



THE APOSTLE PETER AND HIS RELATION TO THE CHURCH OF ROME.

THE history of science, in every department, reveals frequent failure impartially to weigh facts, and hence to reach a just induction, because of some supposed result to which it was imagined the admission of the facts would lead as a conclusion. Thus in the physical sciences true theories in astronomy, chemistry, anatomy, and geology, were long rejected. Thus, too, mediæval Bible students rejected new and true views of Scripture interpretation suggested by advancing science; while Luther even denied for a time the historic facts as to the Epistle of James, because of a preconceived opinion that it contradicted Paul's doctrine of justification by faith.

There can be no question that extreme views have prevailed as to the facts in the history of the apostle Peter, and as to his relation to the Church of Rome. The early Christian writers, from the first to the fourth century, are all of accord in the statement as fact that Peter, as Paul, was twice at Rome; first under Claudius, and again under Nero. Later writers of the Roman Church hence drew the *inference* that he was the head not only of the Church of Rome, but through it, because of Christ's language to him, the head of the universal church. The Reformers, on the other hand, in order to disprove the conclusion denied the facts. The new discussions called out by the extreme dogma of Papal infallibility is calling the attention of

scholarly men, both in the Roman and other churches of Europe, to review this question. It is timely that it be met in our country, where error is to be silenced only by sound reasoning.

To prepare the mind to survey with impartiality the statements of the inspired writers and the varied facts and opinions added by the early Christian writers, it is well to disabuse the judgment of prejudice by allowing it to consider calmly the legitimate conclusion which must be true if the facts are admitted instead of being denied. Let it be admitted, as all the early Christian writers affirm, that Peter was at Rome both under Claudius and under Nero. Then he was there as a preacher while Paul was just beginning his successful ministry at Antioch and in Asia Minor; and he was there again while Paul was laboring in Rome. Yet Peter's influence at Rome, great as it was at Antioch and elsewhere, was too slight to call even for the mention by Luke in his history, or by Paul in his epistle to the Romans or in any one of his six epistles written from Rome. Let the mind be held firmly to a consideration of this necessary conclusion to be derived from admitting to the extreme the fact, though not the Romanist's inference from it, that Peter did have a ministry of some duration at Rome. This bending of the bow in the opposite direction may prepare our minds to take a less prejudiced survey of the whole field of facts, and thus enable us to reach a balanced conclusion. The subtleties of Roman scholars in our country can only be met by a scholarship as thorough, and by reasoning at once logical and liberal.

The survey which must be taken covers, first, the whole field of New Testament statement; second, the facts and comments of the Christian writers before the era when the special supremacy of the Roman pontiff was accepted in southern and western Europe; and, third, the general drift of argument employed by writers of different views in this age of more thorough and liberal Christian scholarship.

The New Testament statements as to Peter, are found in the four gospel narratives of Christ's life, in Luke's history of apostolic acts, and in the allusions of both Paul and Peter in their Epistles. That a just and harmonious induction may be obtained, these allusions must be scanned and compared, so that a right interpretation as well as a complete view of the inspired teaching shall be reached.

In examining and comparing the statements of the four evangelists, it is well to recall that Matthew wrote from the Jewish point of view for his Hebrew countrymen; Mark, under Peter's guidance, for the practical Romans; Luke, with impressions received from Paul's teachings, for the polished Greek; and finally, John, as the bosom friend of Peter, and as the quiet and impartial umpire in apostolic

debate. Keeping these characteristics of the writers in mind, the special statements of each as to Peter, and those in which they unite, take their proper place in a general conclusion derived from all their many allusions.

Opening then the gospel narratives, and tracing their statements as to the apostle Peter, we find that Matthew, Mark, and Luke, agree in mentioning the call of Simon by Jesus at the Lake of Galilee; the healing of his wife's mother, an implied intimation that he was married; his appointment as the first on the list of the apostles; his special avowal of faith in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel; his choice as special witness with James, and John, of the transfiguration, and of the agony in Gethsemane; his ambitious inquiry, "Lo we have left all and followed thee; What shall we have therefore;" Christ's warning that he would thrice deny him; his following Jesus with John to the high priest's palace; and, finally, his persistent denial of his Master: all of which united statements indicate that while Peter was leader in thought and act among his fellows, he was equally prominent in the faults to which his impulsive nature led him. Matthew alone records Peter's walking on the water and loss of faith; his speaking for his brethren in asking an explanation of Christ's parables; his being singled out by Christ in the address, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my Church;" his error as to the duty of tribute to the civil government enjoined by Christ; and his faulty view indicated by the question, "How shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" Mark, again, alone mentions his intrusion on Christ's private devotions in the mountains; his taking the lead in pressing Christ to reveal *when* his coming should take place; and the angel's special message sent by the women at his sepulchre, "Go tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee." Luke, yet again, reports that the boat from which Christ preached, nigh Capernaum, was Simon's; he records his exclamation as he fell down at Jesus' knees, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man;" he mentions his inquiry, "Lord speakest thou this parable unto us, or also to all," and his almost rude rejoinder to Christ's question, "Who touched me?" in the words, "Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, who touched me?" he singles out Peter in the mention that the three witnesses of the transfiguration were heavy with sleep; he names Peter and John as the two directed by Christ to prepare his last passover supper, and he alludes to Christ's appearance to Peter on the day of his resurrection. Finally, John alone mentions Andrew's bringing his brother to Jesus, nigh Bethabara, soon after his baptism; his question, "Lord to whom shall we