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The Message of the First Epistle of Peter for Our Day

By ERIC C. MALTE

(Essay read June, 1949, at the convention of the Eastern District of
The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod)

The purpose of this essay is to interpret and illuminate one of the New Testament Epistles which focuses to a rare degree the interests, needs, and problems of the Church of the first century, and gives classical expression to the teachings of Christ and His Apostles in regard to them. These interests, needs, and problems are not greatly different from those which confront thoughtful Christian men and women the world over today. Of this First Epistle of Peter, Luther once said: "It is one of the noblest books of the New Testament, and the true, pure Gospel."

The Bible is the world's most timeless book, and it is also the world's most timely book — always and in every age. The trend of events in our country and in the world have in no way served to lessen the peculiar relevance of the First Epistle of Peter to our needs; and its teaching about the Church's age-long vocation, the quality and tenor of Christian life, the patience it calls for and the undying hope which sustains it, is well calculated to inspire courage and beget confidence amid the confusion and chaos, the fear and trembling of the present time.

The purpose of this Letter is to exhort and encourage the followers of Jesus Christ in a time of bitter trial and persecution, to give strength and courage in a time when His followers were being reproached for the name of Christ; and this the Apostle Peter does by unfolding to them the ways of God with His children as revealed in the Gospel, by recalling them to the example of Christ, by bringing to their remembrance the glorious truth that if we suffer with Him, we shall also glory with Him, and by expounding the principles of Christian conduct and life, negative as well as positive, which are inherent in their calling and Baptism. In Weymouth's *New Testament in Modern Speech*, in the brief introduction to this Letter, we find the purpose stated succinctly: "The Letter is mainly a letter of encouragement to stand fast."

[728]

The keynote of the Epistle has been variously described as *Hope, Courage, Grace, Pilgrimage, Suffering, Glory*. But in fact, though each of these represents an important strand in the Epistle, none of them does justice to it as a whole. For, despite its brevity — only 105 verses in all — it is a grand summary of Christian faith and duty, the model of a pastoral charge and commission, composed of diverse materials and of many themes, all marked by a compact and close interweaving of doctrine and conduct.

The ideal interpreter of the New Testament would be one who has entered into that fascinating first-century world, has felt its charm, has sojourned in it until he has lived himself into it, thinking and feeling as one of those to whom the letters of Paul, Peter, and John first came; and who will then return into our needy world, bringing the living message of a Peter or Paul to living men and women of our day and age. To see the world of Peter's day become vividly and startlingly alive, to walk with those early Christians on their pilgrim way through life, is to find his Epistle invested with a fresh sense of reality and interest and significance for us today. To that end may the Holy Spirit bless this convention essay on *The Message of the First Epistle of Peter for Our Day*.

I

As stated, the aim of our essay is to bring out the meaning and message of the First Letter of Peter for our day. To do this, it is needful to explain what it originally meant for the Christian communities to which it was originally addressed in the first century; otherwise our reading of it becomes unintelligent. Our aim is to enable everyone of you to sit where sat these first Christians, to feel the impetus, the inspiration, and the power of the Christian faith as it came to the minds and into the lives of these early Christians, and thereby to realize more vividly how new and lasting is the message for us. The saving thing, then, is to let this Epistle of Peter speak for itself. To place this letter in its original setting and to allow its words to come home thus to the imagination and conscience, the heart and mind, of you and men today, shall be our plan and method.

We shall attempt through a study of certain key words to bring the message of First Peter to you. Word study can be one of the most delightful and profitable studies, for it enables

us to see the wonderful variety, proportion and balance, beauty and power of the truth of God. We are conscious of the limitations of such a procedure, and we trust that they are obvious to you, the delegates here assembled. Deep is our regret also, that because of the time limits set for a convention essay, certain sections of this important letter can of necessity be treated only in a very sketchy and summary manner.

Now let us open the First Epistle of Peter and note some of the words and phrases we find there.

Peter an Apostle of Jesus Christ. (1:1.) As Paul in his letters does not call himself by his original name of Saul, so Peter here in his First Letter calls himself, not Simon, but Peter, the name most significant and precious, both to himself and to his readers, because it had been bestowed upon him by his Lord and Master Jesus Christ. In Matthew 16:18 we read: "And Jesus said, And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter." If you will turn to the opening words of the Second Letter of Peter, you will note that there he uses both names, "Simon Peter."

Even without this superscription and the constant tradition of the Church, affirming his authorship, we should almost feel warranted in saying that no one but Peter could have written the first Epistle which bears his name. It breathes Peter's spirit of deep conviction and energy of action, and both in its ideas and modes of expression it continually reminds us of the speeches and sermons of the Apostle Peter recorded in the Book of Acts. There are many references to the sufferings of Christ and to the last days of His earthly life, and they are such as we should expect from one who had been very close to the Master. The whole Epistle is warm with the glow of one whose every thought and teaching are grounded in the continuing sense of the presence of Christ.

Peter, you recall, came from Bethsaida, "Fishtown," on the Sea of Galilee. By training and experience as a fisherman he had developed powers of keen observation. He had learned to watch closely for changes in weather. He had learned to mark the best places and to note the best times for fishing. And so we may expect to find in Peter's Letter traces of the keen-sightedness, the ready application of what is seen and observed. A careful student of his first Letter will notice that the sense of sight, and what it should do and reap, fills a

great space in Peter's message. Accordingly, we read in 1:5 that God's salvation is ready to be *revealed* in the last time; the angels desire to *look into* the mysteries of the Gospel, 1:12; Christ was *manifested* in these last times, 1:20; the Gentiles shall *behold* your good works, 2:12; unbelieving husbands shall be convinced of the power and truth of the Gospel by *beholding* the chaste behavior of their Christian wives, 3:2; the Apostle was *witness* of Christ's sufferings, 5:1; the elders must exercise *oversight* of the flock, 5:2; he speaks of the day of *visitation*, or literally, *overlooking*, 2:12; Christ is the *Bishop*, literally, *Overseer* of souls, 2:25.

The same graphic character appears in what may be styled "reminiscent words or phrases," in which the former personal experiences of the writer are mirrored. Thus, "gird yourselves with humility" in 5:5 recalls the picture of the Lord Jesus in the Upper Room, girded with a towel, and washing the feet of the disciples. Peter never forgot that scene. "To look into" in 1:12 expresses a stooping down to gaze intently, and carries us back to the visit of Peter and John to the sepulcher on the morning of the resurrection, when they stooped down and looked into the tomb. In "feed the flock" found in 5:2 is reflected Christ's charge to Peter at the lake. The recurrence of the word "without respect of persons" in 1:17 is used in a kindred form by Peter in the Book of Acts. Acts 10:34 would seem to indicate that the scene in the house of Cornelius was present to his mind; and "be watchful" in 5:8 may have been suggested by the bitter memory of his own drowsiness in the Garden of Gethsemane and of the Master's exhortation to him and his companions to watch.

Peter's style of writing is vigorous and strong, the work of a plain and practical man. The fervid and energetic spirit of the writer appears in his habit of massing epithets and repeating his thoughts in nearly the same words and forms. In 1:4 he speaks of the inheritance, but he adds that it is incorruptible. More than that. He tells us that it is undefiled. And then he adds that it "fadeth not away." Another instance of this is found in 2:9.

As we learn to know Peter in the Gospels, the Book of Acts, and here in his First Epistle, we shall learn to like him. Everybody liked Peter. Jesus liked him. His associates liked him. The early Church liked him. We like him because we

see so much of ourselves in him. As one Bible student has said, "Peter had neither Paul's head nor John's heart nor James' saintliness and stability; but we venture to say that he was at once the most heady and hearty and human of all the apostles." Peter was so human, so like the rest of us in everything, that his history comes nearer our own, and the glimpses we have of his spiritual experiences seem like glimpses into the depths of our own hearts. Luther once said, "Whenever I look at Peter, my very heart leaps for joy. If I could paint a portrait of Peter, I would paint upon every hair of his head, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins.'"

Many people read the First Epistle of Peter without any thought of the inspired author as they read it. It might have been written by Paul or James or John or anyone else as far as they are concerned. They read the Epistle only to know what is said in it, and they have no concern as to who said it or why he said it as he did. As a consequence, they miss much of its deep significance. They might hear a living voice in these pages. They might come face to face with a living man and a man well worth knowing; for he was one of the most conspicuous members of that holy band whose writings and teachings have turned the world upside down. It is surely worth while to search for these traces of the personality and the experiences of Peter in this Epistle and we find that it is teeming full of them.

CHAPTER ONE

Peter an Apostle of Jesus Christ. (1:1.) "Apostle" is a word used to designate those who had been especially commissioned by Jesus Christ to be His witnesses before the world. Of all the General Epistles, Peter's alone puts forward his apostleship in the introduction. It may be, as many Bible students believe, that he was addressing churches with which he had no personal connection as missionary, and which had been founded by Paul. Perhaps Paul was, as many believe, in Spain at this time when persecutions began to break out over the churches in Asia Minor. Peter had come to Rome, and a journey which Silvanus contemplated making through the chief provinces of Asia Minor gave him an opportunity to address an encouraging letter to the Christians in those regions. Hence, Peter refers to his apostleship in explanation of his writing to them and as his warrant for taking Paul's place.

He addresses them as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. That would be sufficient to insure the ready reception of his message by these Christians.

We note in passing that there is no hint whatsoever that Peter claimed a position superior to that of the other Apostles, as the Roman Catholics claim. If Peter was pope in Rome, there is no indication whatsoever that Peter had knowledge of it.

To the Strangers Scattered Throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. (1:1.) *Strangers.* Literally the word means one who comes from a foreign country into a city or land to reside there by the side of the natives; hence strangers, sojourners in a strange land, pilgrims, foreigners. Moffatt — "those who are scattered as foreigners." The Greek word means persons sojourning for a brief period in a foreign country. Even the preposition in the Greek word implies a sense of transitoriness, as one who passes by to something beyond. The Christian is an exile from heaven, his real home and country, traveling in this world for a brief season; he is on a pilgrimage to the real home in heaven.

To understand this Epistle properly, this aspect of the Christian's life must always be kept in mind. This word *pilgrim* paves the way with great propriety for the admonitions which follow, and contains a sort of abstract or premonition of all that was in the writer's mind. One idea, it may be said, haunts the whole Epistle. To this concept of the Christian life as a pilgrimage he constantly returns, each time with some new application. The Apostle travels round and round this beloved spot, and at each recurring halt some fresh feature in the view of the pilgrim presents itself.

We are pilgrims, and like pilgrims, in our brief absence from the home country we are sustained by a lively hope, 1:3, and by faith in the unseen, 1:8. We are pilgrims, ever coming nearer and nearer to the promised inheritance in heaven, 1:4. We are pilgrims, and so we are not disturbed if for a season we are in heaviness, 1:6. We are pilgrims, and so we love our fellow pilgrims with a pure heart fervently, 1:22. We are pilgrims, and therefore we abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, 2:11. We are pilgrims, and therefore we are not surprised if the "natives," the children of this world, misunderstand us and speak against us as evil-doers, 2:12. We are pilgrims, and very often the "natives," the children of this

world, think it strange that we do not run with them to the same excess of debauchery and riot, 4:4. We are pilgrims, and are happy even when the "natives" point the finger of scorn and ridicule at us and reproach us for the name of Christ, 4:14 and 4:16. We are pilgrims, and know that we have a true and trustworthy and mighty Guide, and so we cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for us, 5:7. We are pilgrims, and so we must always be sober and watchful, lest we be waylaid on our journey to heaven by the devil, who as a roaring lion seeketh whom he may devour, 5:8.

Keeping this aspect of the Christian life in mind, we offer the following outline of the Epistle.

THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIM ON HIS WAY TO THE HEAVENLY COUNTRY

1. The trials on the way. Chapter 1.
2. A new nation and a new people. Chapter 2.
3. The Christian family. Chapter 3.
4. The life of the pilgrim contrasted with that of the "native." Chapter 4.
5. The end of the pilgrim's way. Chapter 5.

Other themes covering this Epistle are these:

Suffering Now. Glory Then.

The Fiery Trial and the Sufficient Grace.

The Epistle of Christian Courage.

The Epistle of Christian Hope.

The Sufficiency of the Grace of God in All Conditions and Relationships of Life.

Christian Suffering.

Christ in the First Epistle of Peter.

We find the theme, *The Christian Pilgrim on His Way to the Heavenly Country*, most satisfactory and comprehensive. In Bradford's account of the departure of the early settlers of Plymouth, Massachusetts (referring to the leave-taking at Leyden, Holland), he ends with this sentence, which explains the use of the term "pilgrims" as applied to these early New England settlers: "So they lefte that goodly and pleasante citie, which had been their restingplace for near 12 years; but they knew they were pilgrims and looked not much on those things, but lifted up their eyes to ye heavens, their dearest countrie, and quieted their spirits." So it was with the Chris-

tians of Peter's day; so it is with us. "We know we are pilgrims and look not much on those things, but lift up our eyes to ye heavens, our dearest countrie, and quiet our spirits."

To the Pilgrims Scattered Throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. This Epistle is a circular letter, intended for the churches scattered over a vast district, and a glance at the map will show that the order in which the provinces are named indicates that Silas, the bearer of the letter, would land at some port in Pontus, probably at Sinope, and journey southward through Galatia to Cappadocia, then turn westward to Asia, and finally come north again to Bithynia. Facilities for travel were quite abundant and copies of the Letter could be multiplied very readily and left at the chief centers en route for regional distribution. Recent discoveries reveal that the multiplication and publication of manuscripts was very common in those days, and copies of this First Epistle of Peter could readily be provided for the various churches in these provinces. One New Testament scholar, Dr. Edgar J. Goodspeed, says: "No historical fact is better established than that book-publication was widely practised in the Graeco-Roman world, in the first, second, and third centuries after Christ. It was a familiar fact of common life. Recent discoveries have shown that the early Christians in the first and second centuries were fully abreast of their contemporaries in the matter of publication."

Lively Hope. (1:3.) This Epistle is addressed to Christians who needed heartening and encouragement under the strain of a persecution period. It was a time of tension, due to interference by the State authorities, who had obviously become suspicious of the Christian movement as immoral and treasonable, 2:12; 4:12-16. This set up in some circles of the Church a feeling of perplexity and hesitation. Christians were suffering from the unwelcome attentions of government officials, as well as from social annoyances, and they needed to be rallied. The purpose of Peter is to recall them to the resources of their faith. Hence, the emphasis upon *hope* which would sustain them.

While these Christians are indeed pilgrims and meet with many trials and tribulations on the way, there is no touch of self-pity in this Epistle for them, but an exulting stress upon the privilege of membership in this heavenly community which

is soon to be admitted to its glory and privilege in heaven. And so Peter begins with the note of praise and thanksgiving, 1:3-12. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Hope is another of the key words of this Epistle, as faith is of St. Paul's Epistles, and love of the First Epistle of John. Christian hope is a light which shines all the more brightly in the darkness of calamity. Peter is fond of this word *hope*, for it occurs again in 1:13, 21, and 3:15. In classical Greek, *hope* has the general significance of expectancy, relating to evil as well as to good. The word *hope* as used here by Peter does not in any way whatsoever imply uncertainty, as our modern word "hope" does. It means a confident expectation based on a sure and lasting foundation. It is watchful waiting and long-ing for that which is sure to come.

Hope in the New Testament is not a shallow optimism concerning tomorrow. It is not looking at the world and life through rose-colored glasses. *Hope* for the redeemed and forgiven heart is really nothing but our faith extended into tomorrow. A Christian writer once said: "Faith is the first, love the greatest, and *hope* the last thing in a Christian life." These three always belong together. God always gives us all three of them together and at the same time. As we believe, we love; as we love, we look *hopefully* to Him who by His resurrection has turned our eyes upward to the gates of heaven, swinging open to receive us pilgrims at the close of life's little day.

Our regeneration issues in a life of hope, hope of eternal life secured and assured by Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. Our first birth ends in physical death; this new birth, this regeneration, issues in life eternal, in a life of *hope*, thanks to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The words have a special force when we remember that Peter was raised by his Master's resurrection from the despair and hopelessness that found utterance in his threefold denial to a *hope* a living *hope*, that no changes of fortune could ever shake. Our *hope* is living, not merely because it is active, but because it is divine and eternal, bound up with His eternal life.

Need we add that this is the hope we pilgrims of today

need at a time when a mood of disillusionment and despair has settled down over the minds and hearts of multitudes today? H. G. Wells has a story of a man who is left in a room in a house reputed to be haunted. The terror of the story is furnished by the effect on the man's mind of a row of candles slowly going out one by one. That story is a picture of what has happened and is happening today to a large number of people. One by one the lights in which they have trusted have gone out. And the room is dark.

Here are a few statements from the 1948 Armistice Day Address by General Omar Bradley, United States Chief of Staff. I believe they mirror the hopelessness and despair that has gripped the hearts of many in our day. "With the monstrous weapons man already has, humanity is in danger of being trapped in this world by its moral adolescents. . . . Our knowledge of science has clearly outstripped our capacity to control it. We have too many men of science; too few men of God. . . . We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. . . . Man is stumbling blindly through a spiritual darkness while toying with the precarious secrets of life and death. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. . . . We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living."

What a high privilege is ours that we have been begotten unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! When we are hemmed in by circumstances, when sickness or old age threaten to make an end of us, when plans are frustrated and men are confused and the world is in chaos, when the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing, when the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, let us cling to this one bright, shining hope: Christ is risen; He is risen indeed! Because he has this living hope the Christian pilgrim can sing:

My risen Lord, I feel Thy strong protection;
I see Thee stand among the graves today;
"I am the Way, the Life, the Resurrection,"
I hear Thee say.

And all the burdens I have carried sadly
Grow light as blossoms on an April day;
My cross becomes a staff, I journey gladly
On my pilgrim way.

II

To an Inheritance Incorruptible and undefiled and that Fadeth not Away, Reserved in Heaven for You. (1:4.) The pilgrim's hope is further defined by its object, the inheritance, or rather, the paternal estate. This inheritance is kept for the believer, not on earth, but in heaven, and is another name for that salvation which is ready to be revealed, 1:5. The pilgrim sees in hope the Promised Land, the Home Country. This promised inheritance of the Christian is not subject to the ravages of war or calamity, nor to the wasting effects of time or unkind seasons. It is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away.

In the Greek all three of these adjectives used to describe our inheritance are compounded with the negative particle, "a," the Alpha privative. It is a remarkable testimony to the reign of sin, and, therefore, of imperfection, of decay and death, throughout the whole fallen world, that as often as we desire to set forth the glory, the purity and perfection of that other higher world toward which we strive and journey, we are almost inevitably compelled to do this by the aid of negatives, by the denying to that higher order of things the leading features and characteristics of this world. The inheritance is *not* corrupted; it is *not* defiled; it is *not* fading away. When the pilgrim enters upon the full possession of this inheritance, then "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. . . . And there shall be no more night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever." (Rev. 21:4 and Rev. 22:5.)

This inheritance is being kept in heaven for you. Literally, that which has been reserved, a perfect participle, indicating the inheritance as one reserved through God's care for His own from the beginning down to the present. "Laid up and kept" is the idea. (Has been laid up and is now being kept.) Heaven is the safe-deposit box where God is guarding our inheritance for us through constant surveillance.

This inheritance is reserved in heaven for you. As Dallmann says: "You need not worry, you need not hurry; no one is going to get ahead of you and snatch it away from you. When you get there, it will be there." Yes, it is reserved for you and guarded by God for you.

Who Are Kept by the Power of God Through Faith unto Salvation. (1:5.) Not only is the inheritance being safely guarded and reserved for the pilgrims, but we ourselves are being guarded by the power of God through faith unto salvation. The word used for "kept" means to keep a city safe with a garrison. Here faith is the garrison which keeps the soul safe till its Lord comes and raises the siege. Compare the beautiful metaphorical use of the same word in Phil. 4:7, where Paul tells us that the heart of the believer is guarded or garrisoned by the peace of God. The word here used is a military term which means to guard, protect, by a military guard. The present participle indicates something in progress, a continuous process of protection. The guard is never changed. It is on duty twenty-four hours a day, year in and year out, until we arrive safe in heaven.

That the Trial of Your Faith Being Much More Precious than of Gold that Perisheth though It be Tried with Fire Might Be Found unto Praise and Honor and Glory at the Appearing of Jesus Christ. (1:7.) The reference here is to the act of putting someone or something to the test with a view of determining whether it is worthy of being approved or not, the test being made with the intention of approving if possible. The Greek words used here are the same as used in classical Greek in referring to the testing of metals. After the metal had been tested and found satisfactory for use in coins, it was approved or sanctioned. The papyri show that the Greek word for "trial" here used, in addition to its proper meaning of process or instrument of testing, as gold is refined by fire, it had come to take on the meaning of the result of the process, "proved worth," "genuineness." Moffatt translates, "to prove your faith is sterling."

The picture here is that of an ancient goldsmith, who puts his crude gold ore in a crucible, subjects it to intense heat, and thus liquefies the mass. The impurities rise to the surface and are skimmed off. When the metalworker is able to see the reflection of his face clearly mirrored in the surface of the liquid, he takes it off the fire, for he knows that the contents are pure gold and will win the approval of the one who is testing. It will be pronounced genuine.

So it is with God and the Christian pilgrim. He puts us in the crucible of Christian suffering; persecutions and fiery trials

come upon us; our faith is purified from the slag of unbelief and sin which somehow mingle with it so often. The result is that our fire-tried faith is then approved and found unto the praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. When our heavenly Father can see His face and image mirrored more and more in our lives, then we have been tested sufficiently; then God can use us here, or take us to the pilgrim home in heaven.

Which Things the Angels Desire To Look Into. (1:12.)
Great is our salvation: The Prophets of old have enquired and searched diligently and pointed to what time and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify when it testified beforehand the suffering of Christ and His glory. Not only the Prophets were deeply interested in our salvation, but even the angels stand, as it were, on tiptoe, bending over, craning their necks, and with wondering eyes, intently study our great salvation.

The word here used in the Greek for "look into" is a very graphic word. In the Greek it is pictorially expressed by the bent body and the outstretched neck of one who is stooping and straining to gaze on some sight which calls for wonder. Now, except in the Epistle of James, where the same word is used of the earnest gaze of the believer into the perfect law of liberty, this verb "look into" is employed only here and in the two accounts of the visit of Peter and John to the sepulcher on the morning of the resurrection. Both evangelists, Luke and John, employ the same word, and its use may be due to Peter's report on the day of resurrection, which was given to the rest of the Apostles on their return.

The word is exactly descriptive of what he had seen as John had reached the sepulcher before him and paused there to look in. It was the most pictorial and expressive word he could apply to the bowed head and earnest gaze of his fellow disciple as he stooped down and looked intently into the empty tomb. In that empty tomb John saw what angels had longed to see. Its emptiness was the seal of man's salvation. In thought, Peter seems to have gone back to that scene by the grave of the Lord, and to have before him John's eager and astonished act and gaze while he bent down that his eyes might see and make sure of the truth of such things as the angels desired to see. The vivid verb in the Greek makes the

clear picture. Weymouth in his *New Testament in Modern Speech* has this translation: "Angels long to peer into these things."

How the angels watch the believers in Christ! How they wonder and marvel at creatures who were once sinners, now living holy lives to the glory of God! It is in the Church of Jesus Christ, redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, that the angels catch the supreme view of God's love — sinners saved by grace, raised to a seat in the heavenly places in Christ.

Oh, if we could call to remembrance that the angels of God desire to look into the things pertaining to our salvation, how much more zealous and fervent we would be in spreading these wondrous tidings of man's salvation by our own personal testimony, through the work of the congregation in our various communities, through the work of our Eastern District and Synod! Yes,

Fling out the banner! Angels bend
In anxious silence o'er the sign;
And vainly seek to comprehend
The wonder of the love divine.

If the angels desire to look into the things pertaining to our salvation as revealed in the Gospel, how diligent and faithful we should be in searching the Scriptures in our home and family devotion, in the Bible class and public services! Think of it! Angels desire to look into these things, and shall it be said of us that we treat these things with indifference and neglect?

Wherefore Gird Up the Loins of Your Mind. (1:13.) The verb "gird" is used of gathering up, or tucking in, long, flowing skirts or robes by means of a belt so as to be ready for energetic action and movement. The metaphor is suggested by the girding up of the loose eastern robes preparatory to running or other exertion. Christ's call is a call to active, energetic, and ready service. There is no time to waste in His service. There is a fitness in the figure as addressed to sojourners and pilgrims, who must be ready always to move on. Girding binds the mind into a compact frame, cutting off loosely flowing thoughts and speculations that lead nowhere, and only hamper our Christian progress on the pilgrim way through life. (Moffatt: "Prepare your minds for action.")

Christians in the early days of the Church overcame the Roman Empire and conquered paganism because, as one of England's writers of contemporary religion has said, "they out-thought, out-lived, and out-died their enemies." Since it is always true that as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23: 7), this English writer was entirely correct when he gave *thinking* first place in the trilogy of things Christians were able to do more effectively and successfully than the pagans, who tried to stamp out Christianity but were themselves conquered. Correct, courageous, sober, sanctified thinking did much toward enabling a mere handful of men and women, without power, without influence, without prestige, without wealth or possessions, to win one victory after another over the mightiest empire the world had ever known.

"Gird up the loins of your mind!" In our own personal life as a Christian, in our congregational work and activities, in planning and executing the work of our District and Synod throughout the world, is our thinking always courageous, sober, and sanctified by a vision of the world's Redeemer and a world-wide commission? Are our minds always sober and alert, conscious of the dangers, and awake to the opportunities of this day and hour? Or do we permit our minds to dwell on things which are unworthy and trivial, such as narrow and selfish ideas, petty sentiments, small grievances, small and petty triumphs, conceit, self-praise, gossip, flattery, time-killing pretense? What a challenge to the pilgrims of our day: "Gird up the loins of your mind!"

CHAPTER TWO

The great doxology (1:3-12) begins with praise to God, who is the One who begot us again. The admonitions that follow grow out of this our relation to God. 1) Since He who begot us is holy (1:13-16) we, too, must be holy. Like father, like son. 2) Since He is our Judge and has ransomed us at so great a price, we must conduct ourselves with godly fear throughout the time of our pilgrimage. (1:17-21.) 3) Since we are begotten of the incorruptible seed of the Word, we are brethren, members of the same family, and thus our relation to each other must be one of love, of children of the one same Father. (1:22-25.)

Then Peter proceeds to the next admonition. 4) Since we

have been begotten by means of the eternal Word, we should long for the milk of the Word as our true and proper nourishment. We thus see how Peter's admonitions advance step by step in proper order.

As New-Born Babes Desire the Sincere Milk of the Word that Ye May Grow Thereby if so be Ye Have Tasted that the Lord Is Gracious. (2:2-3.) The picture here is beautiful and expressive. Look at a babe at its mother's breast in those first days and weeks after birth. In this way you and I should ever long for the milk of the Word.

"As just new-born babes," as suckling babes, matches the participles used in 1:3, "who hath begotten us" and in 1:23, "being born again." All three expressions refer to our regeneration and our new birth. The "just new-born babes" in this compound Greek word, found only here in the New Testament, is not to be understood in a literal sense, that is, recent converts who are still in the condition of babes and infants, who are, therefore, to be fed only milk and not solid food. No, Peter does not introduce a contrast here between milk and solid food such as Paul does in 1 Cor. 3:2 and as is found in Heb. 5:13-14. Peter desires that all his readers, whether they are beginners or veterans in the new life, act as infants in regard to their intense longing and desire to be nourished by the milk of the Word. The point of the picture language is this: as an infant longs for its mother's milk, so every Christian should take no spiritual nourishment save the Word. Weymouth gives this translation in his *New Testament in Modern Speech*, which reproduces the Greek very well: "Thirst, like newly-born infants."

This milk is designated as being that of the Word, derived from the Word, native to the Word. "Word-milk" is the meaning. This milk is without the least guile to mislead or deceive. This milk of the Word is perfectly safe for infants to take and drink, although they being just born, have no ability to be careful as to what they drink.

Long for this milk. Thirst for it. Desire it as new-born infants. Show that you cannot do without it, that you must have it, that nothing will do as a substitute, that you relish it, that you are satisfied with it, that you never tire of it, that you return to it again and again with unabated and with ever-increasing delight. A Christian is one who has a healthy ap-

petite, and healthy food, and healthy growth. We know that a healthy infant is a hungry infant. Need we add that a spiritually healthy Christian is a hungry Christian? Here is the reason why so many children of God have so little love for the Word. The Christian who tries to find satisfaction in the husks of the world has no appetite left for the things of God. His heart is filled with the former and has no room for the latter. To cease longing for the divine milk is the most serious sign of spiritual decline, which soon ends in spiritual death. A starved infant pales and dies, like many of the infants and children in Europe whose pleading cries sounded in our ears during and after the war.

When Peter attaches the condition of reality, "if you did taste that the Lord is gracious," he asks his readers to recall their experience with the Lord in the past and counts on the fact that they have already tasted and found that the Lord is kind and gracious, bestowing only what is wholesome and pleasant. He here alludes to Psalm 34:8, where we read: "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good."

On this word "taste," Luther says: "That is to taste, when I with the heart believe that Christ has been sent for me, and is become mine own; that my miseries are His and His life mine; when His truth enters into the heart, then it is tasted."

Oh, ye children of the heavenly Father, do ye know anyone else who has such food for you! Now that we have tasted, let us continue to thirst for this heavenly nourishment so richly and plentifully provided for us in His Word, and let us continue to grow. Herein lies the food and nourishment we need; without it we starve and die.

III

Ye Also as Living Stones Are Built Up a Spiritual House. (2:5.) Here a new line of thought is begun. From the picture of infants, who give evidence of their healthy state and life by their desire for the milk of the divine Word, Peter advances, with imagery that is entirely different, to living stones in a spiritual house, yea, from the picture of the spiritual house he then advances to those within the house, holy, royal priests, who render acceptable service and sacrifice. We note the transition from infants growing to stones built up. The metaphor of a house built of living stones may seem at first glance to be somewhat abrupt and violent, but it is sufficiently char-

acteristic of Peter. And yet it pictures in a very striking way the union of the believers with Christ, the *Living Stone*, and shows the stability, the growth and activity of the holy Christian Church. In Paul we have even bolder instances of apparent change of metaphors, as when in Col. 2:6-7 in one breath he represents believers as at once walking, rooted, and built up in Christ.

Let us mark that it is the "rock" Apostle, Peter, who rings the changes upon Christ, the *Living Stone*, the chief cornerstone, the stone rejected by the builders, the stone of stumbling, and the rock of offense, and upon Christians as living stones built up into a spiritual house. The imagery of the building stone, so often used by His divine Master and Teacher during His public ministry, seems to have taken a deep hold on the mind of the "rock" Apostle, Peter.

Then, too, note that it is Peter who speaks of *living stones*. Peter was always supremely interested in life. In the great confession he had called Jesus "the Son of the Living God." Before the people gathered at the Beautiful Gate of the temple in Jerusalem Peter had called Jesus "the Prince of Life." When other disciples went back and walked no more with Jesus, Peter said to Him: "Thou hast the words of eternal life." He begins his Epistle with the words, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us unto a *living hope* by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." He tells husbands and wives that they are "joint heirs of the grace of *life* (3:7). He calls the Lord a *living stone* and then says that all Christians are *living stones* in the spiritual house prepared for acceptable worship of God.

It is significant that the word for stone used here in the Greek is the usual word for a worked stone, whether a stone used in a building or a precious stone used by the jeweler.

The Christians are *living stones* because Christ communicates His *life* to them who come to Him in faith. The *living water* which He gives becomes in the believer a fountain of water welling up to *life eternal*. (John 4:14.) He is the *living Bread* which came down from heaven, and to eat of this Bread is to have *eternal life*. (John 6:51.) His blood, shed upon the cross, constitutes a new and *living way* by which believers have access to God. Christ Himself declares that He is the *Life*. (John 14:6; John 11:25.) He has *life* in Himself just as the

Father has. (John 5:26.) The fact that believers are *living stones* is due to their vital and living connection with Christ, the *Living Stone*.

These *living stones* do not lie about loosely; they constitute a spiritual house for a holy and royal priesthood, where spiritual sacrifices are offered.

These sacrifices are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ because they are rendered in His name and for His honor as evidence and fruit of the *life* He has begotten in us. We approach God only through Christ, on the strength of His sacrifice for us. He and His sacrifice alone cover up all imperfections that still cling to our sacrifices. It should be generally known that Masonry uses this passage from Peter in its ritual; but it significantly omits this last phrase, "through Jesus Christ" and thus certifies to its own anti-Christian character.

Peter's words suggest an implied contrast with the Old Testament people of God. They had a house of God, first the tabernacle in the wilderness and then the temple in Jerusalem, but we ourselves are now the house. Their temple was built of dead stones, we are living stones. They approached God through a priesthood, we ourselves are the priesthood. They offered up material sacrifices—sheep and lambs and bullocks and pigeons and fruit and grain. Our sacrifices are purely spiritual—our heart and mind and soul, all that we are and all that we have. Rome still insists that we must approach God through a specific priesthood, the papal hierarchy. Peter knew and believed and taught that our sacrifices are acceptable to God alone by Jesus Christ.

But You Are a Chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood, an Holy Nation, a Peculiar People that Ye May Show Forth the Praises of Him Who Hath Called You out of Darkness into His Marvelous Light. (2:9.) From a wide range of Old Testament passages the Apostle selected these illustrious names and terms and applied them to his readers. They are, indeed, "foreigners and strangers" to the world (1:1), but behold! elect and chosen foreigners. Let the world deride and despise them as outsiders; theirs is a most sacred and distinguished aristocracy. Despised by the world and subjected to many trials as foreigners, they are in reality foreigners because God Himself has elected and chosen them to be far superior to the

world. If we will only permit our mind to dwell on these high distinctions and honors we have in Christ, the thought of Peter will rise before us in all its beauty and power. This is the great doctrine of the spiritual priesthood of all believers, one that was long forgotten by Roman Catholicism but was brought again fully to light by Luther and the Reformation.

A *chosen generation*, a chosen race, a race elect, brings to our mind such passages as Deut. 7:6, "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord, thy God; the Lord, thy God, hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." Isaiah 43:20: "I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen." As God once chose Abraham and his people, so the believers in the New Testament era are now a chosen race, a race elect, among all the races of the world. Our natural descent and all other human differences are obliterated and swallowed up by the spiritual condition and status which is ours by faith in Christ. Oh, how happy we should be to know and fully understand all that the Apostle by inspiration of God has pressed into this term, a *Chosen Generation*, an elect race.

A *royal priesthood* as well as a *holy nation* and *God's own people* allude to Ex. 19:5-6, where we read: "a kingdom of priests," "a holy nation," a "peculiar treasure unto Me above all people." Not only are we an elect and chosen race but also an elect and chosen priesthood. This is in itself a great honor. But note that Peter adds that we are a *royal* priesthood, which is still higher. We Christians as priests have the right and authority and privilege to approach God directly and personally. No one is to speak to God for us or come between us and God.

As priests no man stands between us and God. As a body of *royal* priests, no man stands over us in our relation to God. The adjective "royal" as well as the noun "priesthood" reveal in a double way our relation to God, the exaltation of our high position, and our function—the constant, direct, immediate, personal contact and relation with God. What a glorious liberty! What a glorious honor! What a glorious opportunity and privilege of service! We are royal priests of God.

The expression used in Exodus 19, "a kingdom of priests,"

and Peter's word here, "a royal priesthood," emphasize a feature that is far above all that we find in the Levitical and Aaronitic priesthood of Israel. That priesthood was not royal, kingly. None of those who functioned in it were kings. When it was established at Sinai and the tabernacle was built, Israel had no kings. Centuries came and passed before Israel received its first king, Saul. "A royal priesthood" takes us back to Melchizedek (Heb. 7:1), who was both king and priest, whom Abraham himself honored accordingly, who typified Christ, who was King and Priest in one. "A royal priesthood" like Melchizedek's connects us directly with the King-Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we offer up our sacrifices to God. Our royalty and our priestliness are derived from our relation to Him alone.

A *holy nation* is one that is entirely separated from the unholy, and dedicated to God. Although Peter's readers came from many earthly nations, spiritually now they formed a distinct, separate, holy, superior, exalted nation, and thus were "foreigners" and "pilgrims" among the common earthly nations. (1:1 and 2:11.)

The fourth term, a *peculiar people*, a people for possession, God's own people, also goes back to Ex. 19:5, "a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people" and Deut. 7:6, "a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth," and also Mal. 3:17, "they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." We are bought with a price and thus are now God's own special possession. The King James translates "a peculiar people," which today is somewhat misleading but originally gave a good translation of the Greek words here. The Revised Standard Version of 1946 has "a people for God's own possession." Wycliffe translated, "people of purchasing." Cranmer has "a people which are won." Weymouth has "a people belonging to God."

It would be a sad mistake to suppose that we Christians can be all that Peter states that we are and then sit down and quietly contemplate our honor and excellence. No, these are not static, but dynamic, living, active terms. They include what Peter puts into the purpose clause, in which we may read an undertone of admonition, "that you may show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness

into His marvelous light." Because of what we are by the grace of God, it is truly meet, right, and salutary that by word and deed, through our lips and through our life, we should at all times and in all places give thanks and publish and declare the great things of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. The word used here for "to show forth" means not merely to tell, but to tell out, tell abroad, tell far and wide, tell insistently, consistently, persistently.

Thus we function as a royal priesthood and ever offer up sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, and rejoice over the fact that we, who once were no people, are now God's people and that we who once received no mercy, now have received mercy. This is the confessional and missionary spirit and activity of God's people everywhere and at all times. For this purpose God still permits us to remain in the world. Instead of hiding the fact that we are foreigners in this world, we proclaim it and tell it with delight and speak of Him who has made us what we are.

Kings and priests serving the Most High God, God's own people and nation—are we always living in the full consciousness of our high calling? Or have we forgotten our high calling and great privilege in our own personal life as Christians and as members of our Christian congregations? Has a full understanding of this important doctrine permeated and saturated us in our work in His kingdom?

Beginning with 2:11 and continuing through 3:12, Peter lays down certain concrete patterns of Christian behavior, intended to govern their conduct in certain definite social circles and relationships.

In 2:11 and 12 we have several short and general exhortations to integrity of life, with a view to disarming suspicion and winning unbelievers to the Christian way. In 2:13-17 we have the nature and function of the civil power and the duty of Christians toward it. 2:18-25 presents the duty of meekness inculcated upon Christian slaves, and its basis is the example of Christ, who is now the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. Here we have what has been called the *imitatio Christi*. Then in 3:1-6 we have the duty of Christian wives, exemplified in dutifulness to their husbands, and in modesty of outward apparel, symbolizing a gentle and quiet spirit, based upon the example of Sarah. The duty of Christian husbands to care for

their wives, with whom they are heirs of the grace of life, is pictured in 3:7. Finally, we have a summary of Christian virtues required of the followers of Christ, and illustrated from the 34th Psalm.

There is one word in 2:11 to which we call your special attention. It is the word translated in English by the verb "to war." *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.* The Greek verb used here is not the common verb denoting "to fight" or "to carry on war." It is another Greek verb which is better translated "to launch and carry on a campaign." For the sake of emphasis Peter personifies these fleshly lusts which engage in a campaign and by their strategy intend to capture the soul in order to destroy it. The Apostle urges them to keep themselves aloof from these fleshly lusts. The unbelievers among whom the Christians live in this world are natives of this world and as such they follow the promptings of the flesh and its many lusts. It is natural for them to do so. Right here we see how the Christians appear to the natives as outsiders and aliens. They hold themselves aloof from these neighbors in regard to all such lusts. The Christian pilgrims are now spiritual in their nature and conduct and no longer fleshly. There is of necessity a vast gulf between them and their unbelieving neighbors. For the sake of their own souls and in the interest of their own spiritual welfare, Peter reminds those pilgrims of the campaign and strategy of the evil lusts. Yes,

Pilgrim, be on thy guard;
Ten thousand foes arise,
And hosts of sin are pressing hard
To draw thee from the skies.

Oh, watch and fight and pray,
The battle ne'er give o'er;
Renew it boldly ev'ry day
And help divine implore.

In verse 15 of this second chapter we have the phrase *put to silence*. The word used by Peter is a very graphic word, meaning to muzzle. Foolish men who ridicule and scorn and slander the pilgrims as evil-doers are to have their mouths shut by the good conduct of the Christians. All who would bark at them or bite them must find themselves muzzled by the well-doing of the believers. As a muzzle renders an ill-tempered dog harmless, so the consistent Christian behavior of the believers must render harmless the most evil-minded

and malicious of their foes. Our constant doing good acts like a constant muzzling.

In 2:13-17 Peter expounds the nature and function of the civil power and the duty of Christians toward it. Peter's readers were, of course, under a pagan government, and the question was always asked: In how far and on what principle God's people should obey pagan rulers. The question became acute when Christians were spoken against as evil-doers and were treated as such by the local government in the provinces and were accused and indicted before the authorities. There was increasing danger of this at the time when Peter wrote, and it is thus that he takes up this subject.

No special form of government is advocated by the New Testament. Peter deals with the form of government as it was then existing in the Roman Empire, Nero being the Caesar who is included under "whether it be to the king as supreme." It also includes his governors in the provinces, whether they were *legati Augusti*, *proconsuls*, *procurators*, or had some other title. His admonition is given in these words: "*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme or unto governors as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evil-doers and for the praise of them that do well. Fear God. Honor the king.*" (2:13-14 and 17.)

Fear God and Honor the King. The connection here is twofold. The first precept *fear God* is at once the foundation and the limit of the second, *honor the king*. The loyalty of a Christian man to the State rests on a regard for divine authority. He honors the king because he fears God. There are many who in their obedience to civil authority are influenced entirely by reasons of expediency. They obey because otherwise they would be punished; and they show this by violating laws without scruple when they think this can be done with advantage or impunity. God should be in all our thoughts when we render obedience to the State. The enlightened consistent Christian recognizes civil government as a divine ordinance. With him obedience is not a matter of human arrangement, of expediency, of self-interest; it is a religious duty. This secures a uniformity of obedience which nothing else can do, and therefore, there is no class of citizens who may be so safely relied on for consistent loyalty and

obedience as enlightened Christians. Daniel Webster was right when he said, "Whatever makes good Christians, makes good citizens." Christians obey because God commands them to do so, and performs their civil duties as doing service unto the Lord.

But as the precept *fear God* is with the Christian the foundation of his civil obedience, so it is also its limit. A Christian should honor the king so far, and only so far, as this is consistent with fearing God. Should the civil magistrate require us to do anything that is inconsistent with the divine law; should he require us to neglect what God has commanded, or to do what God has forbidden — then we must fear God and not honor the king, if such obedience is to be accounted honor. The principle on which we are to act in such cases is a very plain one: "We ought to obey God rather than men" and whatever the consequence may be, it must be acted on; and he who really fears God will rise above the fear of men. Fearing God, he will know no other fear.

Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego honored the king by a faithful discharge of their duties as superintendents of the provinces of Babylon; but when he commanded them to worship the colossal image he had erected in the plain of Dura with the assurance that if they did not, they should be cast into a burning fiery furnace, fearing God, "they were not afraid of the king's commandment" but respectfully and determinedly said: "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Daniel, because of his prayers to the one true God, being prohibited by the edict of a monarch whom he most faithfully honored and served, disregarded the edict and took good care that this should be no secret. "When he knew that the writing was signed, he went to his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled on his knees, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Daniel honored the king but he also remembered that he had a higher duty, namely, to fear God.

This same Apostle who urges us to *fear God and honor the king*, when the Jewish magistrates commanded him and John to speak no more in the name of Jesus, replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than to

God, judge ye," and when called to account for acting out this principle, Peter's answer was, "We ought to obey God rather than man." *Honor the king* must always find its foundation and its limit in *fear God*.

Let Caesar's due be ever paid
To Caesar and his throne,
But consciences and souls were made
To be the Lord's alone.

The colossal growth of the power and claims of States in modern times demands that we have Christians who like Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Daniel, Peter, and John *fear God and honor the king*. What if Caesar claims authority in many domains which are not his? That, in fact, is what has occurred increasingly and alarmingly in our generation and is occurring at this very hour in many parts of the world. Compulsion, which is characteristic of the State's action, has been extended from one field of human life to another, rising sometimes to unbridled violence and suppression of the rights and privileges of Christians. There may come a moment when the State is so manifestly going beyond its province as to cease to deserve the loyalty of Christians, since it has ceased to fulfill its own God-given and proper functions. This was the issue that confronted many of our fellow-Lutherans in Germany under Hitler with all of his terrorism and barbarism.

F. E. Mayer, in his report of the conferences held by American Lutheran leaders with Lutheran leaders and pastors at Bad Boll in 1948, after reporting on the discussions concerning Church and State on the basis of Articles XVI and XXVIII, 12—18, of the Augsburg Confession, includes these words in comment: "In 1530 the Lutherans could address their king with whole-hearted assurance: 'King by the grace of God,' and could include the government in the Fourth Petition. Can German Lutherans, since 1934 and 1945, so view the government or must they perhaps include the government in the Seventh Petition?"

Again on page 49 of his report he states:

It was only natural that the discussion on this doctrine became very animated at times. This was due to a number of factors. It must be remembered that some leading churchmen were involved in the attempt (1944) upon Hitler's life, and the overtones of this episode could be heard throughout the discussion. Many of the leading churchmen had been in concentration camps because of their opposition to Hitler, while others, because of a false inter-

pretation of Article XVI, permitted Hitler to inaugurate his anti-Christian program without protest. If one considers what heart-aches were caused by the Nazi government and later by the Russian occupation forces, one will appreciate the deep feeling that came to the surface during the discussions. One pastor reported the indescribably brutal and immoral acts to which he and his poor wife were subjected by a "constituted" government. The different orientation must furthermore be kept in mind. The one group came from a country with a stable government and now functioning as the government of the vanquished, the other is virtually without a government in the modern sense of the word.

The "apocalyptic" events of the past decade left an unmistakable imprint on the German theologians' thinking concerning the problem of Church and State. They find it very difficult to read Romans 13 without reference to Revelation 13. The new ideology of Eastern Europe has placed eschatology still more in the center of the German thinking than during the Hitler regime. What will their attitude be if they should be subject to a government whose political philosophy is based on an atheistic premise, an ideology which to some is a portent of *ruina mundi*? Quite naturally the thoughts of the participants at Bad Boll were frequently directed to the churches behind the Iron Curtain. As yet the front against the Church has not closed its ranks there, but the wedges of nihilism and materialism are being driven into this front. Bishop Beste, when asked what the churches in the eastern zones are doing to present a solid front, answered: "Our people sing hymns of praise." These were unforgettable discussions.

The Lutheran Bishop Ordass, now confined in prison in Hungary, because in seeking to *honor the king* he was also mindful that he was to *fear God*, furnishes a good modern example of how Christians in our day and age are being called on to judge when they can no longer honor the king by following his demands. From *The Christian Century* of May 11, 1949, in an article dealing with the case of this Lutheran bishop we quote the following:

Lutheran leaders had already clashed with the government in regard to its censorship of religious literature and religious broadcasting. On March 28, Bishop Ordass had received a reporter of the Budapest Social Democrat newspaper, who interviewed him on relations between church and state. The bishop was quoted in that newspaper as saying: "The deplorable relations between church and state which now prevail should be rectified, and we for our part are willing to cooperate in bettering these relations. We declare on our part that the condition for this cooperation must be unlimited religious freedom,—freedom for expressing our religious life, the right to retain our church schools, guarantee and carry on our work among the youth outside the schools, and lastly,

the unhampered right of the church to carry on its eleemosynary and social work. We cannot compromise on these conditions, for to do so would be to deny the essence of the church and our calling."

We salute the courage and conviction of Bishop Ordass. The signs of our times seem to indicate that we will need an increasing number of enlightened and courageous men and women who will heed Peter's admonition: *Fear God and honor the king*. This task will not be easy. No Christian may lightly judge when the moment has come for him to resist the government, but he is ever the servant of God and the Lord's free man, and cannot divest himself of his responsibility to *fear God*.

There are some who say that many Christian leaders in Germany blundered by failing to resist immediately when Nazi atheistic and pagan ideologies crowded in upon Christian principles. We are discovering, now that the full story can be told of what was going on under Hitler and his vicious crew of terrorists, that indeed many Christian leaders, among them some of our fellow Lutherans, did speak out against the inhuman, barbarous anti-Christian, diabolical, and pagan practices of Hitler and the Nazis.

How difficult the problem may be for the Christian is seen from an article in *The Lutheran Witness* of July 3, 1945, bearing the title "Personal Request. Addressed to the Evangelical Christians of America. By Gerhard Lindner, Prisoner of War Camp, France," from which we take these words:

We can understand that the majority of the American people condemn Germany because of certain matters of fact which partly go back into pre-war days (persecution of the Jews, oppression of the churches, and others) and partly have come to light in recent reports. As evangelical Christians of this German people we consciously assign to ourselves a place with the others under the guilt which our people have heaped upon themselves. We do not wish to extenuate or excuse anything because we know that acts have been committed within and outside Germany—which cry to heaven. We are bowed down beneath this also that we did not sufficiently and often not clearly enough call a wrong a wrong in spite of expected persecutions.

For the present as well as future days, we will need an increasing number of Christian men and women who clearly understand, and with God's help and strength, consistently live out in their conduct these two injunctions of Peter: *Fear*

God and honor the king. A few years ago Dr. Steward Herman wrote a book entitled *It's Your Souls We Want*, in which he described the relation of Nazis to the Church in Germany. That title could well apply to Communism in many areas of Europe and Asia today. God give us the wisdom and courage to see the issues clearly and quit ourselves like men!

IV

In 2:21 St. Peter tells us that Christ left us an *Example*, and the word he uses in the Greek means a copy, a pattern, an outline for the schoolboy to trace and copy. As a copy or pattern is set at the head of the page and the schoolboy writes under it his awkward attempts at reproduction and he does it over and over again until his imitation begins to look something like the example set before him, so the Christian is to see in Christ the *perfect Example* for his life, and he is to endeavor to reproduce His life in his own, and, however imperfect our first attempts may be, we are to keep at it patiently and persistently until at last we can approximate in some measure the model He has given us. That is all suggested in the one word Peter used, and the definiteness and sharpness of the picture is wholly lost in the English translation.

By thus holding up the *example* of Jesus before us, Peter by no means presents Jesus only as an *example*, as the modernists do in so many of our Protestant pulpits today. No, from start to finish Peter presents Jesus, our *Example*, as our Savior and Redeemer. The doctrine of atonement and of man's salvation by the suffering and death of Christ runs like a golden thread through all his argument and exhortation.

We are to follow *His steps*, continues Peter. The compound verb in the Greek implies not merely following, but close, exact following. We must go the way the Master trod. Where He walked, there we must walk also. As the mountain climbers in the Alps follow very closely in the very steps of their guide, so we pilgrims are to follow closely in the steps of the Master.

The particular trait of the Master which the Apostle here in these closing verses of the second chapter urges upon us is His meekness. If one were asked what trait above all others in the person of the Lord is dear to Peter, the answer is plain: it is His meekness. And he writes about it as one who had

himself witnessed His meekness time after time. We may well believe that the memory of his Master's behavior before friend and foe prompted Peter's mind here. This whole passage directed especially to the Christian slaves bears the mark of Peter's memories of the scene of Christ's last sufferings — the blows and buffeting of the servants and Roman soldiers, the scorn of the high priest, the silent submission of Jesus, the stripes and the cross.

Shall we be wrong if we surmise that Peter is here reproducing for us the indelible impression which the lonely figure of his Master, standing in meek silence before His accusers and His judges had made upon the disciple's mind? Such glimpses as Peter had of our Lord either before Caiaphas or before Pilate, were no doubt intermittent, but St. Luke's narrative (Luke 22:61) indicates that they did occur. And always the same contrast was to be seen between the injustice, cruelty, and violence of His enemies, and the meekness, patience, silence of Him whom most he loved.

Somewhere, we may be sure, among those who saw Jesus tread the road to Calvary step by step, stood the man whom He had called to be His disciple, and who, even though he had so basely denied Him, yet loved his Master still. Yes, he had seen Him carrying his own sins, even his sins of denial and cowardice, up to the hill called Golgotha to the cross of shame on which He was crucified with a criminal on either side. We may suppose that the moment marked the climax of Peter's sorrow and contrition as well as of his Master's humiliation. What more natural than that it should find expression in this context and in these very words? In the longest passage in our New Testament outside the Gospels, which has to do with Christ's suffering and death, Peter states: "For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously, who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree (bare up to the cross as to an altar, and offered Himself thereon) that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes (singular, not plural — the flesh so dreadfully mangled made the disfigured form appear in his eyes like one single bruise or stripe) ye were healed."

With such an *example* of meekness before them—so grounded and rooted in the suffering of Christ, so universal in its range, and so triumphant in its blessed results—Christians should ever follow closely His steps.

CHAPTER THREE

We regret that time does not permit a full and complete examination of the many important admonitions and doctrines contained in chapter three. We trust that you will understand why of necessity we had to omit some portions of this Epistle. For the sake of completeness we offer a brief summary of this chapter and then continue with a more detailed study of the remaining portion of the Letter. We are indebted to the article by Victor Bartling in the January, 1939, issue of *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY* for his excellent summary of Chapter Three.

In the first seven verses of chapter three, which are almost entirely incorporated in the Table of Duties of our Catechism, Peter urges upon Christian wives and Christian husbands the importance and duty of ever remembering that they are missionaries for their faith by reason of the lives they live in their calling as pilgrims on the heavenly way.

The rest of the chapter speaks of the general conduct of the whole body of pilgrims over against the pagan world in which they were sojourning for a brief space of time. There must ever be a distinct contrast between the pilgrims and the natives of this world. In 3:8-14 he exhorts the Christians to do all in their power to keep on good terms with their pagan neighbors, to repay evil with good, and reviling with blessing, and to remember that the Lord will surely punish all those who do evil. This does not mean that they shall cringe in cowardly fear before their enemies and before the magistrates and officials but rather that they defend the truth as they have learned it, 14-16. They must never allow themselves to be driven by persecution into doing evil deeds but rather strive to conquer their enemies by showing themselves blameless, thus keeping a good conscience in all things, and putting their persecutors to silence and shame.

Even when and if they suffer according to God's will for well-doing, they are following in the footsteps of Christ, who also suffered, the Just for the unjust, in order that He might bring such sinners to God. But note that Christ's suffering

did not last long. For after being put to death in the flesh, He was quickened again in the spirit and then began His triumphant reign in the Kingdom of Glory, 17 and 18. First, He descended to the place where the wicked generation destroyed in the Flood was confined, and announced to them His victory over sin and death and the establishment of His glorious kingdom, 19. Then He showed Himself as the resurrected Lord to His disciples, ascended to heaven, and took His place on the right hand of God, where angels and principalities and authorities and powers were made subject to Him, 22. But now when Christ, their King, thus had conquered all His enemies and after a brief period of suffering had gained such great honor and power, those who follow His example could also be certain of gaining victory through Him, saved out of the present evil world by the miraculous grace of God through Holy Baptism, even as Noah and his family were by the grace of God saved out of the ruin of the world in the days of the Flood. The enemies of God and His Church, on the other hand, would now as in the days of Noah meet with due punishment and be forever made powerless to harm the Christians. Let the pilgrims comfort themselves against any accusation of devil and conscience with the thought of Christ's glorious victory over all the forces and powers of evil.

CHAPTER FOUR

In the introduction to this essay it was stated that the purpose of this First Letter of Peter is to exhort and encourage the followers of Christ in a time of bitter trial and persecution. The early chapters of Acts make it clear that it was precisely for the name of Christ that His followers were persecuted by the Jews and Gentiles from the earliest times. Our Lord, as you recall, had foretold this again and again. Those who preached and taught and healed and baptized men "in Christ's name" were bound to suffer for His name. When Gentiles, incited by the Jews or under the impulse of their own suspicions and jealousies, took up the persecutors' role, it would be for His name that Christians would suffer and be persecuted.

Let us direct our attention to some of the words and phrases of the passages in this fourth chapter which speak of these trials and persecutions.

Beloved, Think It not Strange Concerning the Fiery Trial

Which Is to Try You, as Though Some Strange Thing Happened to You. (4:12.) Literally, "Be not astonished or surprised at the burning among you, which is coming to you for a trial or testing, as though a strange thing were happening to you." The persecution, says Peter, is a burning, a fire, a fiery furnace, which is being kindled among them for a trial to test the strength of their faith. The word "burning" shows the severity of these persecutions. The prison and the torture, the sword and the stake, were beginning to threaten the infant Church. The word "burning" is used in this passage to refer to a smelting furnace and the smelting process in which gold or silver ore is purified. These sufferings, severe and violent, constituted the smelting furnace in which their lives were being tested and purified. The reference is to the intense heat of the furnace of the refiner, by which he tests the genuineness and increases the purity of the precious metals.

The picture is obviously designed to indicate at once the great severity and the important purposes of the afflictions on which these Christians might reckon with certainty as awaiting them with increasing intensity and frequency. History tells us that this figure does not at all outrun the reality.

It was not at all unnatural that the early Christians, when exposed to such sufferings, should not only feel them to be very painful but consider them to be strange, as if some strange thing were happening to them. Were not they the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty? Did He not love them? Could He not protect them? Had He not wisdom enough to confound all the plans, power enough to restrain and frustrate all the evil designs of their enemies? Had He not promised them that He would preserve them from all evil and bestow upon them every blessing and good thing? Was it not strange in these circumstances that they should be exposed to suffering at all? Doubly strange that they should be exposed to suffering for avowing their relation and performing their duty to Him? Strangest of all, that they should be exposed to such intense suffering when following His way?

And if these sufferings seemed strange as coming from God, they must also have appeared strange as coming from men. They were no disturbers of the public peace. They were no invaders of private rights. They were blameless and harm-

less, the children of God without rebuke, rendering all their due, nay, doing good to all, as they had opportunity. Was it not strange that they should be the objects of the contempt and dislike of their fellow men and be treated by their rulers as if they had been criminals and malefactors and enemies of the State?

But Peter urges them not to consider these afflictions and persecutions as strange things. It is not strange that the evil world should hate holiness, hate the light, hate the very shadow of it. The more the children of God walk like their Father, the more unlike must they of necessity become to the world about them and become the very targets of their enmity and malice. "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you."

Then, too, through these sufferings they may share in Christ's sufferings, and so in His coming glory, too. It is a privilege to endure reproach for Christ and His name.

In verse 14 of this chapter Peter refers to reproaches heaped upon the Christians for the name of Christ and in verse 16 to their sufferings as Christians. The word "Christian" occurs only three times in the New Testament—twice in the Acts (Acts 11:26 and 26:28) and here. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." They were originally described among themselves as "the disciples," "the brethren," "the believers," "the elect," or "the saints." The name "Christian" was probably invented by the heathen and used at first as a term of derision; there is something of scorn in Agrippa's use of this word. The name "Christian" did not at once become common among the disciples of the Lord. St. Peter is the only sacred writer who adopts it instead of the older names, and that only once, and in connection with threatened persecution. Then they began to see its admirable suitability. It reminded them that the center of their religion was not alone a system of doctrine, but a Person, and that Person the Messiah, Jesus the Christ.

True, the heathen blasphemed this worthy name; suffering Christians must never be ashamed of it, but as the holy martyrs did, utter bravely and cheerfully their *Christianus sum!* (I am a Christian!) with inward peace and thanksgiving, glorifying God that He has given them this grace to bear that

honored name and to suffer for Christ. Joy in suffering for that name is the pledge of the great joy of the redeemed at the revelation of the glory which they now see through a glass darkly.

In the last verse in this section, verse 19, Peter urges these Christians in the midst of these bitter persecutions and trials to commit their souls into the hands of a faithful Creator. The Greek word "commit" is a banking term, meaning "to give in charge as a deposit." Here is a fountain of great comfort and consolation for the day of persecution. God, the faithful Creator, can and will take good care of all that is deposited in His custody and safekeeping. No violence can force His safe where His jewels are kept. In the hour of suffering as well as in time of prosperity, we are ever in the hands of a merciful and loving Father. God is our Creator. He made us. He gave the spirit, the soul; to Him the soul returns. We must imitate our dying Lord, and like Him, commit our souls to the keeping of our heavenly Father as a deposit which may be left with perfect confidence in the hands of this faithful Creator. As a faithful Creator He is strong to preserve no less than to make, and therefore, He too knows how much tension and strain the soul will bear, and will not overweight it, nor test it up to the breaking point. Where can my soul and spirit be so secure and safe as when it is entrusted to the care of Him who fashioned me and measures my sorrows, knowing my frame and remembering that I am dust? He is a faithful Creator. In all trials and persecutions let us commit our souls into His strong and faithful hands. Looking at Him as our Creator, we may well be persuaded that He is able and that He is willing to keep that which in obedience to His command we have committed to Him and His safekeeping.

Before we leave this important section of Peter's Letter, so rich and so full of instruction and meaning for the pilgrims of our day when the flood-gates of persecution have been opened in many areas of the world, may we add a few additional items. These Christians to whom Peter writes had already tasted persecution in some of their previous experiences; now there is prospect that these sufferings will become more frequent and more severe. We are acquainted with the change that was taking place in Rome. Nero's hostility to the Christian faith was bound to have its effect also in the prov-

inces of the Roman empire. Peter writes mainly for this reason, in order to fortify and strengthen them for these trials in advance of their coming.

Many of the papyrus documents unearthed in recent years from the sands of Egypt and other archaeological discoveries help us to understand the growing antagonism of the State, which made itself equal with God, to the Christian faith. They help us to see and understand both the contact and the contrast between early Christianity and the ancient pagan world.

As early as 48 B. C. an inscription of Ephesus salutes Julius Caesar as "God made manifest . . . the Savior of human life." One papyrus document acknowledges Augustus in his first years as "God of God" and his birthday is spoken of as "the nativity of the God." During his lifetime, he bears the title "son of God." As early as 9 B. C. he is called "divine." Nero — of all men — is even more highly honored; he is called "the good God."

When the Christians of Peter's day confessed Jesus Christ as God and Lord, they were deliberately claiming full divinity for their Master, and for Him alone. But the Gentiles had already made the same claim for their emperor. With Nero the number of examples of honoring and worshiping the emperor as God mounts up tremendously; everywhere, down to the remotest village, the officials call Nero "Lord," a fact incidentally noted by St. Luke in Acts 25:26. Later, by the time of Domitian, in the period following the days of Peter and his readers, the term "Lord" and "God" has become a recognized title for the emperor-god, and Christians were being systematically martyred for refusing to concede this title to him and his successors.

The cult of Caesar and the emperor-worship put a peculiar strain upon the churches all over the Roman world. The ignorant masses already regarded the Christians as depraved and vicious, as enemies of the State and society, and credited them with eating human flesh and other monstrous practices. These were, indeed, days of trial for the loyal followers of Christ.

Here, too, we see the particular relevance of the message of First Peter for our day and age. "They that will live godly," they that are determined to act out the principles and precepts of Christian faith, "must suffer persecution." No consistent

Christian passes through this world without personal evidence that this world is not his friend. And he who has never suffered in any way for his Christian faith, who is an entire stranger to the reproach of Christ, has some reason to read with alarm the words of our Lord: "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

Many and varied, violent and fierce, are the persecutions which also in our day are coming upon the Christians in many areas of the world. May we cite a few instances from recent history?

From a news release given out by the International Lutheran Hour on April 24, 1949, we quote the following:

The enemies of Christ go to terrifying extremes in their mad attempt to destroy the faith once given, as Alexander Raffai, a Lutheran Church leader in Hungary, who recently escaped into Austria, now reveals. He describes the torture methods which Russian and Hungarian Communists used to wring confessions from the clergy. A few days ago he told how Communist officials made him stand for twelve hours facing blinding light, how he was clubbed whenever his eyelids dropped. He tells how for eight days he was not allowed to shut his eyes, how when he was tried in a purposely overheated courtroom while his investigators sat in shirt sleeves, he had to stand hour after hour clothed in a heavy overcoat and repeatedly drink a big glass of hot bitter coffee, while the sweat oozed out of his pores and his strength slowly ebbed from him. But he remained faithful to the Lord, and when morning came and his spirit was still unbroken, they made him stand with his nose against a brilliantly lighted wall, a bayonet pointed at his side. He collapsed twelve hours later, and when they revived him, he had to lie on his side on a bench seven inches wide, without closing his eyes while a guard stood over him with a machine-gun. After he still refused to confess, he was isolated in a cell where in ten-degree icy coldness he was not even given a blanket and six of his toes were frozen. When despite this the Hungarian Communists could not break his determination, he was handed over to the Russians. Under their cruelty he broke down and was forcefully made to sign a confession which a Russian major had written.

From a recent book by Albert Kalme, bearing the title *Soviet Blood-Guilt in the Baltics* we have selected these items:

Once the Bolshevik octopus fastens its tentacle about a people, it sucks the life-blood of its victims away. The methods used are the same for any country over which the Hammer and Sickle waves; the dread secret police, the MVD; constant spying and terror; outlawing of religious worship; transformation of education

into propaganda for the State and ruthless deportations of people to slave labor. . . . The Soviet constitution grants "freedom of religious observance." This is a colossal farce, for spiritual faith and practice are utterly incompatible with the Soviet's insistence upon complete subordination of the individual to the State. All forms of religion in my country have been crushed. Ceremonies are forbidden in burial grounds. Outlawed are religious journals, catechisms, and prayer books. Theological seminaries are closed, monasteries and religious societies dissolved. The teaching of religion is forbidden in all schools and churches. All ecclesiastical properties including churches were confiscated.

With what diabolical thoroughness and efficiency Hitler and his Nazi crew of cut-throats sought to uproot and destroy the Church in Germany is becoming increasingly clear from repeated recent documents that have come from Germany. Time does not permit to mention the tortures and terrors that were enacted and carried out on the persons of many of our fellow Lutherans in the land of the Reformation.

In Spain and many other Catholic countries, Protestants and other minorities are graciously accorded the fullest rights and privileges of second-class citizenship. From a report in the *Christian Century* of March 23, 1949, we learn that Cardinal Carmelo of Sao Paulo, Brazil, referred to Protestants as "anti-national, unpatriotic minorities."

Need we add to these references? Those who have eyes to see and ears to hear know that we are living in a day of the exaltation of the State above the citizen and deity, above any accountability to God's Law. All over the world there is a melancholy drift in this direction. The future is full of danger and terror. Atheism and Communism, terrorism and brutality, cruelty in all its most inhuman forms, are spreading like a cancer from one land to another. In many lands the growing power of the atheistic and godless modern State is getting to be an octopus reaching into every nook and corner of life. Recently a Lutheran bishop of Germany, who visited our land, told several of his Lutheran audiences, in words born out of his own suffering and trouble, that we Christians of this day must set our hearts and minds against the modern secular philosophy of the State, the idea that the State must be responsible for everything and that we must turn to it for everything we may want in life. This Lutheran bishop of Germany thought this present-day trend was the greatest danger of our anxious day.

And if it be God's will that we in America in the days which lie ahead should meet with persecution and reproach because of the Name of Christ, may God give us the courage and strength not to be ashamed but rather that we glorify God on this behalf and commit the keeping of our souls to the faithful Creator. The call of the hour is for Christian men who will be strong in the power of His might.

CHAPTER FIVE

In the preceding portions of this Epistle, the Apostle has instructed those to whom he wrote in many of their religious and moral duties as individuals, and also in many of their duties as members of domestic and civil society. In the section which now comes before us he writes to them that they may know how they ought to behave themselves in the house of God. He gives them a directory for their conduct as pastors and elders and also as members of a Christian church. The duties of the pastors to those who were committed to their charge, and the duties of the members both to their pastors and to each other, are here plainly stated and very powerfully enforced.

The Elders Which Are Among You I Exhort, Who Am Also an Elder and a Witness of the Sufferings of Christ and Also a Partaker of the Glory that Shall Be Revealed. (5:1.) It is obvious that the Apostle addresses those who are *elders* in the special sense of the word, as in Acts 11:30; 15:22; 20:17. The last passage shows, as compared with Acts 20:28 that the term was interchangeable with "overseers" and "bishops." The word is used here in its official connotation, while in verse 5 below it refers to those who are "older" in years. The term is not further defined, but probably includes all who have any kind of authorized pastoral office and function. The term was probably taken over by the Church from the synagog. Deissmann has shown that its use both in Judaism and in the Church may have been facilitated by the fact that in Egypt and Asia Minor *elders* was the technical term for the members of civil corporations. These *elders*, then, were men commissioned to have the care of churches and to preach the Gospel, but with a distinct allusion to the fact that they were also literally elders in respect to age.

Who Am Also an Elder. If the word was used in its official

sense in the first clause it cannot well be taken in any other sense here. The Apostle, with a profound humility, strikingly in contrast with the supremacy claimed by the pope, puts himself as a fellow elder on a level with the elders to whom he writes, with duties to be fulfilled in the same spirit, subject to the same conditions. The word *fellow elder*, which seems to be coined by Peter for this occasion, expresses not only the Apostle's modesty but still more his sympathy and understanding with the elders addressed. He knew the measure of their responsibility at first hand and identified himself with them. The function which he and they had in common was that of pastoral care and government.

A Witness of the Sufferings of Christ. We have here a direct claim on the author's part to have been an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ. Luke 24:48 tells us that it is one of the qualifications of those called to be His Apostles. Eyewitness was of the essence of the apostolic office and function.

And Also a Partaker of the Glory that Shall Be Revealed. In what sense was Peter a sharer in the final glory of Jesus Christ? He had experienced a special revelation of the glory which belonged to Jesus and which was revealed for a few fleeting moments to his wondering eyes on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter states that he had been a witness of the glory of Christ; and yet it is stated with characteristic self-effacement; not to magnify his own authority, but to give to his exhortation to his fellow elders in time of stress just that added note of certainty as to the outcome which, because it came from his own direct experience of Christ's glory on the mountain, could speak best to their condition.

Feed the Flock of God. (5:2.) The word for "feed" here as elsewhere implies the whole work of the shepherd — guiding, directing, protecting, as well as supplying food. The shepherd's work had been from a very early period a parable of that of rulers and teachers. Kings were to Homer the "shepherds of the people." David was taken from the sheepfold to feed Israel as the flock of Jehovah (Ps. 78:70-71). The sin of the kings and rulers of Judah had been that they did not feed the flock but scattered and destroyed it. (Jer. 23:1-4; Ezek. 34:2.)

In St. Peter's use of the word we note a reproduction of the words that had fallen on his ears with a three-fold, yet

varied, iteration, "Feed My sheep!" (John 21:16.) He had often heard the Good Shepherd speak in terms of loving solicitude of His sheep (Mark 6:34; Matt. 10:6; Luke 12:32; John 10:1-18).

Feed the Flock of God Which Is Among You. Observe that the flock belongs to God, and not to the overseer, or the elder. The flock is not his, but the Lord's. It is his trust, but the Lord's heritage. In these words of Peter Christian pastors are tacitly reminded who is the Chief Shepherd whom they serve, and to whom they will have to render an account. (Acts 20:28.)

This shepherding is to be taken *not by restraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.* (5:2-3.) These words indicate the three great conditions of true pastoral work. 1) It must not be entered on reluctantly and as under pressure. In one sense indeed the truest and best work may be done by one who feels as St. Paul felt, that a "necessity is laid" upon him (1 Cor. 9:16). What St. Peter deprecates is the drawing back from the labor and responsibility of the care of souls. Here, as in other things, the true temper is that of cheerful and willing service.

There is all the difference, especially in pastoral work, between the man who does his work for no other reason than that he has to do it, and the man who does it willingly, as being in God's service.

Not for Filthy Lucre. 2) Here we have the second condition for true pastoral work which is pleasing to God. The accusation of making money out of religion was brought against Samuel and against Paul, and was vigorously refuted by both. We may infer from 1 Tim. 5:17-18 that the elders and deacons were usually paid, though the repeated warnings against covetousness in the ministry suggest that the remuneration was small and probably uncertain in amount. What is forbidden is not the desire for fair remuneration but the sordid love of gain.

The words are interesting as showing that even in the troubled times in which St. Peter wrote there was enough wealth in the Church to make the position of an elder a lucrative one. There was, for baser natures, the temptation of using spiritual influence and position for base ends, "devouring

widows' houses" as the Pharisees did in Judea (Matt. 23:14), "leading captive silly women" as did the false teachers at Ephesus (2 Tim. 3:6) and Crete (Titus 1:11). In contrast to this temper, eagerly grasping for earthly gain, the Apostle points to the cheerful readiness that seeks eagerly for work for the Lord.

Neither as Being Lords Over God's Heritage. 3) This is the third exhortation to the elders in their pastoral work. The Greek word for "lording" implies an authority exercised both wrongfully and oppressively. Ambition for, and love of power is from the Apostle's standpoint as great a hindrance to true pastoral work as greed and avarice. The whole history of the Church, in particular the history of the papacy, shows how fatally this evil desire has fastened itself on the servants of God whenever they were not mindful of Peter's earnest warning.

Apparently long before the 20th century these warnings were needed, as they are needed today. How tragic that the desire for ease, for wealth, for power enters the hearts of Christian pastors sometimes! What a tragic thing it is, too, when some, as in those early days, leave their first love! Such men enter God's service with full hearts, but time and opportunity turn their minds to position or riches or power, and even before they realize the fact (and sometimes they never do), their whole purpose and vision are selfward rather than Godward. Power, fame, silver and gold become their desires. This is not service for the King. He wants us to serve willingly, with ready minds, living before the flock as examples whose steps and conduct they can always follow.

If such be the walk and labor of the elders and pastors then *when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away* (5:4). The word for *Chief Shepherd* is found in no other place in Scripture and seems therefore to have been coined by St. Peter to express the thought which had been impressed on his mind by his Lord's word, "I am the Good Shepherd" (John 10:14). In his own work, as in that of all pastors of the Church, he saw the reproduction of that of which Christ had set the great example. There is only one who is the *Chief Shepherd*. Note that the Apostle to whom such a prominent place has been given by the Roman Catholic Church affirms the complete

pre-eminence of Christ by according to Him the title—the *Chief Shepherd*.

When He is manifested on the Last Day, those who have faithfully shepherded His flock will receive crowns of glory that will not fade away. He knows all our works, our service, our faithfulness and it will be His delight and joy to reward in His grace those who have been faithful. The victors' crowns among the Greeks and Romans, as well as the garlands worn on festal occasions, were usually of leaves and flowers, such as myrtle, roses, oak or ivy. In contrast to these crowns that of the victor in the Christian ministry is one that never fades. His readers would find the contrast significant.

The Apostle began his Epistle with a description of the fadeless inheritance in heaven; it draws to a close with a fadeless crown. How good and gracious is our God and Savior! How merciful that He should give to His unworthy servants such fadeless crowns of glory!

Be Clothed with Humility. (5:5.) This expression cannot be paralleled in classical Greek before Peter's time. This word in the Greek is a very unusual one, occurring only here and nowhere else. It is derived from the Greek word which means a band, girth, belt, a knot or roll of cloth, made in tucking up any part of the dress. The kindred word from which the verb is directly formed means a slave's apron, under which the loose garments were girded up. It is borrowed from the piece of dress worn by servants when they were doing menial service, a kind of apron fastened by strings, a piece of dress which at once intimated their station as servants and fitted them for the performance of their servant duties. Hence the figure carries an exhortation to put on humility as a working virtue employed in ministering and service. The Apostle calls on Christians to tie on humility, to fasten it on securely. Bengel comments: "Put on and wrap yourselves about with humility, so that the covering of humility cannot possibly be stripped from you."

Where did Peter get the suggestion of this interesting word picture? Evidently he vividly remembered the scene of foot washing in the Upper Room. It was the Lord's last sermon on humility. John records it for us in the fourth Gospel. (John 13:4-6.) Could Peter ever forget any detail of that scene? Here in this Epistle he thinks again of that towel, or apron, where-

with the Master had girded Himself and he exhorts his readers to gird themselves with humility, even as Jesus had girded Himself with that towel to serve His disciples. The girding with the towel or apron was to confine the loosely flowing Oriental robe so that it would not be in the way of serving others. Peter here in his old age thinks that humility might be such a girdle, put on for wear and work, always in readiness for service. It is a striking figure of speech and it is made doubly impressive the moment we connect it with the scene in the Upper Room, as doubtless Peter did in his thought.

How strongly the Apostle Peter pleaded that we should be humble! It is a lesson needed for our life and work today. It seems to be so easy to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. Dear Christian friend, any gift that we possess is from above. We are nothing in ourselves. God give us all humility that we may ever recognize our dependence on Him! When we are proud we trust in ourselves, as beloved Peter once did. God resists the proud. He gives grace to the humble. We are to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, the same mighty hand which wrought our creation, our salvation, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and which keeps us day by day. In due time He will exalt those who are truly humble. For we shall be glorified with the Savior, who humbled Himself and made Himself of no reputation and who has been exalted by the Father and has been given a Name above every name. Is not that worth waiting for? Therefore, let us bind about us humility, let us fasten it tight around us that it may never fall away, so that we labor in willing service for others, unhampered by that which might weight us down and break our walk as pilgrims to the heavenly city.

Casting All Your Care Upon Him, for He Careth for You. (5:7.) The aorist participle in the Greek denotes an act once for all. We are to cast our cares and anxieties on Him and then leave them there. The language is pictorial. These harassing cares and anxieties are represented as a burden, which is felt to be oppressively heavy, and the sinking sufferer is represented as transferring them to God in order to obtain relief from their painful pressure. To cast or throw seems to intimate that the duty enjoined here is one that requires effort, and experience tells us that it is no easy matter to heed the Lord's urgent invitation and throw off these burdens of care and anxiety.

Peter urges us to leave all these matters which we cannot manage to God's management. God means all He says here through the mouth of His Apostle. He can and will do all He promises. The words recall the *verba Christi* in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 5:25-32.) Peter had remembered these words of the Master well. How much the promise had meant to him during all the intervening years! And what a comfort for these persecuted Christians of Peter's day! What a blessed assurance they have been for those bowed down beneath a load of grief and suffering and sorrow! Nothing can cross our pilgrim path, nothing can touch us, nothing can harm us on the pilgrim way without His knowledge and will. Think of it! He, the almighty Father in heaven, cares for us!

Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish,
Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel;
Here bring your wounded hearts,
Here tell your anguish;
Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.

Be Sober, Be Vigilant; Because Your Adversary, the Devil, as a Roaring Lion Walketh About, Seeking Whom He May Devour. (5:8.) Again the Apostle calls upon the pilgrims to be watching and vigilant. There is danger lurking along the pilgrim way, for there is an adversary, the devil, who walks about as a roaring lion, seeking to devour the pilgrims. Peter tells us that he is our adversary. The word adversary is the same as that used in Matt. 5:25 and carries with it the sense of an accuser in a trial before a judge. He is the devil. Literally, the Greek word for devil means one who lies in hiding and ambush and shoots his arrows through at us. This mighty enemy walks about as a roaring lion, looking for his prey, ready to pounce and devour. The Greek word for "devour," literally gulp down, or swallow, implies the thought of total destruction.

Fierce and deadly and clever as this enemy of the pilgrim is, Christ is our Champion. The devil we can resist, counting not upon our own strength but upon the Lord, who is our Strength.

Peter knew this from his own bitter experience when the devil had sought to devour him. He knew how urgent and necessary it was to be sober and watch and resist him steadfast in the faith. Peter had gone to sleep in the Garden, Peter had fallen away in the time of crisis and had denied his Lord.

But Peter had repented and had been forgiven. He knew that in God's strength the devil could be resisted. We appreciate this earnest warning to be sober and vigilant all the more when we remember from whom this warning comes and out of what solemn hours of his life this admonition sprung.

It is probable, wide and general as is this earnest warning against the devil and his wiles, that the special form of attack of which the Apostle thought was that of the persecution then raging, and of which, though human agents were prominent in it, Satan was regarded as the real instigator. This is evident from the words which follow: *Whom resist steadfast in the faith knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.* Far and near there were comrades fighting the same battle against the old evil foe. It was at once their duty and their privilege to follow all examples of steadfastness of which they heard elsewhere and to set that example, so that others, cheered by it, might be strengthened to endure even to the end.

This Is the True Grace of God Wherein Ye Stand. (5:12.) Here is Peter's final word. After the doxology in verse 11 and several personal notes regarding his co-workers, the Epistle comes to a close. Before closing his message he commends them in the trial of their faith to the *grace of God* which for thirty years he had found sufficient to save and to keep and to preserve unto the end. The grace of God which they had so richly experienced in their conversion and in the blessedness and progress of their Christian life was no delusion, as they perhaps were tempted to suppose by their present troubles, but the genuine grace of God.

Nothing less than this grace of God, this lifting, strengthening, keeping power and love of God is sufficient to enable us to stand and remain steadfast today, for we have the same adversary and similar trials and afflictions.

And so the real purpose of Peter has now been reached, namely, to enlighten, comfort, strengthen the believers in time of stress and trial. Even today, after almost twenty centuries, through this Epistle the Apostle Peter still strengthens his brethren as the Lord charged him to do. "When thou art converted," our Lord said to him, "strengthen thy brethren." We have seen that it is indeed a very strengthening message for the pilgrims of our day. It is not for nothing that this Epistle

is one of the most quoted books of the Bible. It has a message for us today. Shall we heed it and follow it?

We, too, are sojourners and pilgrims. We are not at home in this world. We are away from our real home as long as we are in the flesh. We have a home, not built with hands, eternal in the heavens, and any house in which we may live is only a tourist home, a place of lodging for a brief time. Many years ago St. John asked our Savior, "Lord, where dwellest Thou?" Our Lord answered, "Come and see." One day, if only we continue on our heavenly pilgrimage, we shall ask, and He will answer that question for the last time. A little while, a few thorns by the road that may tear and wound us, and we, too, shall see the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, His home and our home. There will be nothing that can hurt or wound us any more, no sin nor tears nor pain nor trials and persecution, nothing that will keep us from being with Him forever. . . . By the living hope which dwells in his heart, the pilgrim walks onward and upward — quietly, because he knows that he is kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation — surely, because he has committed the keeping of his soul to Him as unto a faithful Creator.

With your indulgence, may we close with a word quoted earlier, the word from Bradford's account of the departure of the early settlers of Plymouth, Massachusetts. "So they left that goodly and pleasant citie, which had been their resting-place for near 12 years; but they knew they were pilgrims and looked not much on those things, but lifted up their eyes to ye heavens, their dearest cuntrye, and quieted their spirits." May we learn to lift up our eyes to ye heavens, our dearest cuntrye, and quiet our spirits! This is the message of the First Epistle of Peter to the pilgrim of our day.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Contributors to This Issue

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