

'He deviseth means.' This was the Wise Woman's greatest word. What did she understand by it? She understood that God devises means to bring men back before they are ready to come. She knew no better than that.

And David knew no better than that. Her words touched the king. He gave the order, 'Go therefore, bring the young man Absalom back.' He did not want to consider if Absalom was ready to return. He did not consider what means God devises to make His banished ready.

What means does God devise? What means should David himself have devised to make Absalom ready to come back? He should have left his throne and gone out to Absalom in his

banishment. We know no other means. God Himself seems to know no other.

Though he was rich, yet if David the king, for Absalom's sake, had become poor, going out to Geshur and sharing his banishment, he might have won the heart of Absalom. Then would the banishment of Absalom have come to an end. No doubt it would have been death to the king, for banishment is death—a desperate remedy. But the case was desperate, and we know no other remedy for it. 'Who, though He was rich'—rich in the fellowship of the Father, there is no other riches but that,—'yet for our sakes became poor,' crying, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' He was wounded for our transgressions. He was banished even unto death.

Peter 'the Venerable' of Cluny.

A SKETCH FROM MEDIEVAL CHURCH HISTORY.

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THE title of 'the Venerable' is given to Peter of Cluny by Friedrich Barbarossa of Hohenstaufen. And unquestionably the abbot of Cluny is a pure and noble type of the monastic piety of the Middle Ages. The congregation at Cluny had already left behind it the culminating point of its greatness when Peter was put at the head of the widely ramifying spiritual community, but he succeeded in still bringing about a renaissance of the decaying order. The star of the Cistercians had already risen in full splendour in the heaven of religious orders, and to it belonged the immediate future, until it faded in its turn before the order founded by the most remarkable saint of the Middle Ages—St. Francis.

Peter, like all his predecessors in the office of abbot, was of very noble birth. The Cluny order of monks is still quite an aristocratic institution. The family to which Peter belonged, probably that of the lords of Montboissier, was settled in the Auvergnés. The year of his birth is not certain, but it was either 1092 or 1094. He grew up in a home of exemplary piety, four of his six brothers

choosing an ecclesiastical career, and only two clinging to secular pursuits. His mother, Raingarde, trained her children to strict reverence for the Church. When that fiery preacher of penance, Robert of Arbrissel, uttered his call to repentance, Raingarde, too, vowed that, after the death of her husband, she would become a nun. In the Cluny priory of Marçigny she carried out this resolution, and there she died in 1134. In a letter full of grateful filial love, Peter communicates to his brothers the death of the best of mothers: her body was devoted to work, her heart to penitence.

In the Cluny monastery of Souçilanges-Clermont Peter grew up, and as a Latin stylist developed a skill which put him almost on a level with Bernard of Clairvaux. His marked ability led the Abbot Hugo 1. to appoint him prior of Vezelay, and afterwards of Domne. Then came the dark days, when Abbot Pontius held sway at Cluny, and completely deranged the finances of the monastery by his boundless luxury and excessive display. When his dissolute administration became intolerable,

Pontius was constrained to resign. Compelled sorely against his will to take this step, he vowed a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. Hugo II. was chosen to succeed him, but died after holding office for only three months. Hugo was succeeded, on 27th August 1122, by Peter, who was only thirty years of age, but who was recommended for the office, not only by his noble descent, but by the remarkable qualities of character he displayed, energy being coupled with mildness. Peter in the first place re-established order in Cluny, and made a sincere effort also to set the monastery once more on a sound financial basis. If he did not completely succeed in this last matter, the reason was that the Cluny system of management was an antiquated one, being based, like that of the great seignories of the earlier Middle Ages, upon a system of drawing interest and rents; whereas the Cistercians, accommodating themselves to the social transformation that had taken place, kept the management of their property in their own hands. The usages at Cluny, which had been long handed down by oral tradition, and were only codified for the first time under Abbot Hugo I., were subjected by Peter to a thorough revision. The criticism directed by Bernard of Clairvaux against the luxury of Cluny, led at least to the removal of the worst abuses. Everything was going well, when Pontius suddenly returned to Cluny, and made himself master of the monastery while Peter was absent on a visitation journey in Spain. Pontius commenced a reign of terror, and introduced in the monastery a shameless household system of mistresses. Then Pope Honorius II. interposed, and summoned Pontius and Peter to Rome. Pontius was declared to have forfeited the office of abbot, and died of fever at Rome in 1126. Although he had died unreconciled with the Church, to the credit of the monastery he was buried at Cluny with full honours. Peter, too, had been attacked by fever, but, by the blessing of God, and thanks to the medical treatment of skilled clerical hands, returned to Cluny cured. Here he had to reply to Bernard of Clairvaux, who had once more reproached the Cluny establishment with its deviations from the rule of St. Benedict. Bernard, unquestionably more original than Peter, and his intellectual superior, but also the more passionate and unfair of the two, received an extraordinarily adroit answer. Peter defended the milder usage of Cluny, and the right to change

the rule of St. Benedict if this was done only out of love. With a firmness free from any approach to rudeness, with a suavity which avoids going into details, with a matchless breadth of view, he combated the pedantic interpretation of the rule, and with skilful casuistry cloaked the real deviations from it as brought about by considerations of fitness. Christ, he declares, knows His sheep, not by their fleece, but by their love and faith; so that it is a matter of indifference whether one wears a black or a white cowl. Peter succeeded in smoothing the asperities between the people of Cluny and the Cistercians, and a bond of sincere friendship grew up between him and the great Cistercian abbot. Acting hand in hand with Bernard, he was able to compose the schism that threatened the Church. In the year 1130 Innocent II. was selected as pope by the minority of cardinals, Anaclete II. (sprung from a family of wealthy Jewish money-lenders) by the majority. Although Anaclete was an ex-monk of Cluny, Peter took the side of Innocent, and banned the representative of his own order. Thanks to the support of the two powerful abbots, Peter and Bernard, Innocent speedily obtained recognition by the French king Louis VI., the English king Henry I., and the German king Lothair.

Like Bernard, Peter, too, combated the enemies of the Church. As he did not possess the gift of overpowering eloquence as a popular preacher, he felt the proper course to be to fight with literary weapons. Thus he set himself to controvert the Petrobusians, who, along with a disposition to give to Christianity an inward direction, rejected infant baptism and the 'abomination' of the mass, burned crosses, and pulled down churches because God could be invoked equally well in the stable or the taproom as at the altar. He argued against them from the Bible only, as they rejected the authority of the Church Fathers and of tradition. The transformation of bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ in the Lord's Supper he tried to make intelligible by biblical analogies like the miracle at Cana, or natural processes like the conversion of water into ice.

Far sharper than his conflict with the Petrobusians was Peter's opposition to the Jews. The latter appear to him worse than the Saracens, who reject only the divinity and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, whereas the Jews do not believe in Christ at all. He laments that the Jews may not

be exterminated with the sword, seeing that, according to the promise, they are to be converted in the last days. He makes the draconic demand that, while the lives of the Jews are to be spared, their usurious money be taken from them. He declares that they earn nothing by ordinary agricultural labour or regular military service or by any honourable and useful calling, but fill their chests with gold by purchasing from thieves the articles of value they have stolen from the churches. Peter takes great pains to prove to the Jews from the Scriptures, allegorically interpreted, that the Messiah is the Son of God, nay, that He is God, and no earthly king; and that He came in the person of Jesus, and is not to be looked for in the future.

A fresh discord threatened to arise between Peter and Bernard, when Abelard knocked at the monastery gate of Cluny. This illustrious victim of freedom of thought in life and science came there a broken-down man. Abelard's works had two sides, and Peter had always seen only that one that was turned towards the Church. As his mind was not a systematic one, the heretical consequences of Abelard's teaching escaped his notice, and, since he was conscious of a fellowship with God, exalted above the subtleties of dogmatic wranglings, he readily effected a reconciliation between Abelard and the heresy-hunting Bernard. In a warm and courageous letter to Pope Innocent II., he begged permission to admit Abelard to Cluny. Here, at the end of a walk at the foot of the monastery walls, looking out on great wood-girt meadows, beside a murmuring brook, Abelard would sit meditating under a massive lime tree, his eyes turned towards the convent Paraclete, where Heloise resided. By the advice of physicians he was sent to the monastery of St. Marcellus at Chalons, and there, in 1142, the restless soul found peace. The news of his death was conveyed to Heloise by Peter in a letter which breathes the deepest sympathy for the lady who was at one time bound to Abelard by the closest fleshly ties, and afterwards by the better and stronger tie of divine love. Abelard was buried at Paraclete, the funeral office being discharged by Peter himself, who by his absolution and blessing removed the last stain from the dead. At the request of Heloise, Peter further sent to her a formal decree of absolution, which she attached to the coffin of the man she had loved.

In 1141 Peter had undertaken a journey to

Spain to arrange for the Koran being translated into Latin by Peter of Toledo and the Englishman, Robert of Rethen, who was settled at Pampeluna as archdeacon. This work, containing extracts from the Koran, was sent by Peter to Bernard of Clairvaux, with the request that he would write a refutation of it. As Bernard failed to do so, he himself composed five books (of which the last three are lost) against the 'abominable sect of the Saracens.' Peter makes no false imputations against Mohammed, and accords due recognition to his proclamation of the one God. But he attributes the subsequent rise of Mohammedanism as a world-religion to a lust for rule. Peter is severe in his strictures on Mohammed's careful injunction not to discuss his teaching—an injunction which, he declares, robs man of reason and reduces him to the level of the beasts. A religion, he adds, which cannot be diffused by arguments, but only by the sword, cannot possibly be the true one. Quite unintelligible to Peter was the eclectic procedure of the prophet in the matter of Holy Scripture, for he sees nothing but a subterfuge in Mohammed's assertion that the Bible has been tampered with. He tries the life of Mohammed by the scholastic categories, and concludes accordingly that one who wrought no miracles and had not the gift of prediction can have been only a false prophet.

Peter maintained the closest relations with the popes. Eight times he crossed the Alps to pay his respects to Innocent II., Cœlestin II., Lucius II., and Eugene III. Suddenly there sprang up in the breast of the ageing abbot the wish of his youth that he might end his days in concealment as a recluse. But Bernard dissuaded Eugene III. from granting the necessary permission, on the ground that the Church could not dispense with such a personality.

The last literary work of Peter consisted of two books on the miracles of which he had had personal experience or of which he had received credible information. It is an extremely interesting work from the point of view of the history of culture, because it witnesses to the enormous hold that imagination had upon the childlike minds of himself and his contemporaries. The miracles in question are connected especially with the sacrament of the altar and of confession, with the appearances of angels and dead persons in dreams, and with visions. In these appearances of the

dead there is often at work a tender conscience, speaking of past unkindness. The appearances have frequently a pedagogic and what might be called a police aspect, and bear the features of supra-earthly justice.

Peter was plunged into deep sorrow by the unfortunate issue of the Crusade of 1147, which had been instigated by Bernard, and on which Peter had placed high hopes. He was doomed to see also the back-stroke of the Crusade, which showed itself in the uprising of the lawless elements in France. In 1153 Peter received a heavy blow in the death of his friend Bernard. An old friend made his appearance at Cluny in 1155 in the person of Bishop Henry of Winchester, the twin-brother of King Stephen of England. He had fled to Cluny for refuge from King Henry II. of England. He brought with him princely gifts, which enabled Peter to liquidate the debts of the monastery. A longing for death now seized upon the abbot, who had grown to feel lonely. In 1157 he wrote to the Carthusian friars that he should like to be called away on Christmas Day. On Christmas Eve he preached once more, and in the early dawn of the festival commemorating the birth of the Infant Saviour, with his eyes fixed upon a wooden crucifix, he passed away.

Peter's was a lofty, pure, and devout personality. His religion, like that of his great contemporary, Bernard of Clairvaux, was wholly Christocentric. It was one result of the Crusades, that the bare abstract conception of God was reanimated by the features of Jesus Christ. 'Thou shouldst not glory either in loquacious logic or curious physics, or in anything save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.' Theologically, the ecclesiastical supernaturalism of Peter is closely connected with the Biblical. Augustine, the man of the *Confessions*, with his passionate love to Christ, comes nearest to his heart. To the unphilosophical abbot of Cluny even philosophy is no speculative science, but a practical and ethical struggle for redemption from sin and from passions. Happy in his limitations, he remained a stranger to the insatiable demand

for new objects of knowledge and study. His conception of the monastic life is free and lofty. 'Mere outward separation from the world will do thee no good, if thou hast not the only strong wall against the evil that rises up within thee—that wall which is the Saviour. Living in fellowship with Him, imitating Him in His sufferings, thou shalt be safe against all thy foes. Without this protection, it profits thee nothing to retire into seclusion; nay, a man only thereby exposes himself to stronger temptations, those of pride and vanity.' Again and again he impresses it upon his monks that, 'without Christ, the narrow cell, the bloody scourging, the painful pilgrimage avail nothing. The one thing that is pleasing to God is a pious heart.' The witness of a good conscience is to Peter the only sure consolation of the godly in all trouble. Fastings, vigils, good works, he would value only as disciplinary means, which profit nothing without love. 'Men plant nurseries, till the fields, irrigate meadows, carve boxes, combs, cups; or, instead of the plough, they grasp the pen and, in place of the fields, labour on the pages of Holy Scripture, sowing upon parchment the seed of the divine word, which satisfies the hungry reader.'

Peter's monastic life did not destroy his appreciation of nature. This shows itself in his holy delight in the verdure of spring, and in mountain tops and forest loneliness. Nor did it quench such dutiful feelings as love to his mother and his brothers, which reveals itself as specially hearty and deep. And, above all, the seclusion of the cloister proved to Peter the best nursery for the purest and tenderest friendship. His letters to his friends are full of testimonies to noble friendship as between man and man. A mild, conciliatory personality, of lofty genius and nobility of soul, the friend of Bernard and Abelard, he rounded the sharp points in doctrine and in life, exalting the essentials of Christianity above the disputes of the schools, and placing the spirit of brotherly love above the legalism of the Church order to which he belonged.