

# The Church Guardian

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## CALENDAR FOR JANUARY.

- JAN. 1st—Circumcision.  
 " 6th—Epiphany.  
 " 13th—1st Sunday after Epiphany.  
 " 20th—2nd Sunday after Epiphany.  
 (Notice of Conversion of St. Paul)  
 " 25th—Conversion of St. Paul.  
 " 27th—3rd Sunday after Epiphany.  
 (Notice of Purification.)

## "THE PRIVILEGE OF PETER."

The overdone extravagance of the Papal pretensions in these latter days, and the systematic fraud by which they have been invented and upheld, are sufficient in themselves to forbid the supposition that they were ever either ordained by our Lord, or present to the consciousness of St. Peter.

But in respect that "the Privilege of Peter" is still used, and, as the case of Mr. Luke Rivington shows, occasionally with effect, to entrap unwary souls, it may be worth while, even at this time of day, to go back once more to the fountain-head, and ask what is "the plain, obvious meaning of our Lord's words to St. Peter."

The words of our Lord, on which the Romanists rely, are these:—

(1) "I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."—(St. Matt. xvi. 18, 19.)

(2) "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you (plural), that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned against, establish thy brethren."—(St. Luke xxii. 31, 32.)

(3) The three-fold injunction—"Feed my lambs;" "Tend my sheep;" "Feed my sheep,"—(St. John xxi. 15-17.)

The first and third of these passages, according to Mr. Rivington, imply that our Lord "constituted His Apostle His own representa-

tive as Head of the Church," and, in their plain, obvious meaning, "involve the institution of a visible Head to His visible Church." The second is adduced by Romanists in these days as the Scriptural proof of Papal Infallibility in matters of faith.

Now in regard to the second passage under consideration, it must strike one as a very remarkable fact that the supposed enunciation of Infallibility is sandwiched, as it were, between our Lord's declaration that no one of His Apostles was to exercise authority or lordship over the rest, and His announcement of St. Peter's thrice-repeated denial of his Lord—between a rebuke of assumed supremacy and the prediction of a grievous apostacy. "There arose a contention among them which of them should be accounted the greatest. And He said unto them, the kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them; and they that have authority over them are called Benefactors. But ye shall not be so. . . . Ye [the Apostles—not St. Peter alone], shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Immediately after this, comes the alleged conveyance of Infallibility, and just on the back of that the announcement of the fall.

It says much for Ultramontane courage that it should venture to pluck its coveted flower from so prickly a bush; but it would need something more than courage to lead an unprejudiced person of ordinary intelligence to believe that "the plain, obvious meaning of our Lord's words," uttered under such circumstances, implied not only the personal infallibility of St. Peter, but a like prerogative to eighteen centuries of Popes. Much more plain and obvious is it that St. Peter was in special danger, on the brink of a singular fall, and therefore was made the subject of his Saviour's special intercession. Whoever goes beyond that, oversteps, I fear the bounds of the plain and obvious.

The passage from St. John's Gospel, in like manner, finds its most natural and instructive explanation in a reference to St. Peter's fall. As St. Augustine so beautifully puts it, "To the threefold denial there is now appended a threefold confession, that his tongue may not yield a feebler service to love than to fear, and imminent death may not appear to have elicited more from the lips than present life. Let it be the office of love to feed the Lord's flock, if it was the signal of fear to deny the Shepherd." To St. Peter it was, no doubt, a sufficient comfort at such a time to be restored to the grace of Apostleship from which he had fallen; and we should not be justified in reading into our Lord's words a declaration of supremacy, unless the words themselves clearly transcended the limits of expressions that might be applied to the rest of the Apostles. But surely nothing can be more of the ordinary connotation of Apostleship than feeding the flock of Christ; and nothing, therefore, is of less use for the differentiation of St. Peter from the rest. "The care of all the Churches" was an Apostolic burden and not a Petrine prerogative. How little conscious Peter was of any Lordship in the matter, is touchingly revealed to us by his own subsequent exhortation; as a presbyter to his fellow-presbyters, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage but being examples to the flock." If St. Peter had foreseen with prophetic eye all the voices that would disfigure the administration of his successors, and all the virtues that would in too many cases be conspicuous by their absence, he could not have focussed them with greater skill.

We come, I think, to this, that "the Petrine privilege," whatever it was, is to be sought, not in the passages now discussed, but only in the first quoted extracts from St. Matthew's Gospel. Undoubtedly a signal privilege is there conferred on St. Peter, and the only question is as

to its extent and significance. It will not do to say, grandly, that, by the plain and obvious meaning of the words, Our Lord "constituted His Apostle, His own representative as head of the Church"; still less that He, with equal obviousness, extended the privilege to all the Bishops of Rome. All this is necessary for the Roman contention, but it is certainly *not* in our Lord's words. In truth, there is not in these words a single reference to the headship of the Church. There is reference made to a foundation; to a gift of keys; and to acts of loosing. It is admitted that all of these privileges were not exclusively restricted to St. Peter. The power of binding and loosing for instance, was, by a subsequent act of Christ (St. John xx. 22), conveyed to all the Apostles. We are further assured that the Church was built "upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets," and not upon St. Peter alone. The gift of the keys may be either a synonym, as most authorities appear to take it, for the binding and loosing, or it may be something different. I incline to the latter opinion, and think that it receives its most appropriate explanation in the high privilege which was unquestionably accorded to St. Peter of being the chosen one of God for opening the doors of the Christian Church, to the Jew first, and afterwards to the Gentile. But of course, as Dr. Littledale points out, "as that was done once for all, it cannot be done over again by any one, so that there is nothing left for the Pope to be special heir to, any more than the heirs of Columbus, if any be alive, could enjoy a monopoly of continuing to discover America." In like manner as to the foundation. The plain and obvious meaning of our Lord's words is certainly not restricted to St. Peter; for our Lord could have so easily said, "And on thee I will build my Church," that His not saying so is rather an indication that he did not mean to say so, and that St. Augustine's view is the true one which takes "this rock" to mean the Confession of Christ as the Son of the Living God, which St. Peter had just made. But even if we grant that St. Peter is, in the fullest Ultramontane sense, the foundation of the Church, what then? Is the foundation to be repeated in every successive stone that is laid down upon it to the top-most course? If the Petrine Privilege makes Peter the foundation, so be it; but do not let us be told that the foundation is to shift with each successive year.

On the whole, then, the Petrine Privilege is just the privilege of Peter. I thoroughly agree with Mr. Rivington when he says of St. Peter—"His dogmatic utterances stood by itself, the result of a special, personal revelation, and his reward is correspondingly personal." St. Peter was first in Confession of Christ, and he was the first of the Apostles to be laid as a foundation on the one ultimate foundation of Jesus Christ; the first to open the doors of the Church to Jew and Gentile; the first to receive the power of binding and loosing. His privilege, in a word, was his priority, and there is not a shadow of an argument to prove his supremacy. Still less can it be shown that his privilege was either transmissible or transmitted.—T. T. in the Scottish Guardian.

## APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION—ITS ANTECEDENT PROBABILITY.

On the second Sunday in Advent our Lord's Prayer for unity happened to be read in the second evening lesson; and the great subject of the following Sunday, the third in Advent, is His commission to the Apostles. These two subjects are intimately connected together, and the coincidence of their both being brought forward on two successive Sundays suggests some remarks on the Apostolical Succession.

Many excellent Churchpeople are probably not aware that what is called the Apostolical