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## The Blessing of the Work of Christ.

(Translated from Dr. Ed. Preuss's *Die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung*, Part I, chap. 2.)

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When the Scriptures say that Christ redeemed us, it means the freeing from sin and all its consequences, but chiefly the freeing from *guilt*. Heb. 9, 14; Eph. 1, 7; Col. 1, 14; Rom. 3, 24. This redemption is described as a *purchase*. Rev. 5, 9 the four and twenty elders sing: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." The purchase-money is "not corruptible silver or gold, but the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Pet. 1, 18, 19; in fact, His entire obedience, 1 Tim. 2, 6. This ransom was paid to God, not to the devil. Eph. 5, 2; Heb. 9, 14.

At the same time Christ appeased the wrath of God. St. Paul says that God set Him forth to be a propitiation in His blood. Rom. 3, 25. "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2, 2. The Greek verb which is the root of "propitiation" and "reconciliation" means "to appease wrath," "to dispose to grace or favor." The heathen used it of their gods; the Seventy [Septuagint], of God. Ps. 78, 38. It is peculiar that the Holy Scriptures in this connection do not make God the object of the verb (*ἱλάσκομαι*), but rather sin, respecting which the wrath of God is appeased. Thus it is said of Christ, Heb. 2, 17, that He became a faithful High Priest before God "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people"; according to the original Greek, "to propitiate" (*i. e.*, to expiate) "the sins of the people." Col. 1, 20 says the same, although in other words: "He made peace through the blood of His cross, by Himself." In the first place, He made peace on the one hand, by making satisfaction to the wrath of the Father. In this manner the love of the Son had to force its way by means of His blood through the anger of the divine majesty. But we are saved from wrath. Rom. 5, 8, 9.

## Studies in First Peter.

### I. Did the Apostle Peter Write This Epistle?

Students of the modern critical literature on First Peter will soon notice that the chief isagogical question with which the critics occupy themselves is that of the *authorship* of this book. It overshadows even the famous problem as to the meaning of Babylon in 1 Pet. 5, 13. Negative critics either reject the Petrine authorship outright or declare it doubtful, some regarding the epistle as the product of somebody who hid behind the name of the great apostle (pseudepigraphic theory), while others think that it originally was an anonymous composition and later on was provided with the introductory sentence claiming Petrine authorship for it and with the respective personal remarks in the conclusion which presuppose that St. Peter is the writer. To mention a few American scholars, Professor Bacon, of Yale, inclines to the view that First Peter "*may* [*italics ours. A.*] represent to us the adoptive work of Peter, writing 'by Silvanus.'" (*New Testament Introduction*, p. 157.) Similar are the words of Professor Fowler, of Brown University. (*History and Literature of the New Testament*, p. 266.) Prof. E. F. Scott, of Union Seminary, says: "That Peter himself wrote the book is more than doubtful." (*First Age of Christianity*, p. 170.) Nobody who believes in the inspiration of the Scriptures and holds that First Peter is an integral part of the Canon can entertain such views, the statement of the book itself as to its Petrine origin being so unambiguous and direct. "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ"; in these words, put according to the custom of the ancients at the beginning of the letter, the writer discloses his identity (1, 1). An examination of all critical and introductory material that has accumulated through the centuries will be seen not to contradict this testimony of the letter itself, but rather serve to strengthen our faith in the divine character of the New Testament.

If we scan the epistle itself for further proof of St. Peter's authorship, we shall not be disappointed. The writer speaks of himself as a witness of the sufferings of Christ (5, 1), which points unmistakably to his belonging to the circle of the apostles. The words 2, 23 ("who, when He was reviled, reviled not again," etc.) show that the writer had intimate knowledge of the attitude of Jesus toward His enemies when He was in their power. The mention of Mark as the son of Peter (5, 13) is in keeping with what we know of early church history, since Acts 12, 12ff. indicates that

there was a bond of close fellowship between St. Peter and the family to which Mark belonged. The general contents of the letter offer striking confirmation of the Petrine authorship. Several speeches of Peter are reported to us in the Book of Acts, and it will be seen that what is stressed there, the ill treatment of Christ, His death and resurrection, the salvation He achieved, are points which are prominent in this epistle. Farrar remarks that even as to style this epistle of the apostle and his recorded speeches resemble each other in many particulars; and he adds: "The letter is characterized by the fire and energy which we should expect to find in his forms of expression; but that energy is tempered by the tone of apostolic dignity and by the fatherly mildness of one who was now aged and was near the close of a life of labor." (*Early Days of Christianity*, p. 81.) It is worthy of note that the letter does not mention personal acquaintances among the readers, which again harmonizes with such information as we possess on Peter's activities; for there is no evidence that he ever visited the provinces named 1, 2 and became personally acquainted with the Christians of Asia Minor. Neither should it be overlooked that the silence of the apostle with respect to the Ceremonial Law of the Jews and the utter absence of prejudice against Gentile Christians and those who had evangelized them, fully agrees with the generous support of the work among the Gentiles, which is so conspicuous a characteristic of Peter's conduct as depicted in Acts.

Turning now to the external evidence for the authenticity of the letter, we find that it could not be of an earlier date and hardly any stronger than is actually the case. The most ancient and the strongest witness is Second Peter, which in 3, 1 ("This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you") unmistakably testifies to the Petrine authorship of our letter. Of the apostolic fathers, Papias, Polycarp, and, quite probably, Clement of Rome used this epistle. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Cyprian make express mention of it. That the *Canon Muratori* does not contain its name may be due to the fragmentary state in which we possess this document, it having been quite plausibly conjectured that the lost beginning of the catalog referred to it as well as to several other New Testament books not mentioned in the present form of the document. Origen and Eusebius placed the letter among the universally accepted books, the so-called homologumena. The testimony of the early Church regarding the authenticity of our letter is so overwhelming that even Renan was constrained to write: "The first epistle [of Peter] is one of the

writings of the New Testament which are the most anciently and the most unanimously cited as authentic." (Quoted by Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 80.)

Why, then, in the face of so much clear, decisive evidence, that hesitancy or absolute unwillingness of so many critics to accept First Peter as genuine? Their considerations are, of course, of a rationalistic nature. It is worth while to note that the last hundred years, so rich in discoveries and new hypotheses, did not produce new arguments against the Petrine origin of our letter. What De Wette, who was in doubt as to its author, pointed to a century ago is still urged, and hardly anything besides. What he regarded as difficulties were the kind of persecution which seems to be presupposed in the letter, the apparent dependence of the letter on other New Testament books, and its indefiniteness as to the circle of readers addressed ("*Der Brief hat eine zu unbestimmte Beziehung, als dass man glauben sollte, Petrus haette dafuer die Feder ergriffen*"). The last point, I find, has largely been abandoned by modern criticism, its untenable nature being too patent. In place of it the language and style are stressed as being un-Petrine.

That the letter speaks of persecutions, trials, and sufferings is, of course, undeniable. Some say the statements of the epistle on this subject make it necessary to assume that it was written at the time of the bloody Neronian persecution. But in that persecution Peter was martyred; how could he at the same time write a letter comforting the Christians suffering the persecution? That is their difficulty. Others maintain that the nature of the persecution alluded to in the letter is such as to make it imperative to place its composition in the reign of Trajan, which, of course, means that St. Peter did not write it. Even the defenders of the authenticity of the letter are not agreed as to the kind of persecution contemplated here. Zahn looks upon it as being devoid of an official character, while Ramsay and others hold that "the figure of the Roman magistrate cannot be removed from 1 Pet. 4." I believe that Zahn's view, who places the date of the letter before 64 A. D., the year when the Neronian persecution broke upon the church in Rome, is right. The government is not pictured as the enemy of the Christians. The sufferings enumerated are of a general nature, such as came, for example, upon St. Paul and his associates during his missionary journeys related in Acts, sufferings due not to a hostile policy of the central government at Rome, but to the enmity which the Gospel encountered so universally. The terms

used bear this out — “speaking evil,” “reproach,” “railing,” etc. It is true that the apostle speaks of a “fiery trial.” But that does not necessarily imply a persecution at the hands of the government. It may well describe the lot of the Christians, who in those days were termed a sect which was “everywhere spoken against,” Acts 28, 22. The expression “to suffer as a Christian,” 4, 16, is by some regarded as indicative of systematic persecution by the imperial authorities. But is it? We can well imagine that A. D. 62 to 64 there were many communities in Asia Minor and elsewhere in which an open profession of faith in Jesus Christ made a person a marked man, just as in many cities of China to-day British citizenship will give one both an unenviable and a dangerous prominence, frequently entailing abuse and cruel treatment. Besides, we must not overlook that the Neronian persecution, as the records seem to indicate, was confined to Rome and that it was not, in the first place, caused by religious prejudice, but by the desire of Nero to find a scapegoat on which might be placed the responsibility for the conflagration that had so largely destroyed the imperial city. There is no early witness to the effect that this persecution extended to the provinces. Hence the assumption that the epistle was written between 64 and 67, after the storm had begun to sweep over the church in Rome, would not be of much avail in explaining the persecutions which, according to our letter, took place, or were to be expected, in the various parts of Asia Minor. But as pointed out above, no such hypothesis is needed, since the status of the Christians is not described in a way to imply that their religion had become a forbidden one in the Roman Empire. That Peter should have written this letter, say, about 62 or 63, is not unlikely. My view of the situation is this: Paul’s imprisonment in Rome, lasting two years (Acts 28, 30), had ended with his liberation; he had left the city and gone to Spain. Peter had come to Rome, and a journey which Silas (Silvanus) contemplated making through the chief provinces of Asia Minor gave him an opportunity to address an encouraging letter to the Christians living in those regions. This hypothesis seems to me not to contradict any of the few hints which have been preserved to us as to the later activities of the two great apostles.

When urging that First Peter is dependent on other New Testament books, the critics say that an apostle like Peter would not have stooped to use the material of some other writer, and that, besides, such dependence makes it necessary to regard our epistle as a late book, originating at a time when St. Peter had

been dead a number of years. The whole argument rests more or less on a *petitio principii*, on an unproved assumption, namely, the theory that in First Peter we find embodied material taken from New Testament books of an earlier date, the books in question being chiefly the Pauline epistles. Even conservative scholars have fallen a prey to this view. For example, Maurice Jones, a defender of the authenticity of our letter, says: "The influence of the Pauline writings upon our epistle is unmistakable and is universally acknowledged. The connection is most intimate in the case of the Epistle to the Romans, and here the resemblance is so marked and so continuous that it cannot possibly be accidental. The same thoughts, the same rare words, appear in both epistles, and in one passage (Rom. 13, 1—7 = 1 Pet. 2, 13—17) the same ideas occur in exactly the same order. There is also a close affinity between our epistle and Ephesians, but this is manifested not so much in the region of language, but rather in identities of thought and in the very remarkable similarity of structure." (*The New Testament in the Twentieth Century*, p. 335.) Dr. Jones's explanation is that Peter, during his stay in Rome, made a close study of Romans and Ephesians and, when writing an epistle of his own, "would not disdain to employ the thoughts and conceptions of his fellow-apostle with which he was now so familiar." But all this assumes that Peter could not have uttered the same thoughts and used the same phrases as Paul without study of the Pauline letters — an assumption which is far from justified. In the eyes of these critics similarity seems to presuppose and imply genetic relationship. If one apostle speaks and writes like the other, it must be due to this, that one borrowed from the other. That both belonged to the circle of early believers in Jesus Christ; that the same Holy Spirit lived in them and actuated them in their activities; that there were conferences between them in which their message was discussed; that by and by a number of phrases were coined which got to be the common property of the Christians; that, the needs of the readers of the apostolic letters being similar, the exhortations, etc., had to be similar; that our epistle possesses strongly marked individual traits and contains several thoughts that are peculiar to it, — all this is largely overlooked. McNeile (*New Testament Teaching in the Light of St. Paul's*, p. 137) says very well: "It is important to remember that an agreement with St. Paul does not necessarily imply a borrowing from him. In describing his own movements, St. Paul says that when he went to Jerusalem, he put before 'them of repute' the Gospel which

he preached among the Gentiles, and they 'added nothing' to him. Gal. 2, 1 f. 6. All that was essential in his evangelistic preaching and theirs was practically the same. The background of all the apostolic doctrine and literature was the Old Testament with its age-long traditions of a sacred people, chosen of old by God, and its expectations of an ideal age to come; then the primary facts of Christ's death, resurrection, exaltation, and the gift of His Spirit to the members of the Christian fellowship; and finally the expectation of the near approach of the end. It is not surprising that there was much on which the two apostles expressed themselves similarly." When McNeile, in his next sentence, grants, after all, that Peter was indebted to Romans and Ephesians, he is, in my opinion, making an admission which is entirely gratuitous.

There remains the objection based on the style and language of the epistle. Peter, the Galilean fisherman, it is argued, could not have written such good and often beautiful Greek as is found in this letter. How do we know? is my reply. To what extent Peter was linguistically and esthetically gifted can be gathered only from the New Testament. Why not accept its indirect testimony, found in the speeches and letters of Peter? If, in the absence of further information, one wishes to rely on general principles and says that a man so poor and so far down in the social scale could not have possessed the degree of culture which is exhibited in this letter, one simply contradicts human experience, which tells us that some of our most highly prized literary productions have come from men who belonged to the lower strata of society, for instance, the prophecies of Amos, to mention an inspired writing, and *Pilgrim's Progress*. A friend reminded me of the striking case of Abraham Lincoln. It is a serious error, disproved abundantly by modern research, to think that no Greek was spoken in Galilee in the first century A. D., or that none but a few literati could read or write in those days. Opposing such a view, Maurice Jones says (*op. cit.*, p. 337): "The knowledge that we have acquired by means of the recently discovered papyri shows that it is by no means inconceivable that a native of Galilee should possess a good working knowledge of the Greek language, and more than this the epistle does not imply." Besides, we must not forget that Peter, like his fellow-apostles, was filled with the Holy Spirit and had been endowed with special and extraordinary gifts. It will probably be objected that, according to a very early and exceedingly trustworthy tradition (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, III, 39), Peter made use of Mark as interpreter, which would

seem to imply that he was not able to preach in any language except his native Aramaic. But this inference is far too broad since the term "interpreter" need not signify any more than this, that Mark committed to writing the Gospel-message preached by Peter, just as Xenophon and Plato might be called the interpreters of Socrates.

It will be seen, then, that the objections urged against the Petrine authorship of our book need not perturb us because they rest on hypotheses which can well be shown to be far-fetched or untenable. In spite of its efforts, negative criticism cannot remove from the list of apostolic works this letter, concerning which McNeile says (*op. cit.*, p. 138): "The utter sincerity and simple beauty of his [Peter's] writing make it of unique value and attractiveness. To compare First Peter with the Pauline epistles is like comparing Schubert with Beethoven."

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