

ST. PETER IN ROME.

Notable Discourse by Rev. A. Stapleton Barnes, M. A.

We have much pleasure in reproducing from the Philadelphia Catholic Standard and Times the following report of a remarkable discourse delivered recently in Rome, by the above-named distinguished priest. It was the first lecture delivered on behalf of the Catholic Truth Society.

The lecturer began by saying that he proposed to keep clear of all controversial questions. Of course, as a Catholic, he believed that St. Peter was Bishop of Rome and that he had a primacy over the Church. But it was not the purpose of this lecture to discuss these questions directly, and he should confine himself to the one point of St. Peter's coming to Rome and to the traces which we can find in Roman traditions of his actions while he was there. Some perhaps might say that even this was controversial, for there were some who denied that St. Peter ever came to Rome at all. He, however, denied that there was a controversy on this point; there once was one, of course, but it was dead and buried now, so that, although it might be a long while before the ordinary tourist, with all the assurance which springs from an absolute ignorance of his subject, ceased to assert that there was no real evidence to be found of St. Peter's coming, he thought it might fairly be said that we should never again see a scholar or any one with any regard for his scholarly reputation committing himself to any such rash assertion. The Catholic view was in possession, and until the time of Calvin, in undisputed possession, of the field. Now, it was attacked not on any positive evidence at all, but simply on the ground that the coming of St. Peter is not explicitly mentioned in the Bible. If that was to be taken as a sufficient criterion, a large part of Christianity must go, too. Men would find it very hard, if no regard is to be paid to any records outside the Bible itself, to show why they kept Sunday in the place of the Jewish Sabbath; why they baptized infants, or why Bishops exist to rule the Church.

Hence in the seventeenth century the more learned of Anglican controversialists saw that they could not attack the Catholic belief in St. Peter's having been at Rome except upon principles, the urging of which would be equally fatal to much that the Anglican Church held sacred, and accordingly we find such men as Bishop Pearson (the author of the well known book on the Apostle's Creed), Cave, Hammond and other learned writers writing very strongly in favor of the Catholic position, while one of their number felt so keenly on the subject that he bursts out indignantly, "It is a shame for a Protestant to have to admit that a Protestant has ever been found to deny it!" At the present day all scholars were as one. The Catholic position was upheld by all non-Catholic writers of importance—in Germany by Harnack, Thiersch, Ewald and Hilgenfeldt; in England by Lightfoot, Westcott, Hort, Elliott and even by Dean Farrar; in France by Renan and others. It could, therefore, be hardly necessary to discuss it, and to save time he would simply state the grounds on which Catholics based their belief without examining in detail the arguments which had been urged on the other side.

That belief was attacked on one ground only—the silence of the Bible, but the Bible was not silent on the subject. It contained an explicit statement that St. Peter was in Rome and there wrote his first epistle. It was beyond controversy that Babylon in that epistle meant Rome. He did not expect them to take his assertion for this, but would refer them to the Speaker's Commentary, a very standard Protestant authority. That Commentary speaks as follows: "We have to remark (1) that the city of Babylon was certainly not the seat of a Christian community; (2) that no ancient record has the slightest trace of St. Peter's presence or work in Chaldea; (3) that all ancient authorities are unanimous in the assertion that his later years were passed in the West."

We find an absolute consensus of an ancient interpreters that here Babylon must be understood as equivalent to Rome. We adopt, therefore, this interpretation of the word without the least misgiving. We have no alternative but to accept the old unvarying testimony of the fathers, who must have known the sense in which the statement was understood throughout Asia Minor that St. Peter designated Rome by the name of Babylon. This, then, is sufficient proof that St. Peter was in Rome and that he wrote this epistle from that place. But it may perhaps be urged that we have no proof that he was crucified here. On the contrary, that also is stated explicitly in the Bible. St. John writing his Gospel records for us our Lord's promise to St. Peter that he, too, should be crucified: "Thou shalt not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me hereafter." "When thou shalt be old thou shalt stretch out thine hands and another shall gird thee." And St. John, writing of course long after the event, goes on to note how the prophecy had been exactly fulfilled: "This he said signifying by what death he should glorify God" (John xlii, 36; xx, 18). And again in the Apocalypse we have a reference to Rome as the place of this martyrdom. Here Protestants find no difficulty in allowing that Babylon stands for Rome. Yet in the judgment pronounced against Babylon or heathen Rome we find a statement that that judgment was in punishment for the deaths of

the Apostles Peter and Paul and other martyrs: "Rejoice over her, thou Heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets: for God hath judged your judgment upon her." (Apoc. xviii, 20.)

The Protestant case from the silence of the Bible therefore breaks down altogether; but the Catholic side has much more than this to bring forward in favor of his belief. It has, as we have already quoted, the Speaker's Commentary as admitting "the uniform, unvarying testimony of all early Christian writers." This testimony would be enough if it stood alone and unsupported. But it does not. We have, further, the testimony of all the monuments of Rome. We have St. Peter's tomb and the place of his martyrdom; his chair and his altar and his chains. We have his prison, also, at the Mamertine, to say nothing of the recollections of his presence which connect themselves with S. Prisca, S. Pudensiana and the Coemeterium Ostrianum. We may fairly say that there is no contemporary events which is attested by such a wealth of monumental evidence as is this of the presence of St. Peter in Rome and his martyrdom here. Lastly, there is a fourth line of evidence which, De Rossi says, would be enough to prove the fact, if no other evidence existed, and that is the existence here of his authentic likeness. The two Apostles, Peter and Paul, and they alone, have always distinct and recognizable types of faces in the representations of the earliest times. Others are idealized; these are portraits—the reason being, of course, that of these two Apostles alone were the likenesses handed down in Rome. And this could not have been in St. Peter's case if he had never come here.

We pass on now to the second part of the lecture, in which we deal with the fact of St. Peter's life in Rome, reconstructing it as far as possible from the various traditions which have come down to us. In the fathers we find well defined traditions about him: (1) that he remained at Jerusalem for twelve years after the ascension; (2) that he came first to Rome at the beginning of the reign of Claudius A. D. 42; (3) that he ruled the Church at Rome for five and twenty years; and (4) that before coming to Rome he sat for seven years at Antioch. The first three are perfectly compatible and fit in exactly with the received dates for the crucifixion and for martyrdom of St. Peter. A. D. 29 and 67, but the fourth is almost impossible to reconcile with the others.

(1) Roman Christianity as distinguished from the Roman Church begins with Pentecost, when "strangers of Rome" are recorded as being present. These doubtless returned to Rome and brought the first news of the Gospel message. But a Church means organization and implies at this time the visit of an Apostle or one delegated by an Apostle, and there is no reason to suppose that this took place much before A. D. 40 anywhere outside Jerusalem. During those first twelve years the Church had not woken to the fact of her catholicity and only Jews were preached to. The first Gentile convert, Cornelius, was perhaps a Roman, certainly a volunteer from Italy. So soon as his baptism had fixed the catholicity of the Church God's Providence began to work towards fixing the centre of that catholicity at Rome. And first, St. Peter must leave Jerusalem. This was effected by the persecution of Herod Agrippa, in A. D. 41, when, after Peter had been miraculously delivered from prison, we read that he went "into another place." The end of this journey was Rome, but he probably did not go directly there. He may have gone now to Antioch and founded the Church there. Probably he went on to Pontus and the southern shores of the Black Sea, for there alone outside of Rome do we find local traditions of his presence. There, perhaps, he met Aquila, "a Jew born in Pontus" (Acts xviii, 2), and it may well have been the resolution of this convert to go to Rome with his wife which was the determining cause which induced St. Peter to go there also. If so, they probably took ship together and came to Rome.

Arrived there, Aquila, who was a tent maker, would seem to have set up his home on the Aventine, where Santa Prisca now marks the spot, as there probably St. Peter at first lodged with him. Santa Prisca itself now has little to show to remind us of this period of apostolic residence, but last century an oratory was discovered close by with paintings, judged to belong to the fourth century, which may well have been the original Church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla, so often mentioned in the epistles. The discovery attracted little attention, and the place was again covered up and lost, the only record of it being an MS. not yet published in the National Library at Paris. Santa Prisca, however, did not long keep St. Peter. Probably because of the hostility of the Jews, he removed very soon to a little beyond St. Agnes' Church, to the place where now is the Ostrian cemetery. Here he had his "chair," and here he baptized. And since the essence of a cathedral is not in magnificent buildings, but in the possession of the "cathedra" or Bishop's seat, we may fairly say that here was the first cathedral of Rome. We may still see these, not indeed probably the actual chair on which St. Peter sat, but the chair, carved in the solid rock, which was erected in the second century to commemorate the fact that he had once had his throne at that spot, and which in the fifth and sixth centuries was a favorite object of veneration to pilgrims to Rome, who went there to visit

the spot "ubi Petrus prius sedit."

The Jews in Rome at this time were a large and powerful body. Reference to them are constant in all the literature of the time, and it is curious to see how exactly the national characteristics as we know them to day existed then. There were some rich and powerful friends of Caesar, as the Herods and Agrippa, but most were poor and despised. They were turbulent and disorderly, and Cleero on one occasion, speaking in the Forum, dropped his voice so that none but the Judges might hear, while he spoke of them, admitting that he did so because he feared their vengeance (pro Flacco xxviii). This turbulence, as it had been the cause of his leaving the house of Aquila, so also seems to have led to St. Peter's leaving Rome. In A. D. 49 all the Jews were expelled from Rome, on account, as we read in Suetonius, of riots *impulsore Christo*, "which Christ instigated." So ended probably this visit to Rome, for the next year we find St. Peter at Jerusalem, at the first general council of the Apostolic Church.

The next period, A. D. 50-61, is a difficult one in the history both of St. Peter and of the Roman Church, for we have no records. It may perhaps be suggested that it was during these years in which he was absent from Rome that St. Peter resided at Antioch. Such a solution would satisfy all traditions. At Rome Linus, according to local tradition, presided over the Church, and his headquarters would seem to have been not at the Ostrianum, but S. Pudensiana. Of this, perhaps, we have a hint in II. Timothy iv., 21, "There salute thee Pudens and Linus and Claudia." On any other hypothesis than that he was a resident in their house the mention of Linus between Pudens and Claudia who were husband and wife, would seem a strange one.

In A. D. 58 St. Paul wrote to the Romans, and while on the one hand it seems clear that St. Peter was not then in Rome, we have also clear indications at that epistle that the Roman Church was already organized and that this had been done by an apostle, since he alleges as his reason for not having come to Rome his unwillingness to "build on another man's foundation." (Rom. xv., 20.) We can hardly place St. Peter's return to Rome earlier than A. D. 61, about the time of St. Peter's acquittal and starting for Spain. The chapel on the Ostrian way which commemorates the parting of the apostles perhaps may, since that parting cannot be referred to the day of their martyrdom, be the record of the setting out of St. Paul on this journey. St. Peter would seem not to have returned to the Ostrianum, but to have followed Linus in making his headquarters at the house of Pudens. This is the tradition, and it is confirmed by two monuments—the chair of Peter, which was traditionally supposed to be the Senatorial chair of Pudens, given by him to the apostles, an idea which perhaps arose from its having stood in Pudens' house; and the wooden altar of the apostle, which now forms the high altar at the Lateran, Rome's third cathedral, although a plank of it remains at S. Pudensiana, in memory of its having stood there so long.

The principal memory connected with St. Peter in this period in his contest with Simon Magus. This has been so overlaid with legend that it is difficult to separate truth from fiction, but there can be very little doubt that there is a certain basis of solid history underlying all the stories. In A. D. 64 came the great fire of Rome and the consequent persecution of the Christians described by Tacitus, and it will lend a new interest to the First Epistle of St. Peter if it be read in connection with this event, which was the cause of its being written. He seems to have to us fires of the Vatican gardens and the torturers of the Christians vividly before his eyes, as he writes to encourage the converts in Asia Minor to be firm when the persecution reached them.

The martyrdom of St. Peter himself was in A. D. 67. There is no reason to doubt the truth of the tradition that he was confined in the Mamertine, and the story of the conversion of his jailers gives us the reason why the Church was able to possess herself of his chains. One specially beautiful story of his last days is frequently misunderstood. When our Lord appeared to Peter as he fled from Rome it was not to reproach him. The idea of the answer given to the question, "Domine quid vadis?" was not I go to Rome to be crucified in thy place, but in thy person. Christ, who suffers in all His members, was to suffer especially in Peter, his alter ego. So Peter understood it as he turned back rejecting. It is possible that we may have an allusion to this story in 2 Peter i., 14, which as written just before his martyrdom. The Apostle there says he knows his death is close at hand, "according as our Lord Jesus Christ also hath signified to me."

The place of the martyrdom was not S. Pietro in Montorio, but the Circus of Nero, close to the present sacristy of St. Peter's at the foot of the obelisk which now stands in the centre of the piazza. The place where the obelisk used to be is marked by an inscribed slab in the pavement. There are some difficulties in the way of accepting the tradition that he was crucified feet upwards. Possibly the truth may be that he begged for it, but was refused. In that case the privilege of Peter to represent our Lord and to follow Him exactly, first in life and then in death, would be more strongly marked. There would have been no difficulty in obtaining his body, for the law provided for this. When it was taken from the cross it would be wrapped in linen and spices and laid in the tomb,

perhaps to be the first in Rome to have the privilege afterwards shared by all the martyrs of having the holy mysteries offered above it. Certainly this was a custom within the first century, for we find an allusion to it in Apoc. vi., 9, "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God." There, then, we may leave him in his altar-tomb, the centre for all ages of so much of Christian devotion, resting, as Prudentius, a writer of the fourth century, so beautifully expresses it, "under the feet of God."

THE LIFE OF CARDINAL WISEMAN A LESSON IN UNITY.

We have read Wilfrid Ward's "Life of Cardinal Wiseman" with the deepest interest. It is certainly an admirable specimen of Christian biography. It gives a graphic picture not only of the personal character of the eminent Cardinal, but also of the stirring scenes and events through which he passed and in which he was such an active and influential participant. The book contains many important lessons, but we have been particularly struck with the evidence which it furnishes of the wonderful power of the Church in preserving unity under the most adverse circumstances.

In order to appreciate the full force of that powerful influence it is necessary to recall the condition of the Church of England at the time of the commencement of Wiseman's administration. Plus IX, with whom Wiseman was a great favorite, had learned to esteem him for his brilliant success as a scholar and a zealous and devoted priest. He remarked with prophetic truth, that Wiseman was evidently a man raised up by God for the accomplishment of a great work in England. For three hundred years the Catholics of England had been cruelly and relentlessly persecuted. A few remained faithful, and though active persecution had ceased, the old violent, unreasonable and unreasoning prejudice still existed and this Catholic remnant was still cowed, hampered by disabilities—barely tolerated—and consequently compelled to practice their religion, if not absolutely in secret, yet quietly, unobtrusively, and shorn of the external pomp and ceremony which naturally belongs to it. It is stated as a fact that not a flower appeared upon their altars, and not an image of a saint—not even a statue of the Blessed Virgin was to be seen in any church. A spirit of compromise had grown up even among the old Catholic aristocracy—a disposition to trim, to pare down the prominent features of the Catholic system that were obnoxious to Protestants and to avoid everything that was calculated to excite Protestant hostility. Some, even leading Catholics, went so far as to entertain the question of encouraging a system that should ignore the authority of the Pope.

Wiseman came to England to revive Catholic doctrine and practice after the true, Roman ancient pattern; to rouse sleeping and stultified and encourage timid Catholics, and induce them to assert their rights, to practice their religion openly and aboveboard, and with all the ceremonies and accessories of devotion which rightfully belonged to them. Think of the opposition which such a mode of proceeding would naturally produce. The "Old Catholics" were suspicious of this intruder, as he was considered, though sent by Rome with all the requisite faculties for the accomplishment of his work. They looked upon him as a radical and a dangerous man, calculated to increase Protestant hostility. They did not like his sympathy with and encouragement of the Oxford movement. They were suspicious of that movement, and had no faith in the Oxford men.

All this was a great trial to the sensitive nature of Wiseman, but the climax was reached when his own coadjutor, Errington, who had at Wiseman's own request been appointed Archbishop with right of succession, and who sympathized with the old party, turned against him. He was a man of great ability, and the biographer gives him credit for being conscientious and disinterested in his opposition to the Cardinal's plans. He was also distinguished for his independence and great tenacity of purpose.

Wiseman soon found that he could not look for sympathy or co-operation on the part of Errington, and his conviction that he was not the man for the place was confirmed by Errington's open and avowed hostility to the Cardinal's new order, the Oblates of St. Charles. Of this order Manning had been made head, with considerable power, and he was in entire sympathy with the Cardinal. In this opposition Errington carried with him the Cardinal's Vicar-General and his secretary both of whom had been his devoted friends, and in fact, a majority of the Council.

Here, then, they had all the elements of a successful schism. What saved the Church from such a dire calamity? Appeal to Rome—the supreme tribunal and final court of appeal, with the Holy Father, successor of St. Peter, as the supreme judge. Among Protestants with such elements—such a combination of talent and influence on both sides, it would seem that a schism would have been inevitable. But in this case the Cardinal appealed to Rome to have Errington removed. This brought the whole case before the supreme tribunal, to whose final decision all submitted; peace was restored, reconciliations took place, the cause of the Cardinal triumphed, and after his death



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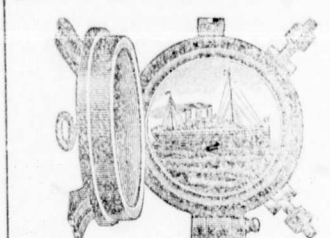
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