

## THE CHAIR OF PETER OR THE CHAIR OF CHRIST.—III.

(Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette.)

On the top of all the considerations we have already urged comes the vital question, Was Peter himself ever at Rome? Assuredly the Scriptural evidence is altogether against the supposition that he was. Paul wrote an epistle to the Roman Church, and he afterwards wrote epistles from Rome to other Churches and to individuals, and he never once mentions the name of Peter. He sends salutations to very many at Rome by name, as may be seen from the last chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, but Peter's name is not to be found in the list. We observe, also, that he is under the impression that no apostle had ever visited Rome up to the time of his writing his Epistle (Rom. i. 11). If Peter was Bishop of Rome at the time, as is asserted by Roman writers, then this is a most unaccountable omission. Clement, who we know was Bishop of Rome a few years later, twice mentions Peter in his letter to the Corinthian Church, but never as having been at Rome, much less Bishop of Rome. For the first three hundred years there is no authentic reference to Rome as having been the Chair of Peter in any Christian writing, and when the expression does first occur, there are grave doubts as to its genuineness. The apocryphal Clementine Homilies are the only ante Nicene writings which assign the See of Rome to Peter, and they have been rejected by the Roman Church since the Roman Council of 436, presided over by Pope Gelasius, as heretical forgeries. It is all but certain, says Dr. Littledale, that the whole legend of Peter's Roman episcopate was developed at Rome out of this identical document (*Plain Reasons*, p. 24). The next authority, in point of time, is a passage believed to be spurious from the epistles of St. Cyprian, where "the place of Fabian" is called "the place of Peter." There is, indeed, a respectable tradition that Peter was martyred at Rome, but there is this same tradition respecting Paul. This does not prove either of them to have been the Bishop of Rome.

There remains the fact that Peter wrote two epistles, and in neither of them does he give the slightest hint of any connection with the Roman Church. To get over this difficulty it is said that the Babylon of St. Peter's first epistle is really Rome, a dangerous surmise, seeing that the Babylon of the Book of the Revelation represents the harlot and apostate Church. It has been pointed out that Peter's opening words in his first epistle are against the supposition that Babylon is Rome because he speaks of certain places beginning from the East, and travelling towards the West, the opposite course to that he would have taken had he been writing from Rome, but the most natural course were he writing from the literal Babylon.

Now this question of the Primacy of Peter becomes of the utmost importance when we consider the vital interests that depend upon it. The truth in so important a matter should be placed beyond the possibility of cavil or contradiction. If, as is alleged, the salvation of mankind depends upon it—if Rome is the only true Church in consequence of the divinely appointed privilege of Peter and his successors as Bishops of Rome,—then the evidence for this should be clearly defined and beyond all question. There should be no yea or nay in the matter, but an absolute certainty. We have seen that so far from this being the case, the evidence is ENTIRELY THE OTHER WAY, and the tremendous assumptions built up by the Church of Rome crumble into dust when touched by the finger of calm investigation. Scripture and history alike oppose the claim.

Let us look a little closer into this question,

—Was Peter ever at Rome? The Rev. W. H. Anderton, a Jesuit priest, some time ago published a treatise in which he undertook to prove the truth of the tradition that Peter was Bishop of Rome for twenty-five years. According to this writer Peter in the twelfth year after the Ascension set up his throne at Rome in the second year of the Emperor Cladius. Now, as King Herod, who had imprisoned Peter (Acts xii. 4), died this same year, immediately after Peter's imprisonment, this his setting up his chair at Rome must have followed closely on his miraculous deliverance. We are told that when Peter departed and "went to another place" (Acts xii. 17); that place was Rome—a poor way certainly of speaking of the metropolis of the world! If this were so, how is it that Luke never mentions what would be so important an event in the early history of the Church? Peter evidently went to a remote spot, not named, for safety and concealment. Between the above date and six years later, when Peter is at Jerusalem attending the Council, there is no evidence whatever of his having visited Rome. A year later (A. D. 54,) according to Mr. Anderton, all Jews were banished from Rome by an edict of Cladius. At this date we find Paul at Corinth, and there is mention of certain refugees from Rome, but no mention of Peter (Acts xviii. 1). Again, when about six years later, Paul wrote his Epistle to the Roman Church, Peter's name (as we have already seen) is not mentioned, although those of twenty-six other persons are. Paul desires to visit them, chiefly on the ground that *no apostolic gift* had yet been bestowed upon them. Three years later Peter was not at Rome, or he would assuredly have come out with the brethren to Appii Forum and the Three Taverns to meet his "beloved brother Paul." If, moreover, the Roman Church had had the benefit of Peter's episcopate all this time, it is inconceivable that there could have been so much ignorance about the Christian faith, as is evident from what we read in the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Paul laid it down as a principle that he would not build upon "another man's foundation" (Rom. xv. 20), but this principle was violated, if while Peter was exercising his episcopal powers at Rome, Paul was there also preaching the kingdom, and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts xxviii. 31). Luke tells us that the Apostle "dwelt two whole years in his own hired house and received all that came in unto him." The historian makes no mention of a visit from Peter. A year later again Paul writes from Rome to the Church at Colosse when Peter could not have been there, or else Paul would never have mentioned Tychicus, Aristarchus, Marcus, and Justus, and have added, "These only are my fellow-workers, unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me" (Col. iv. 11). We know that Epiphraas also was there, and Luke and Demas (Col. iv. 12-14), but there is no mention of Peter! The first writer who speaks of Peter having been at Rome is Dionysius of Corinth (A. D. 171), who mentions his name in conjunction with that of Paul, and says that both Apostles went to Corinth as well as to Rome. Strange as it may appear up to the present, the Roman Church has no day in her calendar specially dedicated to St. Peter, whose name is only united with that of Paul in "St. Peter's and St. Paul's Day."

Peter was certainly not at Rome when Paul in his first imprisonment (A. D. 63) stood before the judgment seat of Nero, or he would not have allowed his brother apostle to complain as he did to Timothy (2 iv. 16)—"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." If Peter had been at Rome, it is inconceivable that he would have deserted his brother in this his hour of need. Could a more indelible stain have been attached to his

name? and yet it is necessarily attached to him if he was at Rome and withheld his compassion from his brother apostle who was a sufferer for the Master's sake.

Lastly, Peter was not at Rome five years later, A. D. 68, for Paul, writing to his beloved Timothy in immediate anticipation of his death in his second imprisonment, distinctly says (2 Tim. iv. 11), "Only Luke is with me;" and while mentioning (2 Tim. iv. 21) the names of persons then resident at Rome he makes no reference to Peter. If, then, this chain of inductive reasoning be correct, it is plain that from the time of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Cladius, which time synchronised with the separation of Paul and Peter after their disagreement in Antioch, to go, the one to the Gentiles in Europe, and the other to the Jews in Babylon, down to the martyrdom of Paul by Nero, there is no evidence of any visit of Peter to Rome. Every circumstance enforces a contradiction to the claim. The distinct assignment to him of an apostleship to the Circumcision, the dating of his own epistle from Babylon, the omission of any single reference to his presence at Rome from all the Epistles of Paul and from the narrative of Luke, the proved disqualification of the apostle to undertake a mission to the Gentiles, the innumerable difficulties introduced into the sacred record by this alleged Roman episcopate of Peter—all these and other circumstances unite in suggesting the question whether Peter was ever at Rome at all. The Romanist historian Pagi, in his correction of the annals of Baronius, has given up the lengthened episcopate of Peter at Rome; and even during the debates of the Vatican Council of 1870, Bishop Strossmayer declared before the assembled prelates "that Scaliger, one of the most learned men that ever lived, hesitated not to say that Peter's residence and bishopric at Rome ought to be classed with ridiculous legends."

### ROMANISM.

[From Church Bells, Eng.]

A somewhat animated correspondence has been going on in the *Times* with regard to the assumption by a certain Roman Catholic priest of the title 'rector' of a parish. He has, of course, no right whatever to such a designation, and his appropriation of it is but one of many instances of unceasing Romanist aggression. A Roman Catholic priest might call himself anything he liked without causing us any concern if his doing so were not part of the organized attempt which is being made to secure the domination of the Roman Church in England. It is for this reason that Churchmen must be vigilant and ready at once to beat back subtle encroachments, and to expose their insidious character. Rome forgets nothing; Rome learns nothing; and to-day she is just as willing as ever she has been to use all and every means to gain her ends. It is well for us that our forefathers fought unto death—often in shocking and barbarous forms—for their religious liberty. To-day we enjoy the fruits of their invincible and inflexible will, and everything that we hold dearest requires that our will to hold what they gained shall be not one title less unconquerable or immovable. The greatness of the insolence of the Roman pretensions may be gauged by the fact that the gentleman who has made himself a 'rector' of an English parish, does not hesitate to quote and adopt in defence of his proceeding a statement that the Anglican communion 'has neither Bishop, priest, nor deacon!'

We need not go far for examples of Romanist intolerance. In our Irish news we have more than once referred to the religious riots which have taken place at Arklow, Sunday after Sunday, for some time past, owing to the disinclination