far men are from realizing this unity in their personal lives and how far the Church is from realizing it within herself. C. E. B. Cranfield writes so finely of this that we cannot do other than quote his whole comment in full, lengthy though it is: "The New Testament never treats this agreeing in Christ as an unnecessary though highly desirable spiritual luxury, but as something essential to the true being of the Church. Divisions, whether disagreements between individual members or the existence of factions and parties and--how much more!--our present-day denominations, constitute a calling in question of the Gospel itself and a sign that those who are involved are carnal. The more seriously we take the New Testament, the more urgent and painful becomes our sense of the sinfulness of the divisions, and the more earnest our prayers and strivings after the peace and unity of the Church on earth. That does not mean that the like-mindedness we are to strive for is to be a drab uniformity of the sort beloved of bureaucrats. Rather is it to be a unity in which powerful tensions are held together by an over-mastering loyalty, and strong antipathies of race and colour, temperament and taste, social position and economic interest, are overcome in common worship and common obedience. Such unity will only come when Christians are humble and bold enough to lay hold on the unity already given in Christ and to take it more seriously than their own self-importance and sin, and to make of these deep differences of doctrine, which originate in our imperfect understanding of the Gospel and which we dare not belittle, not an excuse for letting go of one another or staying apart, but rather an incentive for a more earnest seeking in fellowship together to hear and obey the voice of Christ." There speaks the prophetic voice to our modern condition.

THE MARKS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (2)

1Pet. 3:8-12 (continued)

(ii) Second, Peter sets sympathy. Here again the whole New Testament urges this duty upon us. We are to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep (Rom.12:15). When one member of the body suffers all the other members suffer with it; and when one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it (1Cor.12:26), and it must be so with Christians, who are the body of Christ. One thing is clear, sympathy and selfishness cannot coexist.

So long as the self is the most important thing in the world, there can be no such thing as sympathy; sympathy depends on the willingness to forget self and to identify oneself with the pains and sorrows of others. Sympathy comes to the heart when Christ reigns there.

(iii) Third, Peter sets brotherly love. Again the matter goes back to the words of Jesus. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.... By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn.13:34-35). Here the New Testament speaks with unmistakable definiteness and with almost frightening directness. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death. Any one who hates his brother is a murderer" (1Jn.3:14-15). "If anyone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar" (1Jn.4:20). The simple fact is that love of God and love of man go hand in hand; the one cannot exist without the other. The simplest test of the reality of the Christianity of a man or a Church is whether or not it makes them love their fellow-men.

(iv) Fourth, Peter sets compassion. There is a sense in which pity is in danger of becoming a lost virtue. The conditions of our own age tend to blunt the edge of the mind to sensitiveness in pity. As C. E. B. Cranfield puts it: "We got used to hearing on the radio of a thousand-bomber raid as we ate our breakfast. We have got used to the idea of millions of people becoming refugees." We can read of the thousands of casualties on the roads with no reaction within our hearts, forgetting that each means a broken body or a broken heart for someone. It is easy to lose the sense of pity and still easier to be satisfied with a sentimentalism which feels a moment's comfortable sorrow and does nothing. Pity is of the very essence of God and compassion of the very being of Jesus Christ; a pity so great that God sent his only Son to die for men, a compassion so intense that it took Christ to the Cross. There can be no Christianity without compassion.

(v) Fifth, Peter sets humility. Christian humility comes from two things. It comes, first, from the sense of creatureliness. The Christian is humble because he is constantly aware of his utter dependence on God and that of himself he can do nothing. It comes, second, from the fact that the Christian has a new standard of comparison. It may well be that when he compares himself with his fellow-men, he has nothing to fear from the comparison. But the Christian's standard of comparison is Christ, and, compared with his sinless perfection, he is ever in default. When the Christian remembers his dependence on God and keeps before him the standard of Christ, he must remain humble.

(vi) Lastly, and as a climax, Peter sets forgiveness. It is to receive forgiveness from God and to give forgiveness to men that the Christian is called. The one cannot exist without the other; it is only when we forgive others their sins against us that we are forgiven our sins against God (Matt.6:12,14,15). The

mark of the Christian is that he forgives others as God has forgiven him (Eph.4:32).

As was natural for him, Peter sums the matter up by quoting Ps.34, with its picture of the man whom God receives and the man whom God rejects.

THE CHRISTIAN'S SECURITY IN A THREATENING WORLD

1Pet. 3:13-15a

Who will hurt you, if you are ardent lovers of goodness? Even if you do have to suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. Have no fear of them; do not be troubled; but in your hearts give Christ a unique place.

In this passage we can see how Peter was soaked in the Old Testament; there are two Old Testament foundations for it. It is not so much that he actually quotes them, as that he could not have written the passage at all unless the Old Testament had been in his mind. The very first sentence is a reminiscence of Isa.50:9: "Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty?" Again, when Peter is talking about the banishing of fear, he is thinking of Isa.8:13, "But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread."

There are three great conceptions in this passage.

(i) Peter begins by insisting on a passionate love of goodness. A man may have more than one attitude to goodness. It may be to him a burden or a bore or something which he vaguely desires but the price of which he is not willing to pay in terms of effort. The word we have translated an ardent lover is zelotes (GSN2207); which is often translated Zealot. The Zealots were the fanatical patriots, who were pledged to liberate their native land by every possible means. They were prepared to take their lives in their hands, to sacrifice ease and comfort, home and loved ones, in their passionate love for their country. What Peter is saying is: "Love goodness with that passionate intensity with which the most fanatical patriot loves his country." Sir John Seeley said, "No heart is pure that is not passionate; no virtue safe which is not enthusiastic." It is only when a man falls in love with goodness that the wrong things lose their fascination and their power.

(ii) Peter goes on to speak about the Christian attitude to suffering. It has been well pointed out that we are involved in two kinds of suffering. There is the suffering in which we are involved because of our humanity. Because we are men, there come physical suffering, death, sorrow, distress of mind and weariness and pain of body. But there is also the suffering in which we may be involved because of our Christianity. There may be unpopularity, persecution,

sacrifice for principle and the deliberate choosing of the difficult way, the necessary discipline and toil of the Christian life. Yet the Christian life has a certain blessedness which runs through it all. What is the reason for it?

(iii) Peter's answer is this. The Christian is the man to whom God and Jesus Christ are the supremacies in life; his relationship to God in Christ is life's greatest value. If a man's heart is set on earthly things, possessions, happiness, pleasure, ease and comfort, he is of all men most vulnerable. For, in the nature of things, he may lose these things at any moment. Such a man is desperately easily hurt. On the other hand, if he gives to Jesus Christ the unique place in his life, the most precious thing for him is his relationship to God and nothing can take that from him. Therefore, he is completely secure.

So, then, even in suffering the Christian is still blessed. When the suffering is for Christ, he is demonstrating his loyalty to Christ and is sharing his sufferings. When the suffering is part of the human situation, it still cannot despoil him of the most precious things in life. No man escapes suffering, but for the Christian suffering cannot touch the things which matter most of all.

THE CHRISTIAN ARGUMENT FOR CHRIST

1Pet. 3:15b-16

Always be prepared to make your defence to anyone who calls you to account concerning the hope that is in you; but do so with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame.

In a hostile and suspicious world it was inevitable that the Christian would be called upon to defend the faith he held and the hope by which he lived. Here Peter has certain things to say about this Christian defence.

(i) It must be reasonable. It is a *logos* (GSN3056) that the Christian must give, and a *logos* (GSN3056) is a reasonable and intelligent statement of his position. A cultivated Greek believed that it was the mark of an intelligent man that he was able to give and to receive a *logos* (GSN3056) concerning his actions and belief. As Bigg puts it, he was expected "intelligently and temperately to discuss matters of conduct." To do so we must know what we believe; we must have thought it out; we must be able to state it intelligently and intelligibly. Our faith must be a first-hand discovery and not a second-hand story. It is one of the tragedies of the modern situation that there are so many Church members who, if they were asked what they believe, could not tell, and who, if they were asked why they believe it, would be equally helpless. The Christian must go through

the mental and spiritual toil of thinking out his faith, so that he can tell what he believes and why.

(ii) His defence must be given with gentleness. There are many people who state their beliefs with a kind of arrogant belligerence. Their attitude is that anyone who does not agree with them is either a fool or a knave and they seek to ram their beliefs down other people's throats. The case for Christianity must be presented with winsomeness and with love, and with that wise tolerance which realizes that it is not given to any man to possess the whole truth. "There are as many ways to the stars as there are men to climb them." Men may be wooed into the Christian faith when they cannot be bullied into it.

(iii) His defence must be given with reverence. That is to say, any argument in which the Christian is involved must be carried on in a tone which God can hear with joy. No debates have been so acrimonious as theological debates; no differences have caused such bitterness as religious differences. In any presentation of the Christian case and in any argument for the Christian faith, the accent should be the accent of love.

(iv) The only compelling argument is the argument of the Christian life. Let a man so act that his conscience is clear. Let him meet criticism with a life which is beyond reproach. Such conduct will silence slander and disarm criticism. "A saint," as someone has said, "is someone whose life makes it easier to believe in God."

THE SAVING WORK OF CHRIST

1Pet. 3:17-4:6

For it is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be the will of God, than to suffer for doing wrong. For Christ also died once and for all for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but he was raised to life in the Spirit, in which also he went and preached to the spirits who are in prison, the spirits who were once upon a time disobedient, in the time when the patience of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being built, in which some few--that is, eight souls--were brought in safety through the water. And water now saves you, who were symbolically represented in Noah and his company, I mean the water of baptism; and baptism is not merely the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge to God of a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, because he went to heaven, after angels and authorities and power had been made subject to him.

Since, then, Christ suffered in the flesh, you too must arm yourselves with the same conviction that he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, and as a result of this the aim of such a man now is to spend the time that remains to him of life in the flesh no longer in obedience to human passions, but in obedience to the will of God. For the time that is past is sufficient to have done what the Gentiles will to do, to have lived a life of licentiousness, lust, drunkenness, revellings, carousings, and abominable idolatry. They think it strange when you do not rush to join them in the same flood of profligacy and they abuse you for not doing so. They will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead, so that, although they have already been judged in the flesh like men, they might live in the Spirit like God.

This is not only one of the most difficult passages in Peter's letter, it is one of the most difficult in the whole New Testament; and it is also the basis of one of the most difficult articles in the creed, "He descended into Hell." It is, therefore, better first of all to read it as a whole and then to study it in its various sections.

THE EXAMPLE OF THE WORK OF CHRIST

1Pet. 3:17-18a

For, it is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be the will of God, than to suffer for doing wrong. For Christ also died once and for all for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

Although this passage is one of the most difficult in the New Testament, it begins with something which anyone can understand. The point that Peter is making is that, even if the Christian is compelled to suffer unjustly for his faith, he is only walking the way that his Lord and Saviour has already walked. The suffering Christian must always remember that he has a suffering Lord. In the narrow compass of these two verses Peter has the greatest and the deepest things to say about the work of Christ.

(i) He lays it down that the work of Christ was unique and never need be repeated. Christ died once and for all for sins. The New Testament says this same thing often. When Christ died, he died once and for all (Rom.6:10). The priestly sacrifices in the Temple have to be repeated daily but Christ made the perfect sacrifice once and for all when he offered himself up (Heb.7:27). Christ was once and for all offered to bear the sin of many (Heb.9:28). We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once and for all (Heb.10:10). The New Testament is completely sure that on the Cross something happened which never needs to happen again and that in that happening sin is finally

defeated. On the Cross God dealt with man's sin in a way which is adequate for all sin, for all men, for all time.

(ii) He lays it down that that sacrifice was for sin. Christ died once and for all for sins. This again is frequently said in the New Testament. Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures (1Cor.15:3). Christ gave himself for our sins (Gal.1:4). The function of the High Priest, and Jesus Christ is the perfect High Priest, is to offer sacrifice for sins (Heb.5:1,3). He is the expiation for our sins (1Jn.2:2).

The Greek for for sins is either *huper* (GSN5228) or *peri* (GSN4012) *hamartion* (GSN0266). It so happens that in the Greek version of the Old Testament the regular phrase for a sin-offering is *peri* (GSN4012) *hamartias* (GSN0266) (*Hamartias*, GSN0266, is the singular of *hamartion*, GSN0266), as, for instance, in Lev.5:7 and Lev.6:30. That is to say, Peter is laying it down that the death of Christ is the sacrifice which atones for the sin of men.

We may put it this way. Sin is that which interrupts the relationship which should exist between God and men. The object of sacrifice is to restore that lost relationship. The death of Christ upon the Cross, however we explain it, avails to restore the lost relationship between God and man. As Charles Wesley put it in verse:

No condemnation now I dread: Jesus, and all in him, is mine!
Alive in him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

It may be that we will never agree in our theories of what exactly happened on the Cross, for, indeed, as Charles Wesley said in that same hymn: "'Tis mystery all!" But on one thing we can agree--through what happened there we may enter into a new relationship with God.

(iii) He lays it down that that sacrifice was vicarious. Christ died once and for all for sins, the just for the unjust. That the just should suffer for the unjust is an extraordinary thing. At first sight it looks like injustice. As Edwin H. Robertson put it: "Only forgiveness without reason can match sin without excuse." The suffering of Christ was for us; and the mystery is that he who deserved no suffering bore that suffering for us who deserved to suffer. He sacrificed himself to restore our lost relationship with God.

(iv) He lays it down that the work of Christ was to bring us to God. Christ died once and for all for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. The word for "to bring" is *prosagein* (GSN4317). It has two vivid backgrounds.

(a) It has a Jewish background. It is used in the Old Testament of bringing to God those who are to be priests. It is God's instruction: "You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tent of meeting" (Exo.29:4). The point is this--as the Jews saw it, only the priests had the right of close access to God. In the Temple the layman might come so far; he could pass through the Court of the Gentiles, the Court of the Women, the Court of the Israelites--but there he must stop. Into the Court of the Priests, into the nearer presence of God, he could not go; and of the priests, only the High Priest could enter into the Holy of Holies. But Jesus Christ brings us to God; he opens the way for all men to his nearer presence.

(b) It has a Greek background. In the New Testament the corresponding noun *prosagoge* (GSN4318) is three times used. *Prosagein* (GSN4317) means to bring in; *prosagoge* (GSN4318) means the right of access, the result of the bringing in. Through Christ we have access to grace (Rom.5:2). Through him we have access to God the Father (Eph.2:18). Through him we have boldness and access and confidence to come to God (Eph.3:12). In Greek this had a specialized meaning. At the court of kings there was an official called the *prosagogeus*, the introducer, the giver of access, and it was his function to decide who should be admitted to the king's presence and who should be kept out. He, as it were, held the keys of access. It is Jesus Christ, through what he did, who gives men access to God.

(v) When we go beyond these two verses, further into the passage, we can add two more great truths to Peter's view of the work of Christ. In 1Pet. 3:19 he says that Jesus preached to the spirits in prison; and in 1Pet. 4:6 he says that the gospel was preached to them that are dead. As we shall go on to see, this most probably means that in the time between his death and his resurrection Jesus actually preached the gospel in the abode of the dead; that is to say, to those who in their lifetime had never had the opportunity to hear it. Here is a tremendous thought. It means that the work of Christ is infinite in its range. It means that no man who ever lived is outside the grace of God.

(vi) Peter sees the work of Christ in terms of complete triumph. He says that after his resurrection Jesus went into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to him (1Pet. 3:22). The meaning is that there is nothing in earth and heaven outside the empire of Christ. To all men he brought the new relationship between man and God; in his death he even brought the good news to the dead; in his resurrection he conquered death; even the angelic and the demonic powers are subject to him; and he shares the very power and throne of God. Christ the sufferer has become Christ the victor; Christ the crucified has become Christ the crowned.

THE DESCENT INTO HELL (1)

1Pet. 3:18b-20; 1Pet. 4:6

He was put to death in the flesh, but he was raised to life in the Spirit, in which also he went and preached to the spirits who are in prison, the spirits who were once upon a time disobedient in the time when the patience of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being built.... For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead, so that, although they have already been judged in the flesh like men, they might live in the spirit like God.

We have already said that we are here face to face with one of the most difficult passages, not only in Peter's letter, but in the whole New Testament; and, if we are to grasp what it means, we must follow Peter's own advice and gird up the loins of our mind to study it.

This passage has lodged in the creed in the phrase: "He descended into hell." We must first note that this phrase is very misleading. The idea of the New Testament is not that Jesus descended into hell but that he descended into Hades. Ac.2:27, as all the newer translations correctly show, should be translated not: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," but, "Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades." The difference is this. Hell is the place of the punishment of the wicked; Hades was the place where all the dead went.

The Jews had a very shadowy conception of life beyond the grave. They did not think in terms of heaven and of hell but of a shadowy world, where the spirits of men moved like grey ghosts in an everlasting twilight and where there was neither strength nor joy. Such was Hades, into which the spirits of all men went after death. Isaiah writes: "For Sheol cannot thank thee, death cannot praise thee; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for thy faithfulness" (Isa.38:18). The Psalmist wrote: "In death there is no remembrance of thee; in Sheol who can give thee praise?" (Ps.6:5). "What profit is there in my death if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise thee? Will it tell of thy faithfulness?" (Ps.30:9). "Dost thou work wonders for the dead? Do the shades rise up to praise thee? Is thy steadfast love declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in Abaddon? Are thy wonders known in the darkness, or thy saving help in the land of forgetfulness?" (Ps.88:10-12). "The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any that go down into silence" (Ps.115:17). "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going" (Ecc.9:10). The Jewish conception of the world after death was of this grey world of shadows and forgetfulness, in which men were separated from life and light and God.

As time went on, there emerged the idea of stages and divisions in this shadowland. For some it was to last for ever; but for others it was a kind of prison-house in which they were held until the final judgment of God's wrath

should blast them (Isa.24:21-22; 2Pet. 2:4; Rev.20:1-7). So, then, it must first of all be remembered that this whole matter is to be thought of, not in terms of hell, as we understand the word, but in terms of Christ's going to the dead in their shadowy world.

THE DESCENT INTO HELL (2)

1Pet. 3:18b-20; 1Pet. 4:6 (continued)

This doctrine of the descent into Hades, as we must now call it, is based on two phrases in our present passage. It says that Jesus went and preached to the spirits who are in prison (1Pet. 3:19); and it speaks of the gospel being preached to the dead (1Pet. 4:6). In regard to this doctrine there have always been differing attitudes amongst thinkers.

(i) There are those who wish to eliminate it altogether. There is the attitude of elimination. Some wish to eliminate it altogether and attempt to do so along two lines.

(a) Peter says that in the Spirit Christ preached to the spirits in prison, who were disobedient in the time when the patience of God waited in the days of Noah, when the ark was being built. It is argued that what this means is that it was in the time of Noah himself that Christ did this preaching; that in the Spirit long ages before this he made his appeal to the wicked men of Noah's day. This would completely do away with the idea of the descent into Hades. Many great scholars have accepted that view; but we do not think it is the view which comes naturally from Peter's words.

(b) If we look at Moffatt's translation, we find something quite different. He translates: "In the flesh he (Christ) was put to death, but he came to life in the Spirit. It was in the Spirit that Enoch also went and preached to the imprisoned spirits who had disobeyed at the time when God's patience held out during the construction of the ark in the days of Noah." How does Moffatt arrive at this translation?

The name of Enoch does not appear in any Greek manuscript. But in the consideration of the text of any Greek author, scholars sometimes use a process called emendation. They think that there is something wrong with the text as it stands, that some scribe has perhaps copied it wrongly; and they, therefore, suggest that some word should be changed or added. In this passage Rendel Harris suggested that the word Enoch was missed out in the copying of Peter's writing and should be put back in.

(Although it involves the use of Greek some readers may be interested to see how Rendel Harris arrived at this famous emendation. In the top line in italic

print, we have set down the Greek of the passage in English lettering and beneath each Greek word its English translation:

thanatotheis (GSN2289) men (GSN3303) sarki (GSN4561) having been put to death in the flesh

zoopoietheis (GSN2227) de (GSN1161) pneumatī (GSN4151) having been raised to life in the Spirit

en (GSN1722) ho (GSN3588) kai (GSN2532) tois (GSN3588) in which also to the

en (GSN1722) phulake (GSN5438) pneumasi (GSN4151) in prison spirits

poreutheis (GSN4198) ekeruxen (GSN2784) having gone he preached.

(Men (GSN3303) and de (GSN1161) are what are called particles; they are not translated but merely mark the contrast between sarki, GSN4561, and pneumatī, GSN4151). It was Rendel Harris' suggestion that between kai (GSN2532) and tois (GSN3588) the word Enoch (GSN1802) had dropped out. His explanation was that, since most manuscript copying was done to dictation, scribes were very liable to miss words which followed each other, if they sounded very similar. In this passage:

en (GSN1722) ho (GSN3588) kai (GSN2532) and Enoch (GSN1802)

sound very much alike, and Rendel Harris thought it very likely that Enoch (GSN1802) had been mistakenly omitted for that reason).

What reason is there for bringing Enoch (GSN1802) into this passage at all? He has always been a fascinating and mysterious person. "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him" (Gen.5:24). In between the Old and New Testaments many legends sprang up about Enoch and famous and important books were written under his name. One of the legends was that Enoch, though a man, acted as "God's envoy" to the angels who sinned by coming to earth and lustfully seducing mortal women (Gen.6:2). In the Book of Enoch it is said that he was sent down from heaven to announce to these angels their final doom (Enoch 12: 1) and that he proclaimed that for them, because of their sin, there was neither peace nor forgiveness ever (Enoch 12 and 13).

So then, according to Jewish legend, Enoch did go to Hades and preach doom to the fallen angels. And Rendel Harris thought that this passage referred, not to Jesus, but to Enoch, and Moffatt so far agreed with him as to put Enoch into his translation. That is an extremely interesting and ingenious suggestion but without doubt it must be rejected. There is no evidence for it at all; and it is not natural to bring in Enoch, for the whole picture is of the work of Christ.

THE DESCENT INTO HELL (3)

1Pet. 3:18b-20; 1Pet. 4:6 (continued)

We have seen that the attempt at the elimination of this passage fails.

(ii) The second attitude is limitation. This attitude--and it is that of some very great New Testament interpreters--believes that Peter is indeed saying that Jesus went to Hades and preached, but that he by no means preached to all the inhabitants of Hades. Different interpreters limit that preaching in different ways.

(a) It is argued that Jesus preached in Hades only to the spirits of the men who were disobedient in the days of Noah. Those who hold this view often go on to argue that, since these sinners were desperately disobedient, so much so that God sent the flood and destroyed them (Gen.6:12-13), we may believe that no man is outside the mercy of God. They were the worst of all sinners and yet they were given another chance of repentance; therefore, the worst of men still have a chance in Christ.

(b) It is argued that Jesus preached to the fallen angels, and preached, not salvation, but final and awful doom. We have already mentioned these angels. Their story is told in Gen.6:1-8. They were tempted by the beauty of mortal women; they came to earth, seduced them and begat children; and because of their action, it is inferred, the wickedness of man was great and his thoughts were always evil. 2Pet. 2:4 speaks of these sinning angels as being imprisoned in hell, awaiting judgment. It was to them that Enoch did, in fact, preach; and there are those who think that what this passage means is not that Christ preached mercy and another chance; but that, in token of his complete triumph, he preached terrible doom to those angels who had sinned.

(c) It is argued that Christ preached only to those who had been righteous and that he led them out of Hades into the paradise of God. We have seen how the Jews believed that all the dead went to Hades, the shadowy land of forgetfulness. The argument is that before Christ that was indeed so but he opened the gates of heaven to mankind; and, when he did so, he went to Hades and told the glad news to all the righteous men of all past generations and led them out to God. That is a magnificent picture. Those who hold this view often go on to say that, because of Christ, there is now no time spent in the shadows of Hades and the way to paradise is open as soon as this world closes on us.

THE DESCENT INTO HELL (4)

1Pet. 3:18b-20; 1Pet. 4:6 (continued)

(iii) There is the attitude that what Peter is saying is that Jesus Christ, between his death and resurrection, went to the world of the dead and preached the gospel there. Peter says that Jesus Christ was put to death in the flesh but raised to life in the Spirit, and that it was in the Spirit that he so preached. The meaning is that Jesus lived in a human body and was under all the limitations of time and space in the days of his flesh; and died with that body broken and bleeding upon the Cross. But when he rose again, he rose with a spiritual body, in which he was rid of the necessary weaknesses of humanity and liberated from the necessary limitations of time and space. It was in this spiritual condition of perfect freedom that the preaching to the dead took place.

As it stands this doctrine is stated in categories which are outworn. It speaks of the descent into Hades and the very word descent suggests a three-storey universe in which heaven is localized above the sky and Hades beneath the earth. But, laying aside the physical categories of this doctrine, we can find in it truths which are eternally valid and precious, three in particular.

(a) If Christ descended into Hades, then his death was no sham. It is not to be explained in terms of a swoon on the Cross, or anything like that. He really experienced death, and rose again. At its simplest, the doctrine of the descent into Hades lays down the complete identity of Christ with our human condition, even to the experience of death.

(b) If Christ descended into Hades, it means that his triumph is universal. This, in fact, is a truth which is ingrained into the New Testament. It is Paul's dream that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth (Php.2:10). In the Revelation the song of praise comes from every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth and under the earth (Rev.5:13). He who ascended into Heaven is he who first descended into the lower parts of the earth (Eph.4:9-10). The total submission of the universe to Christ is woven into the thought of the New Testament.

(c) If Christ descended into Hades and preached there, there is no corner of the universe into which the message of grace has not come. There is in this passage the solution of one of the most haunting questions raised by the Christian faith-- what is to happen to those who lived before Jesus Christ and to those to whom the gospel never came? There can be no salvation without repentance but how can repentance come to those who have never been confronted with the love and holiness of God? If there is no other name by which men may be saved, what is to happen to those who never heard it? This is the point that Justin Martyr fastened on long ago: "The Lord, the Holy God of Israel, remembered his dead, those sleeping in the earth, and came down to them to tell them the good news of salvation." The doctrine of the descent into Hades conserves the

precious truth that no man who ever lived is left without a sight of Christ and without the offer of the salvation of God.

Many in repeating the creed have found the phrase "He descended into hell" either meaningless or bewildering, and have tacitly agreed to set it on one side and forget it. It may well be that we ought to think of this as a picture painted in terms of poetry rather than a doctrine stated in terms of theology. But it contains these three great truths--that Jesus Christ not only tasted death but drained the cup of death, that the triumph of Christ is universal and that there is no corner of the universe into which the grace of God has not reached.

THE BAPTISM OF THE CHRISTIAN

1Pet. 3:18-22

For Christ also died once and for all for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but he was raised to life in the Spirit, in which also he went and preached to the spirits who are in prison, the spirits who were once upon a time disobedient in the time when the patience of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being built, in which some few--that is, eight souls--were brought in safety through the water. And water now saves you, who were symbolically represented in Noah and his company, I mean the water of baptism; and baptism is not merely the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge to God of a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, because he went to heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been made subject to him.

Peter has been speaking about the wicked men who were disobedient and corrupt in the days of Noah; they were ultimately destroyed. But in the destruction by the flood eight people--Noah and his wife, his sons Shem, Ham and Japheth, and their wives--were brought to safety in the ark. Immediately the idea of being brought to safety through the water turns Peter's thoughts to Christian baptism, which is also a bringing to safety through the water. What Peter literally says is that baptism is an antitype of Noah and his people in the ark.

This word introduces us to a special way of looking at the Old Testament. There are two closely connected words. There is *tupos* (GSN5179), *type*, which means a seal, and there is *antitupos* (GSN0499), *antitype*, which means the impression of the seal. Clearly, between the seal and its impression there is the closest possible correspondence. So there are people and events and customs in the Old Testament which are types, and which find their antitypes in the New Testament. The Old Testament event or person is like the seal; the New Testament event or person is like the impression; the two answer to each other.

We might put it that the Old Testament event symbolically represents and foreshadows the New Testament event. The science of finding types and antitypes in the Old and the New Testaments is very highly developed. But to take very simple and obvious examples, the Passover Lamb and the scapegoat, who bore the sins of the people, are types of Jesus; and the work of the High Priest in making sacrifice for the sins of the people is a type of his saving work. Here Peter sees the bringing safely through the waters of Noah and his family as a type of baptism.

In this passage Peter has three great things to say about baptism. It must be remembered that at this stage of the Church's history we are still dealing with adult baptism, the baptism of people who had come straight from heathenism into Christianity and who were taking upon themselves a new way of life.

(i) Baptism is not merely a physical cleansing; it is a spiritual cleansing of the whole heart and soul and life. Its effect must be on a man's very soul and on his whole life.

(ii) Peter calls baptism the pledge of a good conscience to God (1Pet. 3:21). The word Peter uses for pledge is *eperotema* (GSN1906). In every business contract there was a definite question and answer which made the contract binding. The question was: "Do you accept the terms of this contract, and bind yourself to observe them?" And the answer, before witnesses was: "Yes." Without that question and answer the contract was not valid. The technical word for that question and answer clause is *eperotema* (GSN1906) in Greek, *stipulatio* in Latin.

Peter is, in effect, saying that in baptism God said to the man coming direct from heathenism: "Do you accept the terms of my service? Do you accept its privileges and promises, and do you undertake its responsibilities and its demands?" And in the act of being baptized the man answered: "Yes."

Some use the word sacrament. Sacrament is derived from the Latin *sacramentum*, which means a soldier's oath of loyalty on entering the army. Here we have basically the same picture. We cannot very well apply this question and answer in infant baptism, unless it be to the parents; but, as we have said, baptism in the very early church was of adult men and women coming spontaneously from heathenism into the Church. The modern parallel is entering upon full membership of the Church. When we enter upon Church membership, God asks us: "Do you accept the conditions of my service, with all privileges and all its responsibilities, with all its promises and all its demands?" and we answer; "Yes." It would be well if all were clearly to understand what they are doing when they take upon themselves membership of the Church.

(iii) The whole idea and effectiveness of baptism is dependent on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the grace of the Risen Lord which cleanses us; it is to the Risen, Living Lord that we pledge ourselves; it is to the Risen, Living Lord that we look for strength to keep the pledge that we have given. Once again, where infant baptism is the practice, we must take these great conceptions and apply them to the time when we enter upon full membership of the Church.

THE OBLIGATION OF THE CHRISTIAN

1Pet. 4:1-5

Since then, Christ suffered in the flesh, you too must arm yourselves with the same conviction, that he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, and as a result of this the aim of such a man now is to spend the time that remains to him of life in obedience to the will of God. For the time that is past is sufficient to have done what the Gentiles will to do, to have lived a life of licentiousness, lust, drunkenness, revellings, carousings, and abominable idolatry. They think it strange when you do not rush to join them in the same flood of profligacy, and they abuse you for not doing so. They will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

The Christian is committed to abandon the ways of heathenism and to live as God would have him to do.

Peter says, "He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." What exactly does he mean? There are three distinct possibilities.

(i) There is a strong line in Jewish thought that suffering is in itself a great purifier. In the Apocalypse of Baruch the writer, speaking of the experiences of the people of Israel, says, "Then, therefore, were they chastened that they might be sanctified" (13: 10). In regard to the purification of the spirits of men Enoch says, "And in proportion as the burning of their body becomes severe, a corresponding change will take place in their spirit for ever and ever; for before the Lord of spirits there will be none to utter a lying word" (67: 9). The terrible sufferings of the time are described in 2 Maccabees, and the writer says, "I beseech those that read this book that they be not discouraged, terrified or shaken for these calamities, but that they judge these punishments not to be for destruction but for chastening of our nation. For it is a token of his great goodness, when evil-doers are not suffered to go on in their ways any long time, but forthwith punished. For not as with other nations, whom the Lord patiently forbearth to punish, till the day of judgment arrive, and they be come to the fullness of their sins, so dealeth he with us, lest that, being come to the height of sin, afterwards he should take vengeance on us. And though he punish sinners

with adversity, yet doth he never forsake his people" (2Macc.6:12-16). The idea is that suffering sanctifies and that not to be punished is the greatest punishment which God can lay upon a man. "Blessed is the man whom thou dost chasten, O Lord," said the Psalmist (Ps.94:12). "Happy is the man whom God reproves," said Eliphaz (Jb.5:17). "For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (Heb.12:6).

If this is the idea, it means that he who has been disciplined by suffering has been cured of sin. That is a great thought. It enables us, as Browning said, "to welcome each rebuff that turns earth's smoothness rough." It enables us to thank God for the experiences which hurt but save the soul. But great as this thought is, it is not strictly relevant here.

(ii) Bigg thinks that Peter is speaking in terms of the experience which his people had of suffering for the Christian faith. He puts it this way: "He who has suffered in meekness and in fear, he who has endured all that persecution can do to him rather than join in wicked ways can be trusted to do right; temptation has manifestly no power over him." The idea is that if a man has come through persecution and not denied the name of Christ, he comes out on the other side with a character so tested and a faith so strengthened, that temptation cannot touch him any more.

Again there is a great thought here, the thought that every trial and every temptation are meant to make us stronger and better. Every temptation resisted makes the next easier to resist; and every temptation conquered makes us better able to overcome the next attack. But again it is doubtful if this thought comes in very relevantly here.

(iii) The third explanation is most probably the right one. Peter has just been talking about baptism. Now the great New Testament picture of baptism is in Rom.6. In that chapter Paul says that the experience of baptism is like being buried with Christ in death and raised with him to newness of life. We think that this is what Peter is thinking of here. He has spoken of baptism; and now he says, "He who in baptism has shared the sufferings and the death of Christ, is risen to such newness of life with him that sin has no more dominion over him" (Rom.6:14). Again we must remember that this is the baptism of the man who is voluntarily coming over from paganism into Christianity. In that act of baptism he is identified with Christ; he shares his sufferings and even his death; and he shares his risen life and power, and is, therefore, victor over sin.

When that has happened, a man has said good-bye to his former way of life. The rule of pleasure, pride and passion is gone, and the rule of God has begun. This was by no means easy. A man's former associates would laugh at the new puritanism which had entered his life. But the Christian knows very well that the

judgment of God will come, when the judgments of earth will be reversed and the pleasures that are eternal will compensate a thousandfold for the transitory pleasures which had to be abandoned in this life.

THE ULTIMATE CHANCE

1Pet. 4:6

For this is the reason why the gospel was preached to the dead, so that, although they have been judged in the flesh like men, they may live in the Spirit like God.

This very difficult passage ends with a very difficult verse. Once again we have the idea of the gospel being preached to the dead. At least three different meanings have been attached to dead. (i) It has been taken to mean those who are dead in sin, not those who are physically dead. (ii) It has been taken to mean those who died before the Second Coming of Christ; but who heard the gospel before they died and so will not miss the glory. (iii) It has been taken to mean quite simply all the dead. There can be little doubt that this third meaning is correct; Peter has just been talking about the descent of Christ to the place of the dead, and here he comes back to the idea of Christ preaching to the dead.

No fully satisfactory meaning has ever been found for this verse; but we think that the best explanation is as follows. For mortal man, death is the penalty of sin. As Paul wrote: "Sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned" (Rom.5:12). Had there been no sin, there would have been no death; and, therefore, death in itself is a judgment. So Peter says, all men have already been judged when they die; in spite of that Christ descended to the world of the dead and preached the gospel there, giving them another chance to live in the Spirit of God.

In some ways this is one of the most wonderful verses in the Bible, for, if our explanation is anywhere near the truth, it gives a breath-taking glimpse of a gospel of a second chance.

THE APPROACHING END

1Pet. 4:7a

The end of all things is near.

Here is a note which is struck consistently all through the New Testament. It is the summons of Paul that it is time to wake out of sleep, for the night is far spent and the day is at hand (Rom.13:12). "The Lord is at hand," he writes to the Philippians (Php.4:5). "The coming of the Lord is at hand," writes James (Jas.

5:8). John says that the days in which his people are living are the last hour (1Jn.2:18). "The time is near," says the John of the Revelation, and he hears the Risen Christ testify: "Surely I am coming soon" (Rev.1:3; Rev.22:20).

There are many for whom all such passages are problems, for, if they are taken literally, the New Testament writers were mistaken; nineteen hundred years have passed and the end is not yet come. There are four ways of looking at them.

(i) We may hold that the New Testament writers were in fact mistaken. They looked for the return of Christ and the end of the world in their own day and generation; and these events did not take place. The curious thing is that the Christian Church allowed these words to stand although it would not have been difficult quietly to excise them from the New Testament documents. It was not until late in the second century that the New Testament began to be fixed in the form in which we have it today; and yet statements such as these became unquestioned parts of it. The clear conclusion is that the people of the early church still believed these words to be true.

(ii) There is a strong line of New Testament thought which, in effect, holds that the end has come. The consummation of history was the coming of Jesus Christ. In him time was invaded by eternity. In him God entered into the human situation. In him the prophecies were all fulfilled. In him the end has come. Paul speaks of himself and his people as those on whom the ends of the ages have come (1Cor.10:11). Peter in his first sermon speaks of Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit and of all that should happen in the last days, and then says that at that very time men were actually living in those last days (Ac.2:16-21).

If we accept that, it means that in Jesus Christ the end of history has come. The battle has been won; there remain only skirmishes with the last remnants of opposition. It means that at this very moment we are living in the "end time," in what someone has called "the epilogue to history." That is a very common point of view; but the trouble is that it flies in the face of facts. Evil is as rampant as ever; the world is still far from having accepted Christ as King. It may be the "end time," but the dawn seems as far distant as ever it was.

(iii) It may be that we have to interpret near in the light of history's being a process of almost unimaginable length. It has been put this way. Suppose all time to be represented by a column the height of Cleopatra's Needle with a single postage stamp on top, then the length of recorded history is represented by the thickness of the postage stamp and the unrecorded history which went before it by the height of the column. When we think of time in terms like that near becomes an entirely relative word. The Psalmist was literally right when he

said that in God's sight a thousand years were just like a watch in the night (Ps.90:4). In that case near can cover centuries and still be correctly used. But it is quite certain that the Biblical writers did not take near in that sense, for they had no conception of history in terms like that.

(iv) The simple fact is that behind this there is one inescapable and most personal truth. For everyone of us the time is near. The one thing which can be said of every man is that he will die. For every one of us the Lord is at hand. We cannot tell the day and the hour when we shall go to meet him; and, therefore, all life is lived in the shadow of eternity.

"The end of all things is near," said Peter. The early thinkers may have been wrong if they thought that the end of the world was round the corner, but they have left us with the warning that for every one of us personally the end is near; and that warning is as valid today as ever it was.

THE LIFE LIVED IN THE SHADOW OF ETERNITY

1Pet. 4:7b-8

Be, therefore, steady and sober in mind so that you will really be able to pray as you ought. Above all cherish for each other a love that is constant and intense, because love hides a multitude of sins.

When a man realizes the nearness of Jesus Christ, he is bound to commit himself to a certain kind of life. In view of that nearness Peter makes four demands.

(i) He says that we must be steady in mind. We might render it: "Preserve your sanity." The verb Peter uses is *sophronein* (GSN4994); connected with that verb is the noun *sophrosune* (GSN4997), which the Greeks derived from the verb *sozein* (GSN4982), to keep safe, and the noun *phronesis* (GSN5428), the mind. *Sophrosune* (GSN4997) is the wisdom which characterizes a man who is preeminently sane; and *sophronein* (GSN4993) means to preserve one's sanity. The great characteristic of sanity is that it sees things in their proper proportions; it sees what things are important and what are not; it is not swept away by sudden and transitory enthusiasms; it is prone neither to unbalanced fanaticism nor to unrealizing indifference. It is only when we see the affairs of earth in the light of eternity that we see them in their proper proportions; it is when God is given his proper place that everything takes its proper place.

(ii) He says that we must be sober in mind. We might render it: "Preserve your sobriety." The verb Peter uses is *nephein* (GSN3525) which originally meant to be sober in contradistinction to being drunk and then came to mean to act soberly and sensibly. This does not mean that the Christian is to be lost in a gloomy joylessness; but it does mean that his approach to life must not be

frivolous and irresponsible. To take things seriously is to be aware of their real importance and to be ever mindful of their consequences in time and in eternity. It is to approach life, not as a jest, but as a serious matter for which we are answerable.

(iii) He says that we must do this in order to pray as we ought. We might render it: "Preserve your prayer life." When a man's mind is unbalanced and his approach to life is frivolous and irresponsible, he cannot pray as he ought. We learn to pray only when we take life so wisely and so seriously that we begin to say in all things: "Thy will be done." The first necessity of prayer is the earnest desire to discover the will of God for ourselves.

(iv) He says that we must cherish for each other a love that is constant and intense. We might render it: "Preserve your love." The word Peter uses to describe this love is *ektenes* (GSN1618) which has two meanings, both of which we have included in the translation. It means outstretching in the sense of consistent; our love must be the love that never fails. It also means stretching out as a runner stretches out. As C. E. B. Cranfield reminds us it describes a horse at full gallop and denotes "the taut muscle of strenuous and sustained effort, as of an athlete." Our love must be energetic. Here is a fundamental Christian truth. Christian love is not an easy, sentimental reaction. It demands everything a man has of mental and spiritual energy. It means loving the unlovely and the unlovable; it means loving in spite of insult and injury; it means loving when love is not returned. Bengel translates *ektenes* (GSN1618) by the Latin *vehemens*, *vehement*. Christian love is the love which never fails and into which every atom of man's strength is directed.

The Christian, in the light of eternity, must preserve his sanity, preserve his sobriety, preserve his prayers and preserve his love.

THE POWER OF LOVE

1Pet. 4:7b-8 (continued)

"Love," says Peter, "hides a multitude of sins." There are three things which this saying may mean; and it is not necessary that we should choose between them, for they are all there.

(i) It may mean that our love can overlook many sins. "Love covers all offences," says the writer of the Proverbs (Prov.10:12). If we love a person, it is easy to forgive. It is not that love is blind, but that it loves a person just as he is. Love makes patience easy. It is much easier to be patient with our own children than with the children of strangers. If we really love our fellow-men, we can accept

their faults, and bear with their foolishness, and even endure their unkindness. Love indeed can cover a multitude of sins.

(ii) It may mean that, if we love others, God will overlook a multitude of sins in us. In life we meet two kinds of people. We meet those who have no faults at which the finger may be pointed; they are moral, orthodox, and supremely respectable; but they are hard and austere and unable to understand why others make mistakes and fall into sin. We also meet those who have all kinds of faults; but they are kind and sympathetic and they seldom or never condemn. It is the second kind of person to whom the heart more readily warms; and in all reverence we may say that it is so with God. He will forgive much to the man who loves his fellow-men.

(iii) It may mean that God's love covers the multitude of our sins. That is blessedly and profoundly true. It is the wonder of grace that, sinners as we are, God loves us; that is why he sent his Son.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

1Pet. 4:9-10

Be hospitable to one another and never grudge it. As each has received a gift from God, so let all use such gifts in the service of one another, like good stewards of the grace of God.

Peter's mind is dominated in this section by the conviction that the end of all things is near. It is of the greatest interest and significance to note that he does not use that conviction to urge men to withdraw from the world and to enter on a kind of private campaign to save their own souls; he uses it to urge them to go into the world and serve their fellow-men. As Peter sees it, a man will be happy if the end finds him, not living as a hermit, but out in the world serving his fellow-men.

(i) First, Peter urges upon his people the duty of hospitality. Without hospitality the early church could not have existed. The travelling missionaries who spread the good news of the gospel had to find somewhere to stay and there was no place for them to stay except in the homes of Christians. Such inns as there were were impossibly dear, impossibly filthy and notoriously immoral. Thus we find Peter lodging with one Simon a tanner (Ac.10:6), and Paul and his company were to lodge with one Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple (Ac.21:16). Many a nameless one in the early church made Christian missionary work possible by opening the doors of his house and home.

Not only did the missionaries need hospitality; the local churches also needed it. For two hundred years there was no such thing as a church building. The church

was compelled to meet in the houses of those who had bigger rooms and were prepared to lend them for the services of the congregation. Thus we read of the church which was in the house of Aquila and Priscilla (Rom.16:5; 1Cor.16:19), and of the church which was in the house of Philemon (Phm.2). Without those who were prepared to open their homes, the early church could not have met for worship at all.

It is little wonder that again and again in the New Testament the duty of hospitality is pressed upon the Christians. The Christian is to be given to hospitality (Rom.12:13). A bishop is to be given to hospitality (1Tim.3:2); the widows of the Church must have lodged strangers (1Tim.5:10). The Christian must not forget to entertain strangers and must remember that some who have done so have entertained angels unawares. (Heb.13:2). The bishop must be a lover of hospitality (Tit.1:8). And it is ever to be remembered that it was said to those on the right hand: "I was a stranger, and you welcomed me" while the condemnation of those on the left hand was: "I was a stranger, and you did not welcome me" (Matt.25:35,43).

In the early days the Church depended on the hospitality of its members; and to this day no greater gift can be offered than the welcome of a Christian home to the stranger in a strange place.

(ii) Such gifts as a man has he must place ungrudgingly at the service of the community. This again is a favourite New Testament idea which is expanded by Paul in Rom.12:3-8 and 1Cor.12. The Church needs every gift that a man has. It may be a gift of speaking, of music, of the ability to visit people. It may be a craft or skill which can be used in the practical service of the Church. It may be a house which a man possesses or money which he has inherited. There is no gift which cannot be placed at the service of Christ.

The Christian has to regard himself as a steward of God. In the ancient world the steward was very important. He might be a slave but his master's goods were in his hands. There were two main kinds of stewards, the dispensator, the dispenser, who was responsible for all the domestic arrangements of the household and laid in and divided out the household supplies; and the vilicus, the bailiff, who was in charge of his master's estates and acted as landlord to his master's tenants. The steward knew well that none of the things over which he had control belonged to him; they all belonged to his master. In everything he did he was answerable to his master and always it was his interests he must serve.

The Christian must always be under the conviction that nothing he possesses of material goods or personal qualities is his own; it all belongs to God and he must ever use what he has in the interests of God to whom he is always answerable.

THE SOURCE AND OBJECT OF ALL CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOUR

1Pet. 4:11

If anyone speaks, let him speak as one uttering sayings sent from God. If anyone renders any service, let him do so as one whose service comes from the strength which God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ to whom belong glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

Peter is thinking of the two great activities of the Christian Church, preaching and practical service. The word he uses for sayings is *logia* (GSN3048). That is a word with a kind of divine background. The heathen used it for the oracles which came to them from their gods; the Christians used it for the words of scripture and the words of Christ. So Peter is saying, "If a man has the duty of preaching, let him preach not as one offering his own opinions or propagating his own prejudices, but as one with a message from God." It was said of one great preacher: "First he listened to God, and then he spoke to men." It was said of another that ever and again he paused, "as if listening for a voice." There lies the secret of preaching power.

Peter goes on to say that if a Christian is engaged in practical service, he must render that service in the strength which God supplies. It is as if he said, "When you are engaged in Christian service, you must not do it as if you were conferring a personal favour or distributing bounty from your own store, but in the consciousness that what you give you first received from God." Such an attitude preserves the giver from pride and the gift from humiliation.

The aim of everything is that God should be glorified. Preaching is not done to display the preacher but to bring men face to face with God. Service is rendered not to bring prestige to the giver but to turn men's thoughts to God. E. G. Selwyn reminds us that the motto of the great Benedictine Order of monks is four letters--I-O-G-D--which stand for the Latin words (ut) in omnibus glorificetur Deus (in order that in all things God may be glorified). A new grace and glory would enter the Church, if all church people ceased doing things for themselves and did them for God.

THE INEVITABILITY OF PERSECUTION

1Pet. 4:12-13

Beloved, do not regard the fiery ordeal through which you are passing and which has happened to you to test you, as something strange, as if some alien experience were happening to you, but rejoice in so far as you share the sufferings of Christ so that you may also rejoice with rapture when his glory shall be revealed.

In the nature of things persecution must have been a much more daunting experience for Gentiles than it was for Jews. The average Gentile had little experience of it; but the Jews have always been the most persecuted people upon earth. Peter was writing to Christians who were Gentiles and he had to try to help them by showing them persecution in its true terms. It is never easy to be a Christian. The Christian life brings its own loneliness, its own unpopularity, its own problems, its own sacrifices and its own persecutions. It is, therefore, well to have certain great principles in our minds.

(i) It is Peter's view that persecution is inevitable. It is human nature to dislike and to regard with suspicion anyone who is different; the Christian is necessarily different from the man of the world. The particular impact of the Christian difference makes the matter more acute. To the world the Christian brings the standards of Jesus Christ. That is another way of saying that he inevitably is a kind of conscience to any society in which he moves; and many a man would gladly eliminate the troublesome twinges of conscience. The very goodness of Christianity can be an offence to a world in which goodness is regarded as a handicap.

(ii) It is Peter's view that persecution is a test. It is a test in a double sense. A man's devotion to a principle can be measured by his willingness to suffer for it; therefore, any kind of persecution is a test of a man's faith. But it is equally true that it is only the real Christian who will be persecuted. The Christian who compromises with the world will not be persecuted. In a double sense persecution is the test of the reality of a man's faith.

(iii) Now we come to the uplifting things. Persecution is a sharing in the sufferings of Jesus Christ. When a man has to suffer for his Christianity he is walking the way his Master walked and sharing the Cross his Master carried. This is a favourite New Testament thought. If we suffer with him, we will be glorified with him (Rom.8:17). It is Paul's desire to enter into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ (Php.3:10). If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him (2Tim.2:12). If we remember that, anything we must suffer for the sake of Christ becomes a privilege and not a penalty.

(iv) Persecution is the way to glory. The Cross is the way to the crown. Jesus Christ is no man's debtor and his joy and crown await the man who, through thick and thin, remains true to him.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

1Pet. 4:14-16

If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the presence of the glory and the Spirit of God rest upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer or a busybody. But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him by this name bring glory to God.

Here Peter says the greatest thing of all. If a man suffers for Christ, the presence of the glory rests upon him. This is a very strange phrase. We think it can mean only one thing. The Jews had the conception of the Shekinah, the luminous glow of the very presence of God. This conception constantly recurs in the Old Testament. "In the morning," said Moses, "you shall see the glory of the Lord" (Exo.16:7). "The glory of the Lord settled upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud coverer it six days," when the law was being delivered to Moses (Exo.24:16). In the tabernacle God was to meet with Israel and it was to be sanctified with his glory (Exo.29:43). When the tabernacle was completed, "then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exo.40:34). When the ark of the covenant was brought into Solomon's temple, "a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord" (1Kgs.8:10-11). Repeatedly this idea of the Shekinah, the luminous glory of God, occurs in the Old Testament.

It is Peter's conviction that something of that glow of glory rests on the man who suffers for Christ. When Stephen was on trial for his life and it was certain that he would be condemned to death, to those who looked on him his face was as the face of an angel (Ac.6:15).

Peter goes on to point out that it is as a Christian that a man must suffer and not as an evil-doer. The evils which he singles out are all clear enough until we come to the last. A Christian, Peter says, is not to suffer as an allotriepiskopos (GSN0244). The trouble is that there is no other instance of this word in Greek and Peter may well have invented it. It can have three possible meanings, all of which would be relevant. It comes from two words, allotrios (GSN0245), belonging to another and episkopos (GSN1985), looking upon or looking into. Therefore, it literally means looking upon, or into, that which belongs to another.

(i) To look on that which is someone else's might well be to cast covetous eyes upon it. That is how both the Latin Bible and Calvin take this word--to mean that the Christian must not be covetous.

(ii) To look upon that which belongs to another might well mean to be too interested in other people's affairs and to be a meddling busybody. That is by far the most probable meaning. There are Christians who do an infinite deal of harm with misguided interference and criticism. This would mean that the Christian

must never be an interfering busybody. That gives good sense and, we believe, the best sense.

(iii) There is a third possibility. *Allotrios* (GSN0245) means that which belongs to someone else; that is to say, that which is foreign to oneself. Along that line *allotriepiskopos* (GSN0244) will mean looking upon that which is foreign to oneself. That would mean, of a Christian, entering upon undertakings which do not befit the Christian life. This would mean that a Christian must never interest himself in things which are alien to the life that a Christian should lead.

While all three meanings are possible, we think that the third is the right one.

It is Peter's injunction that, if a Christian has to suffer for Christ, he must do so in such a way that his suffering brings glory to God and to the name he bears. His life and conduct must be the best argument that he does not deserve the suffering which has come upon him and his attitude to it must commend the name he bears.

ENTRUSTING ALL LIFE TO GOD

1Pet. 4:17-19

For the time has come for judgment to begin from the household of God. And, if it begins from us, what will be the end of those who disobey the good news which comes from God? And, if the righteous man is scarcely saved, where will the impious man and the sinner appear? So, then, let those who suffer in accordance with the will of God, entrust their souls to him who is a Creator on whom you can rely, and continue to do right.

As Peter saw it, it was all the more necessary for the Christian to do right because judgment was about to begin.

It was to begin with the household of God. Ezekiel hears the voice of God proclaiming judgment upon his people, "Begin at my sanctuary" (Eze.9:6). Where the privilege has been greatest, there the judgment will be sternest.

If judgment is to fall upon the Church of God, what will be the fate of those who have been utterly disobedient to the invitation and command of God? Peter confirms his appeal with a quotation from Prov.11:31: "If the righteous is requited on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!"

Finally, Peter exhorts his people to continue to do good and, whatever happens to them to entrust their lives to God, the Creator on whom they can rely. The word he uses for to entrust is *paratithesthai* (GSN3908), which is the technical word for depositing money with a trusted friend. In the ancient days there were

no banks and few really safe places in which to deposit money. So, before a man went on a journey, he often left his money in the safe-keeping of a friend. Such a trust was regarded as one of the most sacred things in life. The friend was absolutely bound by all honour and all religion to return the money intact.

Herodotus (6: 86) has a story about such a trust. A certain Milesian came to Sparta, for he had heard of the strict honour of the Spartans, and entrusted his money to a certain Glaucus. He said that in due time his sons would reclaim the money and would bring tokens which would establish their identity beyond doubt. The time passed and the sons came. Glaucus treacherously said that he had no recollection of any money being entrusted to him and said that he wished four months to think about it. The Milesians departed sad and sorry. Glaucus consulted the gods as to what he ought to do, and they warned him that he must return the money. He did so, but before long he died and all his family followed him, and in the time of Herodotus there was not a single member of his family left alive because the gods were angry that he had even contemplated breaking the trust reposed in him. Even to think of evading such a trust was a mortal sin.

If a man entrusts himself to God, God will not fail him. If such a trust is sacred to men, how much more is it sacred to God? This is the very word used by Jesus, when he says "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" (Lk.23:46). Jesus unhesitatingly entrusted his life to God, certain that he would not fail him--and so may we. The old advice is still good advice--trust in God and do the right.

THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH

1Pet. 5:1-4

So, then, as your fellow-elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as a sharer in the glory which is going to be revealed, I urge the elders who are among you, shepherd the flock of God which is in your charge, not because you are coerced into doing so, but of your own free-will as God would have you to do, not to make a shameful profit out of it, but with enthusiasm, not as if you aimed to be petty tyrants over those allotted to your care, but as being under the obligation to be examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Few passages show more clearly the importance of the eldership in the early church. It is to the elders that Peter specially writes and he, who was the chief of the apostles, does not hesitate to call himself a fellow-elder. It will be worth our while to look at something of the background and history of the eldership, the most ancient and the most important office in the Church.

(i) It has a Jewish background. The Jews traced the beginning of the eldership to the days when the children of Israel were journeying through the wilderness to the Promised Land. There came a time when Moses felt the burdens of leadership too heavy for him to bear alone, and to help him seventy elders were set apart and granted a share of the spirit of God (Num.11:16-30). Thereafter elders became a permanent feature of Jewish life. We find them as the friends of the prophets (2Kgs.6:32); as the advisers of kings (1Kgs.20:8; 1Kgs.21:11); as the colleagues of the princes in the administration of the affairs of the nation (Ezr.10:8). Every village and city had its elders; they met at the gate and dispensed justice to the people (Deut.25:7). The elders were the administrators of the synagogue; they did not preach, but they saw to the good government and order of the synagogue, and they exercised discipline over its members. The elders formed a large section of the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews, and they are regularly mentioned along with the Chief Priests and the rulers and the Scribes and the Pharisees (Matt.16:21; Matt.21:23; Matt.26:3; Matt.26:57; Matt.27:1,3; Lk.7:3; Ac.4:5; Ac.6:12; Ac.24:1). In the vision of the Revelation in the heavenly places there are twenty-four elders around the throne. The elders were woven into the very structure of Judaism, both in its civil and its religious affairs.

(ii) The eldership has a Greek background. Especially in Egyptian communities we find that elders are the leaders of the community and responsible for the conduct of public affairs, much as town councillors are today. We find a woman who had suffered an assault appealing to the elders for justice. When corn is being collected as tribute on the visit of a governor, we find that "the elders of the cultivators" are the officials concerned. We find them connected with the issuing of public edicts, the leasing of land for pasture, the ingathering of taxation. In Asia Minor, also, the members of councils were called elders. Even in the religious communities of the pagan world we find "elder priests" who were responsible for discipline. In the Socnopaeus temple we find the elder priests dealing with the case of a priest who is charged with allowing his hair to grow too long and with wearing woollen garments--an effeminacy and a luxury of which no priest should have been guilty.

We can see that long before Christianity took it over "elder" was a title of honour both in the Jewish and in the Graeco-Roman world.

THE CHRISTIAN ELDERSHIP

1Pet. 5:1-4 (continued)

When we turn to the Christian Church we find that the eldership is its basic office.

It was Paul's custom to ordain elders in every community to which he preached and in every church which he founded. On the first missionary journey elders were ordained in every church (Ac.14:23). Titus is left in Crete to ordain elders in every city (Tit.1:5). The elders had charge of the financial administration of the Church; it is to them that Paul and Barnabas delivered the money sent to relieve the poor of Jerusalem in the time of the famine (Ac.11:30). The elders were the councillors and the administrators of the Church. We find them taking a leading part in the Council of Jerusalem at which it was decided to fling open the doors of the Church to the Gentiles. At that Council the elders and the apostles are spoken of together as the chief authorities of the Church (Ac.15:2; Ac.16:4). When Paul came on his last visit to Jerusalem, it was to the elders that he reported and they suggested the course of action he should follow (Ac.21:18-25). One of the most moving passages in the New Testament is Paul's farewell to the elders of Ephesus. We find there that the elders, as he sees them, are the overseers of the flock of God and the defenders of the faith (Ac.20:28-29). We learn from James that the elders had a healing function in the Church through prayers and anointing with oil (Jas. 5:14). From the Pastoral Epistles we learn that they were rulers and teachers, and by that time paid officials (1Tim.5:17; the phrase double honour is better translated double pay).

When a man enters the eldership, no small honour is conferred upon him, for he is entering on the oldest religious office in the world, whose history can be traced through Christianity and Judaism for four thousand years; and no small responsibility falls upon him, for he has been ordained a shepherd of the flock of God and a defender of the faith.

THE PERILS AND PRIVILEGES OF THE ELDERSHIP

1Pet. 5:1-4 (continued)

Peter sets down in a series of contrasts the perils and the privileges of the eldership; and everything he says is applicable, not only to the eldership, but also to all Christian service inside and outside the Church.

The elder is to accept office, not under coercion, but willingly. This does not mean that a man is to grasp at office or to enter upon it without self-examining thought. Any Christian will have a certain reluctance to accept high office, because he knows only too well his unworthiness and inadequacy. There is a sense in which it is by compulsion that a man accepts office and enters upon Christian service. "Necessity," said Paul, "is laid upon me; Woe to me, if I do not preach the gospel" (1Cor.9:16). "The love of Christ controls us," he said (2Cor.5:14). But, on the other hand, there is a way of accepting office and of rendering service as if it was a grim and unpleasant duty. It is quite possible for a man to agree to a request in such an ungracious way that his whole action is

spoiled. Peter does not say that a man should be conceitedly or irresponsibly eager for office; but that every Christian should be anxious to render such service as he can, although fully aware how unworthy he is to render it.

The elder is to accept office, not to make a shameful profit out of it, but eagerly. The word for making a shameful profit is *aischrokerdes* (GSN0146). The noun from this is *aischrokerdeia*, and it was a characteristic which the Greek loathed. Theophrastus, the great Greek delineator of character, has a character sketch of this *aischrokerdeia*. Meanness--as it might be translated--is the desire for base gain. The mean man is he who never sets enough food before his guests and who gives himself a double portion when he is carving the joint. He waters the wine; he goes to the theatre only when he can get a free ticket. He never has enough money to pay the fare and always borrows from his fellow-passengers. When he is selling corn (American: grain), he uses a measure in which the bottom is pushed up, and even then he carefully levels the top. He counts the half radishes left over from dinner in case the servants eat any. Rather than give a wedding present, he will go away from home when a wedding is in the offing.

Meanness is an ugly fault. It is quite clear that there were people in the early church who accused the preachers and missionaries of being in the job for what they could get out of it. Paul repeatedly declares that he coveted no man's goods and worked with his hands to meet his own needs so that he was burdensome to no man (Ac.20:33; 1Th.2:9; 1Cor.9:12; 2Cor.12:14). It is certain that the payment any early office-bearer received was pitifully small and the repeated warnings that the office-bearers must not be greedy for gain shows that there were those who coveted more (1Tim.3:3,8; Tit.1:7,11). The point that Peter is making--and it is ever valid--is that no man dare accept office or render service for what he can get out of it. His desire must ever be to give and not to get.

The elder is to accept office, not to be a petty tyrant, but to be the shepherd and the example of the flock. Human nature is such that for many people prestige and power are even more attractive than money. There are those who love authority, even if it be exercised in a narrow sphere. Milton's Satan thought it better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven. Shakespeare spoke about proud man, dressed in a little brief authority, playing such fantastic tricks before high heaven as would make the angels weep. The great characteristic of the shepherd is his selfless care and his sacrificial love for the sheep. Any man who enters on office with the desire for preeminence, has got his whole point of view upside down. Jesus said to his ambitious disciples, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all" (Mk.10:42-44).

THE IDEAL OF THE ELDERSHIP

1Pet. 5:1-4 (continued)

One thing in this passage which defies translation and is yet one of the most precious and significant things in it is what we have translated "petty tyrants over those allotted to your care." The phrase which we have translated those allotted is curious in Greek; it is *ton* (GSN3588) *kleron* (GSN2819), the genitive plural of *kleros* (GSN2819) which is a word of extraordinary interest.

(i) It begins by meaning a dice or a lot. It is so used in Matt.27:35 which tells how the soldiers beneath the Cross were throwing dice (*kleroi*, GSN2819) to see who should possess the seamless robe of Jesus.

(ii) Second, it means an office gained or assigned by lot. It is the word used in Ac.1:26 which tells how the disciples cast lots to see who should inherit the office of Judas the traitor.

(iii) It then comes to mean an inheritance allotted to someone, as used in Col.1:12 for the inheritance of the saints.

(iv) In classical Greek it very often means a public allotment or estate of land. These allotments were distributed by the civic authorities to the citizens; and very often the distribution was made by drawing lots for the various pieces of land available for distribution.

Even if we were to go no further than this, it would mean that the office of the eldership and, indeed, any piece of service offered to us is never earned by any merit of our own but always allotted to us by God. It is never something that we have deserved but always something given to us by the grace of God.

But we can go further than this. *Kleros* (GSN2819) means something which is allotted to a man. In Deut.9:29 we read that Israel is the heritage (*kleros*, GSN2819) of God. That is to say, Israel is the people specially assigned to God by his own choice. Israel is the *kleros* (GSN2819) of God; the congregation is the *kleros* (GSN2819) of the elder. Just as Israel is allotted to God, an elder's duties in the congregation are allotted to him. This must mean that the whole attitude of the elder to his people must be the same as the attitude of God to his people.

Here we have another great thought. In 1Pet. 5:2 there is a phrase in the best Greek manuscripts which is not in the King James or the Revised Standard Versions. We have translated it: "Shepherd the flock of God, which is in your charge, not because you are coerced into doing so, but of your own free-will as God would have you to do." As God would have you to do is in Greek *kata* (GSN2596) *theon* (GSN2316), and that could well mean quite simply like God.

Peter says to the elders, "Shepherd your people like God." Just as Israel is God's special allotment, the people we have to serve in the Church or anywhere else are our special allotment; and our attitude to them must be the attitude of God.

What an ideal! And what a condemnation! It is our task to show to people God's forbearance, his forgiveness, his seeking love, his illimitable service. God has allotted to us a task and we must do it as he himself would do it. That is the supreme ideal of service in the Christian Church.

MEMORIES OF JESUS

1Pet. 5:14 (continued)

One of the lovely things about this passage is Peter's attitude throughout it. He begins by, as it were, taking his place beside those to whom he speaks. "Your fellow-elder" he calls himself. He does not separate himself from them but comes to share the Christian problems and the Christian experience with them. But in one thing he is different; he has memories of Jesus and these memories colour this whole passage. Even as he speaks, they are crowding into his mind.

(i) He describes himself as a witness of the sufferings of Christ. At first sight we might be inclined to question that statement, for we are told that, after the arrest in the garden, "All the disciples forsook him and fled" (Matt.26:56). But, when we think a little further, we realise that it was given to Peter to see the suffering of Jesus in a more poignant way than was given to any other human being. He followed Jesus into the courtyard of the High Priest's house and there in a time of weakness he three times denied his Master. The trial came to an end and Jesus was taken away; and there comes what may well be the most tragic sentence in the New Testament: "And the Lord turned and looked at Peter...and Peter went out and wept bitterly" (Lk.22:61-62). In that look Peter saw the suffering of the heart of a leader whose follower had failed him in the hour of his bitterest need. Of a truth Peter was a witness of the suffering that comes to Christ when men deny him; and that is why he was so eager that his people might be staunch in loyalty and faithful in service.

(ii) He describes himself as a sharer in the glory which is going to be revealed. That statement has a backward and a forward look. Peter had already had a glimpse of that glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. There the sleeping three had been awakened, and, as Luke puts it, "they kept awake and they saw his glory" (Lk.9:32). Peter had seen the glory. But he also knew that there was glory to come, for Jesus had promised to his disciples a share in the glory when the Son of Man should come to sit on his glorious throne (Matt.19:28). Peter remembered both the experience and the promise of glory.

(iii) There can surely be no doubt that, when Peter speaks of shepherding the flock of God, he is remembering the task that Jesus had given to him when he had bidden him feed his sheep (Jn.21:15-17). The reward of love was the appointment as a shepherd; and Peter is remembering it.

(iv) When Peter speaks of Jesus as the Chief Shepherd, many a memory must be in his mind. Jesus had likened himself to the shepherd who sought at the peril of his life for the sheep which was lost (Matt.18:12-14; Lk.15:4-7). He had sent out his disciples to gather in the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt.10:6). He was moved with pity for the crowds, for they were as sheep without a shepherd (Matt.9:36; Mk.6:34). Above all, Jesus had likened himself to the Good Shepherd who was ready to lay down his life for the sheep (Jn.10:1-18). The picture of Jesus as the Shepherd was a precious one, and the privilege of being a shepherd of the flock of Christ was for Peter the greatest privilege that a servant of Christ could enjoy.

THE GARMENT OF HUMILITY

1Pet. 5:5

In the same way, you younger people must be submissive to those who are older. In your relationships with one another you must clothe yourselves with the garment of humility, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Peter returns to the thought that the denial of self must be the mark of the Christian. He clinches his argument with a quotation from the Old Testament: "Toward the scornful God is scornful, but to the humble he shows favour" (Prov.3:34).

Here again it may well be that the memories of Jesus are in Peter's heart and are colouring all his thought and language. He tells his people that they must clothe themselves with the garment of humility. The word he uses for to clothe oneself is very unusual; it is *egkombousthai* (GSN1463) which is derived from *kombos* which describes anything tied on with a knot. Connected with it is *egkomboma*, a garment tied on with a knot. It was commonly used for protective clothing; it was used for a pair of sleeves drawn over the sleeves of a robe and tied behind the neck. And it was used for a slave's apron. There was a time when Jesus had put upon himself just such an apron. At the Last Supper John says of him that he took a towel and girded himself, and took water and began to wash his disciples' feet (Jn.13:4-5). Jesus girded himself with the apron of humility; and so must his followers.

It so happens that egkombousthai (GSN1463) is used of another kind of garment. It is also used of putting on a long, stole-like garment which was the sign of honour and preeminence.

To complete the picture we must put both images together. Jesus once put on the slave's apron and undertook the humblest of all duties, washing his disciples' feet; so we must in all things put on the apron of humility in the service of Christ and of our fellow-men; but that very apron of humility will become the garment of honour for us, for it is he who is the servant of all who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE LAWS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (1)

1Pet. 5:6-11

So, then, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that in his good time he may exalt you.

Cast all your anxiety upon him because he cares for you.

Be sober; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Stand up to him, staunch in the faith, knowing how to pay the same tax of suffering as your brethren in the world.

And after you have experienced suffering for a little while, the God of every grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, settle you.

To him be dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Here Peter speaks in imperatives, laying down certain laws for the Christian life.

(i) There is the law of humility before God. The Christian must humble himself under his mighty hand. The phrase the mighty hand of God is common in the Old Testament; and it is most often used in connection with the deliverance which God wrought for his people when he brought them out of Egypt. "With a strong hand," said Moses, "the Lord has brought you out of Egypt" (Exo.13:9). "Thou hast only begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand" (Deut.3:24). God brought his people forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand (Deut.9:26). The idea is that God's mighty hand is on the destiny of his people, if they will humbly and faithfully accept his guidance. After all the varied experiences of life, Joseph could say to the brothers who had once sought to eliminate him: "As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (Gen.50:20). The Christian never resents the experiences of life and never

rebels against them, because he knows that the mighty hand of God is on the tiller of his life and that he has a destiny for him.

(ii) There is the law of Christian serenity in God. The Christian must cast all his anxiety upon God. "Cast your burden on the Lord," said the Psalmist (Ps.55:22). "Do not be anxious about tomorrow," said Jesus (Matt.6:25-34). The reason we can do this with confidence is that we can be certain that God cares for us. As Paul had it, we can be certain that he who gave us his only Son will with him give us all things (Rom.8:32). We can be certain that, since God cares for us, life is out not to break us but to make us; and, with that assurance, we can accept any experience which comes to us, knowing that in everything God works for good with those who love him (Rom.8:28).

(iii) There is the law of Christian effort and of Christian vigilance. We must be sober and watchful. The fact that we cast everything upon God does not give us the right to sit back and to do nothing. Cromwell's advice to his troops was: "Trust in God, and keep your powder dry." Peter knew how hard this vigilance was, for he remembered how in Gethsemane he and his fellow-disciples slept when they should have been watching with Christ (Matt.26:38-46). The Christian is the man who trusts but at the same time puts all his effort and all his vigilance into the business of living for Christ.

(iv) There is the law of Christian resistance. The devil is ever out to see whom he can ruin. Again Peter must have been remembering how the devil had overcome him and he had denied his Lord. A man's faith must be like a solid wall against which the attacks of the devil exhaust themselves in vain. The devil is like any bully and retreats when he is bravely resisted in the strength of Jesus Christ.

THE LAWS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (2)

1Pet. 5:6-11 (continued)

(v) Finally, Peter speaks of the law of Christian suffering. He says that, after the Christian has gone through suffering, God will restore, establish, strengthen and settle him. Every one of the words which Peter uses has behind it a vivid picture. Each tells us something about what suffering is designed by God to do for a man.

(a) Through suffering God will restore a man. The word for restore is difficult in this case to translate. It is *kartarizein* (GSN2675), the word commonly used for setting a fracture, the word used in Mk.1:19 for mending nets. It means to supply that which is missing, to mend that which is broken. So suffering, if accepted in humility and trust and love, can repair the weaknesses of a man's character and add the greatness which so far is not there. It is said that Sir

Edward Elgar once listened to a young girl singing a solo from one of his own works. She had a voice of exceptional purity and clarity and range, and an almost perfect technique. When she had finished, Sir Edward said softly, "She will be really great when something happens to break her heart." Barrie tells how his mother lost her favourite son, and then says, "That is where my mother got her soft eyes, and that is why other mothers ran to her when they had lost a child." Suffering had done something for her that an easy way could never have done. Suffering is meant by God to add the grace notes to life.

(b) Through suffering God will establish a man. The word is *sterixein* (GSN4741), which means to make as solid as granite. Suffering of body and sorrow of heart do one of two things to a man. They either make him collapse or they leave him with a solidity of character which he could never have gained anywhere else. If he meets them with continuing trust in Christ, he emerges like toughened steel that has been tempered in the fire.

(c) Through suffering God will strengthen a man. The Greek is *sthenoun* (GSN4599), which means to fill with strength. Here is the same sense again. A life with no effort and no discipline almost inevitably becomes a flabby life. No one really knows what his faith means to him until it has been tried in the furnace of affliction. There is something doubly precious about a faith which has come victoriously through pain and sorrow and disappointment. The wind will extinguish a weak flame; but it will fan a strong flame into a still greater blaze. So it is with faith.

(d) Through suffering God will settle a man. The Greek is *themelioun* (GSN2311), which means to lay the foundations. When we have to meet sorrow and suffering we are driven down to the very bedrock of faith. It is then that we discover what are the things which cannot be shaken. It is in time of trial that we discover the great truths on which real life is founded.

Suffering is very far from doing these precious things for every man. It may well drive a man to bitterness and despair; and may well take away such faith as he has. But if it is accepted in the trusting certainty that a father's hand will never cause his child a needless tear, then out of suffering come things which the easy way may never bring.

A FAITHFUL HENCHMAN OF THE APOSTLES

1Pet. 5:12

I have written this brief letter to you through Silvanus, the faithful brother, as I reckon him to be, to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.

Peter bears witness that what he has written is indeed the grace of God, and he bids his people, amidst their difficulties, to stand fast in it.

He says that he has written through Silvanus. The Greek phrase (*dia*, GSN1223, *Silouanou*, GSN4610) means that Silvanus was his agent in writing. Silvanus is the full form of the name Silas and he is almost certainly to be identified with the Silvanus of Paul's letters and the Silas of Acts. When we gather up the references to Silas or Silvanus, we find that he was one of the pillars of the early church.

Along with Judas Barsabas, Silvanus was sent to Antioch with the epoch-making decision of the Council of Jerusalem that the doors of the Church were to be opened to the Gentiles; and in the account of that mission Silvanus and Judas are called leading men among the brethren (Ac.15:22,27). Not only did he simply bear the message, he commended it in powerful words, for Silvanus was also a prophet (Ac.15:32). During the first missionary journey Mark left Paul and Barnabas and returned home from Pamphylia (Ac.13:13); in preparing for the second missionary journey Paul refused to have Mark with him again; the result was that Barnabas took Mark as his companion and Paul took Silvanus (Ac.15:37-40). From that time forward Silvanus was for long Paul's right-hand man. He was with Paul in Philippi, where he was arrested and imprisoned with him (Ac.16:19,25,29). He rejoined Paul in Corinth and with him preached the gospel there (Ac.18:5; 2Cor.1:19). So closely was he associated with Paul that in both the letters to the Thessalonians he is joined with Paul and Timothy as the senders of the letters (1Th.1:1; 2Th.1:1). It is clear that Silvanus was a most notable man in the early church.

As we saw in the introduction, it is most probable that Silvanus was far more than merely the scribe who wrote this letter for Peter and the bearer who delivered it. One of the difficulties of First Peter is the excellence of the Greek. It is Greek with such a classical tinge that it seems impossible that Peter the Galilean fisherman should have written it for himself. Now Silvanus was not only a man of weight in the Church; he was also a Roman citizen (Ac.16:37) and he would be much better educated than Peter was. Most probably he had a large share in the composition of this letter. We are told that in China, when a missionary wished to send a message to his people, he often wrote it in the best Chinese he could achieve, and then gave it to a Christian Chinese to correct and put into proper form; or, he might even just tell the Christian Chinese what he wished to say, leaving him to put it into literary form for his approval. That is most likely what Peter did. He either gave his letter to Silvanus to polish into excellent Greek or else he told Silvanus what he wished said and left him to say it, adding the last three verses as his personal greeting.

Silvanus was one of those men the Church can never do without. He was content to take the second place and to serve almost in the background so long as God's

work was done. It was enough for him that he was Paul's assistant, even if Paul for ever overshadowed him. It was enough for him to be Peter's penman, even if it meant only a bare mention of his name at the end of the letter. For all that, it is no little thing to go down in history as the faithful henchman on whom both Peter and Paul depended. The Church always has need of people like Silvanus and many who cannot be Peters or Pauls can still assist the Peters and Pauls to do their work.

GREETINGS

1Pet. 5:13

She who is at Babylon, and who has been chosen as you have been chosen, greets you, and so does Mark my son.

Although it sounds so simple, this is a troublesome verse. It presents us with certain questions difficult of solution.

(i) From whom are these greetings sent? The King James Version has "the Church that is at Babylon elected together with you, saluteth you." But "the Church that is" is in italics, which means that there is no equivalent in the Greek which simply says "the one elected together with you at Babylon" and the phrase is feminine. There are two possibilities.

(a) It is quite possible that the King James Version is correct. That is the way Moffatt takes it when he translates "your sister Church in Babylon." The phrase could well be explained as being based on the fact that the Church is the Bride of Christ and may be spoken of in this way. On the whole, the commonest view is that it is a Church which is meant.

(b) But it does have to be remembered that there is actually no word for Church in the Greek, and this feminine phrase might equally well refer to some well-known Christian lady. If it does, by far the best suggestion is that the reference is to Peter's wife. We know that she did actually accompany him on his preaching journeys (1Cor.9:5). Clement of Alexandria (Stromateis 7.11.63) tells us that she died a martyr, executed in Peter's own sight, while he encouraged her by saying, "Remember the Lord." She was clearly a well-known figure in the early church.

We would not wish to speak dogmatically on this question. It is perhaps more likely that the reference is to a Church; but it is not impossible that Peter is associating his wife and fellow-evangelist in the greetings which he sends.

(ii) From where was this letter written? The greetings are sent from Babylon. There are three possibilities.

(a) There was a Babylon in Egypt, near Cairo. It had been founded by Babylonian refugees from Assyria and was called by the name of their ancestral city. But by this time it was almost exclusively a great military camp; and in any event the name of Peter is never connected with Egypt. This Babylon may be disregarded.

(b) There was the Babylon in the east to which the Jews had been taken in captivity. Many had never come back and it was a centre of Jewish scholarship. The great commentary on the Jewish Law is called the Babylonian Talmud. So important were the Jews of Babylon that Josephus had issued a special edition of his histories for them. There is no doubt that there was a large and important colony of Jews there; and it would have been quite natural for Peter, the apostle of the Jews, to preach and to work there. But we do not find the name of Peter ever connected with Babylon and there is no trace of him having ever been there. Scholars so great as Calvin and Erasmus have taken Babylon to be this great eastern city but, on the whole, we think the probabilities are against it.

(c) Regularly Rome was called Babylon, both by the Jews and by the Christians. That is undoubtedly the case in the Revelation where Babylon is the great harlot, drunk with the blood of the saints and the martyrs (Rev.17-18). The Godlessness, Just and luxury of ancient Babylon were, so to speak, reincarnated in Rome. Peter is definitely connected in tradition with Rome; and the likelihood is that it was from there that the letter was written.

(iii) Who is the Mark, whom Peter calls his son, and from whom he sends greetings? If we take the elect lady to be Peter's wife. Mark might quite well be literally Peter's son. But it is much more likely that he is the Mark who wrote the gospel. Tradition has always closely connected Peter with Mark, and has handed down the story that he was intimately involved with Mark's gospel. Papias, who lived towards the end of the second century and was a great collector of early traditions, describes Mark's gospel in this way: "Mark, who was Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately though not in order, all that he recollected of what Christ had said or done. For he was not a hearer of the Lord or a follower of his; he followed Peter, as I have said, at a later date, and Peter adapted his instructions to practical needs, without any attempt to give the Lord's words systematically. So that Mark was not wrong in writing down some things in this way from memory, for his one concern was neither to omit nor to falsify anything he had heard." According to Papias, Mark's gospel is nothing other than the preaching material of Peter. In similar vein Irenaeus says that after the death of Peter and Paul at Rome, "Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also handed down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter." It is the consistent story of tradition that Mark, the evangelist, was indeed a son to Peter, and all the likelihood is that these greetings are from him.

So, then, we may gather up the possibilities. "She who is at Babylon, and who has been chosen, as you have been chosen," may either be the Church or the wife of Peter, herself a martyr. Babylon may be the Babylon of the east but is more likely to be the great and wicked city of Rome. Mark might possibly be the actual son of Peter, about whom we know nothing else, but is more likely to be Mark, the writer of the gospel, who was to Peter as a son.

AT PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER

1Pet. 5:14

Greet each other with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all that are in Christ.

The most interesting thing here is the injunction to give each other the kiss of love. This was for centuries an integral and precious part of Christian fellowship and worship; and its history and gradual elimination, is of the greatest interest.

With the Jews it was the custom for a disciple to kiss his Rabbi on the cheek and to lay his hands upon his shoulder. That is what Judas did to Jesus (Mk.14:44). The kiss was the greeting of welcome and respect, and we can see how much Jesus valued it, for he was grieved when it was not given to him (Lk.7:45). Paul's letters frequently end with the injunction to salute each other with a holy kiss (Rom.16:16; 1Cor.16:20; 2Cor.13:12; 1Th.5:26).

In the early church the kiss became an essential part of Christian worship. "What prayer is complete," asks Tertullian, "from which the holy kiss is divorced? What kind of sacrifice is that from which men depart without the peace?" (Dex Oratione 18). The kiss, we see here, was called the peace. It was specially a part of the communion service. Augustine says that, when Christians were about to communicate, "they demonstrated their inward peace by the outward kiss" (De Amicitia 6). It was usually given after the catechumens had been dismissed, when only members of the Church were present, and after the prayer before the elements were brought in. Justin Martyr says, "When we have ceased from prayer, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president bread and a cup of wine" (1.65). The kiss was preceded by the prayer "for the gift of peace and of unfeigned love, undefiled by hypocrisy or deceit," and it was the sign that "our souls are mingled together, and have banished all remembrance of wrongs" (Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures 25.5.3). The kiss was the sign that all injuries were forgotten, all wrongs forgiven, and that those who sat at the Lord's Table were indeed one in the Lord.

This was a lovely custom and yet it is clear that it was sadly open to abuse. It is equally clear from the warnings so often given that abuses did creep in. Athenagoras insists that the kiss must be given with the greatest care, for "if

there be mixed with it the least defilement of thought, it excludes us from eternal life" (Legatio Christianis 32). Origen insists that the kiss of peace must be "holy, chaste and sincere," not like the kiss of Judas (Commentaria in Epistolam B. Pauli ad Romanos 10: 33). Clement of Alexandria condemns the shameless use of the kiss, which ought to be mystic, for with the kiss "certain persons make the churches resound, and thereby occasion foul suspicions and evil reports" (Paedagogus 3: 11). Tertullian speaks of the natural reluctance of the heathen husband to think that his wife should be so greeted in the Christian Church (Ad Uxorem 2: 4).

In the Church of the west these inevitable problems gradually brought the end of this lovely custom. By the time of the Apostolic Constitutions in the fourth century, the kiss is confined to those of the same sex--the clergy are to salute the bishop, the men the men and the women the women. In this form the kiss of peace lasted in the Church of the west until the thirteenth century. Sometimes substitutes were introduced. In some places a little wooden or metal tablet, with a picture of the crucifixion on it, was used. It was kissed first by the priest, and then passed to the congregation, who each kissed it and handed it on, each man to his neighbour, in token of their mutual love for Christ and in Christ. In the oriental Churches the custom still obtains; it is not extinct in the Greek Church; the Armenian Church substituted a courteous bow.

We may note certain other uses of the kiss in the early church. At baptism the person baptized was kissed, first by the baptizer and then by the whole congregation, as a sign of his welcome into the household and family of Christ. A newly ordained bishop was given "the kiss in the Lord." The marriage ceremony was ratified by a kiss, a natural action taken over from paganism. Those who were dying first kissed the Cross and were then kissed by all present. The dead were kissed before burial.

To us the kiss of peace may seem very far away. It came from the day when the Church was a real family and fellowship, when Christians really did know and love one another. It is a tragedy that the modern Church, often with vast congregations who do not know each other and do not even wish to know each other, could not use the kiss of peace except as a formality. It was a lovely custom which was bound to cease when the reality of fellowship was lost within the Church.

"Peace to all of you that are in Christ," says Peter; and so he leaves his people to the peace of God which is greater than all the troubles and distresses the world can bring.