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## THE LUTHER QUADRI-CENTENNIAL.

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For many years the Christian people of Continental Europe of the two communions, Lutheran and Reformed, with a view to preserving the heritage bequeathed to them by the Reformers of the sixteenth century, have observed one Sabbath in the year as Reformation Day. In 1904, at Liverpool, the General Council of the Alliance of Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System unanimously recommended to the churches of the Alliance—not only those in Europe but all the churches throughout the world—the observance of one Sabbath in the year “as a day of special thanksgiving for the blessings resulting to so many churches and countries from that great religious revival which we call the Reformation of the sixteenth century.” In 1910 the General Assembly of our own Church, expressing the belief that such commemorative exercises are fitted to render most important service in our own land at the present time, made provision for a similar annual observance by our pastors and people.

Few events in the history of the world are more worthy of such commemoration. For the Reformation was not only “a great insurrection of human intelligence,” as Guizot has called it—a mighty intellectual Renaissance; and it not only produced a tremendous political upheaval which inaugurated a new era of civil liberty; but it was a heroic vindication of freedom of

## GROWTH IN GRACE.

### *A Book Study of Second Peter.*

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#### 1. *Author.*

This epistle claims to have been written by "Symeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1). The writer declares that this is the second epistle from his hand. "This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you" (3:1). The first epistle that he wrote is our First Peter. The author says that he had been a companion of Christ. He speaks of "putting off of this my tabernacle . . . even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me" (1:13-14). This is a clear reference to Christ's prediction of Peter's death (John 13:36; 21:18-19). He claims to have been a witness of the Transfiguration, and to have heard God's voice when He spoke, "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him" (1:16-18). He was one of the apostles (3:2), and a friend of Paul's (3:15). Many expressions show points of likeness to Peter's speeches in Acts, and the general character of the letter is in accord with the character of Simon Peter. It resembles 1 Peter to which it alludes (3:1).

The internal evidence in favor of the Petrine authorship as outlined above is supported by the fact that Origen (230 A. D.) speaks of "two epistles of Peter," and quotes 2 Peter 1:4, and gives it the authority of Scripture. But he admits that some reject 2 Peter. Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea (300 A. D.) placed it among the disputed books. Jerome included it in his Vulgate Version. The Church Councils of Laodicea (372 A. D.) and

of Carthage (397 A. D.) placed it in the New Testament canon as of equal authority with the other New Testament books.

### 2. *Date and Place of Writing.*

1:14 seems to imply that Peter was on the verge of martyrdom. Hence, we may suppose that the epistle was written from Rome some time 63-64 A. D., as the apostle was probably put to death in 64 A. D. Certainly it was written after 1 Peter, and probably before Jude, as Jude appears to quote from 2 Peter and not 2 Peter from Jude.

### 3. *Readers and Occasion of Writing.*

The epistle is addressed "to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us" (1:1). The readers are further described as "those who have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (1:4). These expressions make it probable that the readers were mostly Gentile, rather than Jewish converts. Some of the apostles had been among their teachers (3:2), and 1:12 seems to imply that they were not recent converts. So far, we have found nothing definite as to the locality of the readers. However, the statement in 3:1, "this is the second epistle that I write unto you," shows that the same readers are in view to whom 1 Peter had been sent; that is, the Jewish and Gentile believers of the Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia of Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1). These believers were in great spiritual peril by reason of the presence of cunning and crafty false teachers among them. These false teachers are described in three passages—2:1-22, 3:3-7, 3:16. Note the following points about them: they repudiate the rule of Christ over them (2:1); they are immoral in their personal lives and are contaminating others (2:2, 10, 18); they rebel against properly constituted church authority (2:10); their motives are selfish and base, as they are influenced by greed of gain (2:3, 12, 14); they are unprincipled and crafty (2:3, 14, 19); their teaching is empty rhetoric

(2:18); they ridicule the idea of Christ's Second Coming (3:1); they pervert the Old Testament Scriptures (3:16); they are desperately wicked men and are compared to the worst sinners of the Old Testament (2:5, 6, 15). Thus they resemble the Nicolaitans and Balaamites of the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira (Rev. 2:12-29). The epistle was occasioned by this great danger to which the readers were exposed.

#### 4. *Purpose of the Epistle.*

The purpose is declared in 3:1, 17, 18 to be to stir up the minds of its readers to remember what had been taught them, in order that they might be saved from the dangers now threatening them and might grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The aim is two-fold. First, negatively, to rescue them from perils more dangerous and more to be feared than persecution by a hostile world. Second, to build them up in purity and holiness of life. In presenting this "call to a holy life," Peter reminds his readers that the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ is granted only to the pure in heart; that Jesus Christ is a present power for a godly life; that these false teachers and all who follow them will surely be overtaken by a fearful doom; that Christ delays his second coming in order that sinners may have a chance to repent; and that at the appointed time he will come to reward the godly and destroy the impenitent.

#### 5. *Theme and Structure.*

The leading thought of 1 Peter is the grace of God; of 2 Peter, growth in grace, or progress in divine knowledge. The word "knowledge" occurs many times, and it is the strong Greek word that is used, meaning full, accurate, advanced knowledge. This knowledge makes possible our growth in grace and holiness. And growth in grace is the Christian's best security against moral peril. The theme of 2 Peter is, The growing Christian is the safe Christian. "Grace to you . . . be multi-

plied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord" (1:2). "His divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that called us" (1:3). "In your virtue supply knowledge, and in your knowledge self-control" (1:5-6). "These things make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:8). Finally, in the last two verses Peter brings out clearly the great theme of his epistle—that growth in grace is the Christian's best security against spiritual perils—when he says: "Ye, therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware, lest, being carried away by the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (3:17-18).

The structure of 2 Peter is precisely that of 1 Peter. In 1 Peter 1:13, "Wherefore" is the link that binds the two main parts of the epistle together. Likewise, in 2 Peter 1:12, "Wherefore" binds the two main divisions of 2 Peter together. Hence, in 2 Peter we have two outstanding things: (1) Exhortation to growth in grace (1:1-11); and (2) Reasons for this exhortation (1:12-3:18).

#### 6. *Analysis and Exposition.*

##### *Salutation 1:1-2.*

1. The writer is "Symeon Peter," who has been put into service and apostleship by Jesus Christ (1:1).

2. The readers are those who, by their faith, have been placed in the same position of spiritual privilege and blessing as that of the apostle himself through the impartial justice of our God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (1:1).

3. The greeting is an earnest prayer for his readers' continual progress in the Christian life by means of "the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord" (1:2). "Multiplied" is

found again in 1 Peter 1:2 and in Jude 2, but Paul never uses it.

I. *Exhortation to Growth in Grace, 1:3-11.*

At this point we enter upon the first main division of the epistle. Peter exhorts his readers to build themselves up into the beautiful temple of a God-like and Christ-like character. The best analysis of this section we have ever seen is that of Dr. John A. Broadus, which we will follow in part.

1. We have, first, three reasons why we should make growth in grace, or character-building, the supreme purpose of our lives. 1:3-4.

a. God's power has given us every thing we need for the task. "His divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (1:3). No one, therefore, can complain of his inability to accomplish this task, for God has supplied every needful thing.

b. God has given His precious and exceeding great promises for our encouragement (1:4). They are "precious," because they promise us exactly what we need. They are "great," because they promise us great things. We have, then, a right to ask great things of God, and He has a right to ask us to attempt great things for Him. Some one has counted sixty thousand separate and distinct promises in the Bible. However many and wonderful they are, God has put them there to encourage us to grow in grace.

c. God holds up before us a lofty destiny. "Ye may become partakers of the divine nature" (1:4). Keep on growing in grace, keep on building up your Christian character, and one day you will build up into the likeness of Christ. (See Rom. 8:28-29; 1 John 3:1-3; Eph. 4:13.)

2. We have, secondly, the process of growth in grace (1:5-7).

The apostle compares the development of the Christian character to the erection of some glorious temple. Notice that he puts faith at the foundation of the building. "Faith is the first

thing in the world," says Dr. A. T. Pierson. Augustine said: "Faith is the root and mother of all our virtues." And Paul says: "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Then, observe that love is the capstone of the building. "Love is the greatest thing in the world," says Henry Drummond. Mr. O. S. Marden says: "Character-building is the grandest thing in the world."

3. We have, thirdly, three blessed fruits of growing in grace (1:8-11).

The Christian who makes the development of a Christ-like character the supreme aim of his life will:

a. Never be idle or unfruitful. "For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful" (1:8).

b. Never stumble, but will make his calling and election sure. That is, sure to his own mind. As he grows in grace, the assurance that he is one of God's very own will become more and more firm and unshaken.

c. Receive an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (1:11).

II. *Reasons for exhorting his readers thus to grow in grace* (1:12-3:18).

1. This is his last message to them (1:12-15).

2. Because of the reality and power of the truth which he proclaims unto them (1:16-21).

This truth is attested by the Transfiguration of Christ (1:16-18), and by the inspired word of God (1:19-21).

3. Because growing in grace is the only safeguard against the peril to which they are exposed (2:1-3:18).

a. Peril of false teachers, who are corrupt in doctrine and in life (2:1-22).

b. Peril of mockers, who make the delay of Christ's second coming an occasion for sin (3:1-18).

Peter has summed up for us in his closing verse the whole message of his second epistle: "Grow in the grace and knowl-

edge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (3:18). The building of a Christ-like character is the Christian's best security.

"We are building every day,  
In a good or evil way;  
And the structure as it grows,  
Will our inmost self disclose;

Till in every arch and line  
All our faults and failings shine.  
It may grow a castle grand,  
Or a wreck upon the sand.

Build it well, whate'er you do,  
Build it straight, and strong, and true;  
Build it clean, and high, and broad:  
Build it for the eye of God."