

*ST. PETER : CORRESPONDENCES BETWEEN
HIS HISTORY AND HIS TEACHING.*

THE object of this paper is to compare what is related concerning St. Peter in the New Testament narratives with what he writes in 1 Peter.

The Simon Peter of the Gospels has more of a distinct individual character than we can associate with any other name in the New Testament. We see him eager and forward, emotional, generous, carried away by the feeling of the moment, attached to the Lord Jesus with enthusiastic and demonstrative reverence ; but liable to reaction in a pitiful degree, and therefore discredited by lapses : having more likeness to the tide in its flow and its ebb than to an immovable rock.

St. Mark's Gospel has been regarded as representing in a special manner the recollections of St. Peter. Let us therefore note first the places in St. Mark in which St. Peter's character is illustrated. It will be seen that forwardness is the most obvious feature of it. Simon was the first hearer of Jesus who was so strongly attracted by Him as to abandon his employment and his home, and to become His follower and companion. What ardour this must have required ! Simon and his brother Andrew (i. 16-18), in response to the call of Jesus, left their nets and followed Him. It is certain that Simon led his brother ; and when James and John were called, they had before them the example and the enthusiasm of their friends the sons of Jona, to make obedience the easier to them. When Jesus de-

parted before daylight into a desert place to pray (i. 35-37), Simon and they that were with him followed after Him. From the first Simon was the accepted leader of all those who were about Jesus. When the Twelve received their special appointment as apostles or envoys, St. Mark observes (iii. 16), "Simon He surnamed Peter." But we are not obliged to believe that this surname was formally given at that time to Simon, any more than that James and John were then surnamed Boanerges. There is some apparent support, it is true, for the assumption that these descriptive names were given in advance, in John i. 42, "Thou shalt be called Cephas." But it is more probable that the titles were not actually given until particular circumstances suggested them. In St. Mark's narrative of the cardinal confession made at Cæsarea Philippi, there is only the brief statement (viii. 29), "Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ," without the blessing and promise that followed. But this Evangelist tells us of the correction which St. Peter presently incurred when Jesus began to warn the disciples that He, the Christ, would be rejected and put to death. "Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him." The warm-hearted follower could not admit the thought of such a future awaiting the Master in whom he believed. And Jesus was deeply moved by the sympathy thus expressed. To Him also the Passion had its dark and repellent aspect; but He thought perhaps chiefly of what it would be to this band of trustful followers. "Turning about, and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter, and saith, Get thee behind me, Satan!" He was aware of a temptation dangerously assailing Him in the form of this sympathy; and with a vehemence that sometimes marked His action and His words He repulsed the Tempter, as in the wilderness. The repugnance and the sympathy, the shrinking from the Cross, the refusal to believe that the Christ should

suffer, were very human ; but the Divine purpose of redemption overrode these touching weaknesses. The shrinking did not belong to the Divine mind, but to the natural human affections. That St. Peter's human-mindedness did not make him less dear to his Master was shown six days after, when Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John (ix. 2-6) to witness the Transfiguration. The three apostles were profoundly awed by what they saw : Peter did not know what to say, but it would not have been like him to say nothing, so he gave expression to the wondering reverence which possessed them all in the childlike words, " Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles, for Thee and Moses and Elijah." Could this moment of heavenly glorification be prolonged ! A little later another casual observation of St. Peter is recorded : when Jesus had cursed the fig tree, and the disciples passing it the next morning saw that it was withered, " Peter, calling to remembrance, saith unto Him, Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which Thou cursedst is withered away ! " It is not obvious why this natural remark is preserved, or how it served to suggest what the Lord Jesus went on to say. Perhaps the sort of pride in the wonder-working power of Jesus which it expressed was not entirely to the Lord's mind. He was always seeking to lead His disciples through Himself to the Father in heaven ; and in harmony with this aim He continually endeavoured to awaken them to spiritual conceptions. " Have faith in God," He says. " Do not make much of physical wonders, or of Me as able to work them. You, if you will have faith in God, shall work greater wonders. The important thing is that your minds should be filially trustful towards God ; and that cannot be without your being also brotherly towards your fellow-men." When Jesus had prophesied the destruction of the Temple, " Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him pri-

vately, Tell us, when shall these things be ? And what shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished ? ” (xiii. 3). Peter was the one to express most frankly the dependence on signs, and the impatience, which were natural feelings of the disciples in general. They were all perplexed, and Peter was the readiest to ask for explanations. And he was the readiest to express in words the devotion which all the Apostles showed in their action up to the last too trying moment. When Jesus warned them that they would all be offended, or would stumble (xiv. 27), Peter exclaimed, “ Although all shall stumble, yet will not I.” Nay—his Master told him—before that very night was over, he would actually disown Him. But Peter “ spake exceeding vehemently, If I must die with Thee, I will not deny Thee.” Jesus knew this fervour to be genuine ; and when He went apart in Gethsemane to pray, He took with Him Peter and James and John (xiv. 33). The exhausted disciples fell asleep ; and it was to Peter that the Lord addressed His indulgent remonstrance, “ Simon, sleepest thou ? Couldst thou not watch with Me one hour ? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation : the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” The spirit for a while kept its ascendancy. When the band sent by the Jewish authorities had laid hands on Jesus, one of the disciples (St. Mark leaves him unnamed) “ drew his sword, and smote the high priest’s servant and struck off his ear ” (xiv. 47). Peter must have known that he was throwing his life away ; but he was saved by the act of healing of which another Evangelist tells us. The spirit was still dominant enough to constrain Peter to follow afar off, even into the court of the high priest. But as the miserable hours drew on, the wil ingness of the spirit failed, and the weakness of the flesh increased, till what had seemed so impossible took place, and Peter

disowned his Master. But his loving reverence was quickly rekindled, and he broke into a passion of tears. St. Mark tells nothing more of what Peter did or said.

But the other Evangelists add records which further illustrate the character and history of St. Peter as given us by St. Mark. In their Gospels he is equally to the front of the disciples,—the first to be won to Jesus, the habitual spokesman of the rest, treated by Jesus as their leader, specially favoured and specially corrected and warned, entirely sincere in his devotion but strangely unstable. St. Matthew alone relates the characteristic incident, how, when the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, Peter called to Him, “ Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee upon the waters. And He said, Come. And Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters, to come to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid ; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and took hold of him, and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ? ” (xiv. 28–31). Again a certain eagerness is followed by an expostulation, when Peter, wanting to have things explained, asked, “ Declare unto us the parable ” ; and Jesus, before giving the explanation, remonstrated, “ Are ye also even yet without understanding ? ” (xv. 15, 16). The confession at Cæsarea Philippi, related briefly by St. Mark and St. Luke, is set forth most fully by St. Matthew. In his Gospel, St. Peter answers, in reply to the inquiry of Jesus, “ Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And thereupon Jesus spoke the significant words, “ Blessed art thou, Simon Barjonah ; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock [upon this that has been revealed to thee] I will build my Church ; and the gates of

Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven ” (xvi. 16–19). St. Matthew, recording with St. Mark how Jesus was tried by the unwillingness of the disciples to accept His announcement that He was to suffer and be put to death, adds an illustrative word : Jesus turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, *thou art a stumbling-block unto me*, for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men ” (xvi. 23). A stumbling-block is nearly what we should call a temptation. The shock which the future Passion gave to the disciples affected their Master so strongly that He had to suppress with vehement decision an inclination to feel with them. Again we have, in Matthew xviii. 21, an approach of Peter met with a rebuff. “ Then came Peter, and said to Him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him ? Until seven times ? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times ; but until seventy times seven.” Peter’s question, innocent as it looks, represented that teaching of the scribes which was so offensive to our Lord, a formal, external, unspiritual way of looking at things, reducing the inner life to a business of rules and numbers. Jesus would not tolerate the notion that His disciples were to keep count of their forgivenesses ; that would be enough to make them unreal. Their forgiving was to be “ from the heart.” Once more, in the two Evangelists (Matthew xix. 27, Luke xviii. 28), we have St. Peter making a boast ; and both show how kindly Jesus received the expression of devotion ; whilst St. Matthew gives further the warning which the boast drew from Jesus. When Jesus had been deploring the difficulty which a rich man would find in entering into the kingdom of heaven, Peter gave expression to what was

in the minds of the disciples—that they at any rate had given up everything to follow their Master and become the first subjects of His kingdom. “Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee!” St. Matthew adds what was also so likely to be in the minds of all, “What then shall we have?” Certainly, Jesus told them, they should not be without the amplest reward. All real sacrifice, such as He knew theirs to be, should be much more than compensated. *But*, there is a danger of the sacrifice being turned into a bargain, an investment. The moment a disciple asks, What shall I have for my service? he is forfeiting the claim which God will acknowledge. God is not to be served as by labourers who work for hire, but by the real giving up of what a man has and what he is. In a very remarkable passage of St. Luke (xxii. 24-34), Jesus similarly combines promises and warnings. It would seem that, as the end drew nearer, there was more of tenderness in the Lord’s sense of the weakness of the disciples. On the last night they were contending amongst themselves, as St. Luke records, about precedence. Jesus bade them consider the example they had in Him. “But”—He recalled with an access of affectionate feeling—“ye are they which have continued with me in my trials, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me.” And He went on, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not: and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren.” Peter understood that the Lord contemplated a temporary failure of his constancy; and he protested, “Lord, with Thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death.” Then followed the more definite prediction of the denial. The last mention of St. Peter in St. Luke keeps his impulsive temperament still before us (xxiv. 12). The women were telling the apostles of their finding the

tomb empty and of the apparition of angels. "These words appeared in their sight as idle talk ; and they disbelieved them. But Peter arose, and ran unto the tomb."

In the Fourth Gospel we should hardly have expected to find such illustrations as are given us there of St. Peter's character. Devotion to Jesus, unreserved and appreciative, but hasty and forward, marks all the allusions to him in St. John. The falling away of many disciples caused Jesus to ask the Twelve, "Would ye also go away ?" and it is Simon Peter who answers, "Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life : and we have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God" (vi. 66-69). What can be more like St. Peter than his behaviour at the washing of the disciples' feet ? Some of them had submitted in awe to what the Lord was doing. "So He cometh to Simon Peter. He saith unto Him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet ? Jesus answered him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt understand hereafter. Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." In the same night we see him twice intervening, impatient, wanting to know. When Jesus said, "One of you shall betray me" (xiii. 24), Simon Peter, appealing to the disciple who was reclining next to Jesus, and whom he assumed to be more in their Lord's confidence than himself and the rest, said, "Tell us who it is of whom He speaketh." Presently, when Jesus spoke of going away, Simon Peter says to Him (36), "Lord, whither goest Thou ? Jesus answered, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now ; but thou shalt follow afterwards. Peter saith unto Him, Lord, Why cannot I follow Thee even now ? I will lay down my life for Thee." And he did in a sense lay down his life for his Master, when

he drew his sword against the high priest's servant, and struck off his right ear. It is in St. John that Simon Peter is named as doing this (xviii. 10). The sad story of the denial is told with greater fulness in St. John (15-27). And again there is greater fulness in the account of the visit to the empty tomb (xx. 1-8). Simon Peter, when he set off running, was accompanied by the disciple whom Jesus loved. This disciple outran Peter, but when he came to the tomb, he stopped at the entrance, and only looked in; but Peter coming up, went at once into the tomb, and was followed by the other disciple. The last we hear of St. Peter in the Gospels is when Jesus manifested Himself to His disciples at the sea of Tiberias. Simon Peter was still the leader whom the others followed. He said, "I go a fishing," and they went with him. When Jesus stood on the beach, it was the other disciple who was first to be sure that it was the Lord, but when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his coat about him, and cast himself into the water. The other disciples remained in the boat, dragging the net full of fishes. When they came to the beach, it was Simon Peter who drew the net to land (xxi. 2-11). Then followed after a while, that profoundly interesting conversation which began with the Lord's question, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?" Those words "more than these" seem as if they must refer to the manner in which Peter outran his comrades in demonstrative reverence and affection. "If thy devotion surpasses that of these others,—then, feed my lambs." There are slight variations in the charge given three times. "Feed my lambs; tend my sheep; feed my sheep." The Lord was resolved that, at the cost of Peter being hurt by the repeated question, "Lovest thou me?" he should never forget that he was charged to be a true and faithful shepherd. The final appeal of Jesus was, "Follow

me." Deeply moved—broken down, we may say—by his Lord's tenderness and his own sense of unworthiness, Peter's heart was drawn towards his companion whom he knew that Jesus loved ; and he asked, " Lord, and what shall this man do ? " Jesus answered, " If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ? Follow thou me." The calling of the most ardent of the disciples was to be a keeper of the sheep of Jesus and to follow his Lord.

In the founding of the Church of Christ St. Peter had the first place, first in time and foremost in importance ; until his work—that of the Apostle to the Jews—began to be eclipsed by that of the Apostle to the great Gentile world. We see him taking the lead, but with a different manner from that which we have been observing in the Gospels. In the Acts, he is the acknowledged chief of the Apostolic band, but never outrunning his comrades, always dignified and courageous, speaking and acting with authority, but waiting on instructions from his heavenly Lord ; feeding his Master's sheep, whilst he dutifully followed his Master. Critics have been ready to make the most of what signs there are in the Acts and other New Testament books of differences between St. Peter and St. Paul ; but I think there has been no attempt to make out that the Jerusalem Apostles were troubled by dissensions amongst themselves. If there was such harmony as there appears to have been in the governing body that consisted of Simon Peter and his colleagues, during those most trying days of the early history of the Church, that is surely a very remarkable fact. Where our Lord says to Simon, " Do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren," our Authorized Version has, " when thou are converted " ; and we might almost say that St. Peter seems to have undergone a change equal to that of " conversion " between the Denial and the Day of Pentecost. And if he on his part was able to avoid

everything in speech or act which could offend any of his colleagues, we must recognize that they all proved themselves to be wonderfully influenced by the uniting Spirit poured out upon the new Society. St. Paul, in Galatians ii. 11-14, records an incident which we generally understand as an exhibition of the weakness which in the Gospels follows close upon Simon's ardour. But St. Peter's action may be regarded as illustrating his earnest desire and endeavour to keep the peace between disciples of different views and habits. And if he, the chief of the Twelve, bore with patience St. Paul's unsparing championship of Gentile liberty, the harmony maintained at Jerusalem becomes the more intelligible to us.

We have the First Epistle of St. Peter to show us what were the ideas and sentiments which characterized the teaching of the Apostle in his later days. His addresses reported in the Acts were chiefly straightforward and fearless testimonies to the resurrection and the royalty of his Crucified Master. One of them, to which we shall refer again presently, contains a quotation from the Psalms, which he had heard Jesus Himself use (Matt. i. 42). This Jesus, he says, "is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner : and in none other is there salvation" (Acts iv. 11, 12).

Five particular indications of St. Peter having been influenced in what he wrote by what had occurred in his personal history may be observed in the Epistle. But it is worth while to note first its general tone. All through it St. Peter is commending gentleness, orderly and conciliatory behaviour, submissiveness, patience under insults and injuries. There is no sign anywhere of the old eager and impetuous Simon. It would seem that Simon had been "converted" into a new Cephas or Peter. As he recalled the image of Him who when He was reviled reviled not

again, and who had bidden him put up his sword into its sheath, suffering and patience became sacred to him ; and he felt that the main endeavour of those who would follow Jesus must be to curb resentment and to bear with meekness and to submit to regulation. He seeks to persuade the Christians to be as inoffensive neighbours and as loyal citizens as it is possible for them to be in their surroundings.

1. In the phrase "Gird yourselves with humility, or, wrap round you the apron of humility, to serve one another" (v. 5), it is obvious to see a reminiscence of the washing of the feet of the disciples, followed by the saying, "I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you" (St. John xiii. 14, 15).

2. In the Epistle, the sufferings of Christ, and the glories to follow them, are three or more times associated together in a manner which shows the connexion between them to have been at home in St. Peter's mind. We have seen that as a follower of Him whom he believed to be the Christ he had been shocked by the prospect of his Master's rejection and death, and that a few days after the first shock he was taken with the two sons of Zebedee to see a vision of Jesus in glory on the Mount of the Transfiguration. He was persuaded to reconcile himself to the sufferings of the Christ in view of the glory to follow. And he was brought, as time went on, to see this connexion in the old prophets. "The Spirit of Christ in the prophets . . . testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them" (i. 11). The share of the members in the sufferings and the glory of their Head is assumed in iv. 13: "Inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice ; that at the revelation of His glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy." In the third mention of the sufferings and the glory St. Peter might almost seem to be referring directly to the Transfiguration : "The elders among you I exhort,

I the fellow-elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and also the partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed ” (v. 1).

3. This last correspondence passes into the next. “The God of all grace, who called you unto His eternal *glory* in Christ, after that ye have *suffered* a little while, shall Himself perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you ” (v. 10). St. Peter could certainly never forget the touching words, “Simon, Simon, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat : but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not : and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren ” (St. Luke xxii. 31, 32). The Tempter, the adversary, proved himself peculiarly dangerous to Simon ; but if he stumbled terribly, the ardent disciple was enabled by the grace of God to recover himself ; and his Master bade him believe that his weakness might help him to be a means of strengthening to others. He would know the need of constant watchfulness against temptation, of a militant attitude against the adversary : he would be able to encourage his brethren to rely on the assured grace of God. His mind being set on preserving his brethren from such lapses as his had been, he would find ways of practically helping them to stand firm. “Stablish thy brethren ” : that was a charge he could never forget. He knew the power of sufferings to perplex and depress those who were bidden to trust in God’s love and care. So he wrote thus :—“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time ; casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He is caring for you. Be sober, be watchful ; your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour : whom withstand, stedfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brotherhood that is in the world.” Thus he could exhort his fellow-believers ;

but he could only stablish them effectually by leading them to look to the gracious Father and to depend on Him. "The God of all grace shall Himself perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." The multiplication of these words is significant. Our Revisers thought that the evidence was in favour of leaving out the last word ; but Professor Nestle, in the Greek text prepared by him for the Bible Society, has restored it. The Greek words are—*καταρτίσει, στηρίξει, σθενώσει, θεμελιώσει*. The second is the word spoken by our Lord in the charge He gave to Peter. *Καταρτίσει*, would be used for the setting of a limb that was broken or out of joint—"will put you right." *Στηρίξει*, "will make you firm." *Σθενώσει*, "will make you strong, put vigour into you." *Θεμελιώσει*, "will settle you on a good foundation."

4. We have seen with what earnest insistence the Lord Jesus charged Simon Peter to be a good shepherd to the sheep of Christ. "If thou art before all others in thy devotion to me, feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep." The lambs and sheep belonged to Christ, He was the good Shepherd who gave His life for His sheep ; but He employed shepherds under Him. The efficiency of these under-shepherds depended on their loyalty to the Divine Shepherd. Simon Peter did his best to keep His Master's sheep, as the chief Apostle to his fellow-countrymen. But where his personal superintendence could not reach, there were local shepherds or pastors, each over his flock. To them St. Peter writes, "The elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partner of the glory that shall be revealed, tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according unto God ; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind ; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but

making yourselves ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away" (v. 1-4). St. Peter and his fellow-shepherds, all who had any oversight over portions of the flock of God, had to give account to the Chief Shepherd, who owned the whole flock. The members of the Church were sheep that had gone astray, but had returned unto the Divine Shepherd and Overseer of their souls.

5. As the confession at Cæsarea Philippi, and the blessing which followed it, form the chief distinction in the apostolic career of St. Peter, matching the humiliation of the denial ; so the passage of the Epistle which illustrates it is the fullest of those which we are considering. It occurs in the second chapter. St. Peter has been bidding his readers long for the spiritual food which will nourish them unto salvation,—“if,” he says, “ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” Then he abruptly passes from one figure to another : “to whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Because it is contained in Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious ; and he that believeth on Him shall not be put to shame. For you therefore which believe is the preciousness ; but for such as disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner ; and, a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence ; for they stumble at the word, being disobedient” (ii. 4-8). We have seen that in one of the earliest of his addresses after the Day of Pentecost, St. Peter said of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, “He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner”

(Acts iv. 11) : and that he was applying to Christ a prophetic image which Christ had already appropriated to Himself (Matt. xxii. 42). When therefore Jesus spoke of the rock upon which He would build His Church, St. Peter must have understood Him to mean that He would build it upon Himself ; and if He called Simon a stone, St. Peter must have thought of himself as the first of the living stones joined to the Living Stone or Rock that a temple of worship and sacrifice might be built up unto God. The name of Cephas or Peter was a continual witness to Simon himself and to his fellow-believers of the purpose of God to build up a Society or Brotherhood resting upon the Christ, the Son of God and Son of man. The Christians who considered the significance of the name were reminded that they were joined to the Brotherhood as the stones of a building are added to the corner-stone or foundation, and that the whole sacred Society depended for its existence and unity and character on its Head and Saviour and Lord.

J. LLEWELYN DAVIES.