

JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLE PETER.

BY WILLIAM WALLACE MARTIN.

THE man of Nazareth in Galilee laid the foundations of an universal religion. Jesus heralded a religious faith, that opened a way for every man to have access to God. The authority of His teachings rests upon the belief, that He was son of God. Mark opens his gospel with the words "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ son of God." Ecclesiastical authority has placed in its Canon of the Holy Scriptures only Four Gospels. There were many others but they were not preserved. The facts of the Life of Jesus must be gathered from these Gospel-writings. An account in them is given us of His parentage, birth, the visit of the wise men, the flight into Egypt and the return to Nazareth. Barring the parentage, there are no reasons why all these occurrences, connected with His infancy, may not be historical. The going to the Passover, when He was twelve years of age and His conversing with the rabbis in the temple, are events, which have no inherent impossibility. Jesus is unknown to history from this time until He is thirty years of age. He then appears on the stage of action, shows Himself to be the master religious thinker of His time, a most subtle reasoner, and a popular orator of the first order. He also is a most accomplished physician. It is idle to say that Jesus acquired this mastery of the broadest education in the small and despised village of Nazareth.

The modern thinker, trained to scientific reasoning upon facts and accustomed to scientific discoveries—prophecies belonging to matter and mind—will be slow to accept, if he ever does accept, such an abnormal development. The theologian, who is at home with miracles, may accept the Nazareth-genesis of Jesus, but the scientist will do a whole lot of searchings and suffer a whole realm of doubtings before he believes in Jesus as the marvelous product of Nazareth environment. Cuvier, the great French naturalist, took the

few scattered bones of extinct animals, found in caves, and reconstructed their skeletons. He was thereby able to tell their manner of life and their habitats. But we have a biography of Cuvier and find that early in life his bent was natural phenomena; his early friend was Tessier, the agriculturist. He at twenty-six was appointed assistant to the professor of comparative anatomy at the Museum d'Historie Naturelle. The modern thinker finds no difficulty in accepting any reasonable statement of the attainments and achievements of Cuvier in the realms of Comparative Anatomy so far as it relates to species whether extinct or existing. Our exacting modern thinker regards Jesus as a natural specimen of the human race with quite limitless ability to fathom the religious nature of man and to grasp a tenable and helpful understanding of God. He accepts the only records of the life of Jesus we have. He notices in the Gospels an almost complete absence of biographical reference, which would make reasonable the attainments and achievements of the man of Nazareth. This modern thinker asks the scientific investigator of religious phenomena to take the few fragments we have of the words and works of Jesus and reconstruct his early life so that these words and works are normal products of a human life. The day of the ecclesiastical Christological theologian has passed. The present is awaiting a scientific Christology.

The synoptic gospels give us the manner of life which Jesus lived. He went about as a physician and also as a teacher. As a physician He healed (*therapeuei*) others. His cures were diseases, demoniacal possessions, death. Whence came His knowledge of medicine? When and where did He study. The ecclesiastical Christological theology answers, "He was the only begotten Son of God and so knew all." The answer is not adequate, the scientific student will reply. The time when Jesus could have studied must have been during those thirty years which the gospels have left practically blank. The scientific student, if he is adequately informed, will also tell you that for two centuries and a half Alexandria had the finest medical university in the world. It was of Grecian origin. He will add that in Galilee round about the inland sea were many cities wherein the finest palaces were reared all aglow with splendors of Grecian architecture. Indeed the Sea of Galilee at that time was a pleasure pond for the Roman rulers of Syria. There were splendid inland cities also which the Grecians built. They were not alone centers of fashionable civic life; but Grecian learning thrived in them. Jesus could have walked from

Nazareth to Tiberias in about six hours. He would behold there the glories of the Roman rulers, side by side with the grandeurs of the Seleucidian dynasties. The Aramaic, native inhabitants, a mixed Semitic people, were the hoi polloi. Reminders of the greatness of the Semites were all about the Sea of Tiberias, but they were only ruins. Fleets then sailed the sea, where today the boats can be counted on the hand. Witnesses to the majesty of Rome are seen in the Herod-built city of Tiberias, built when Jesus was some sixteen years old and named after the Roman emperor. When Jesus was some twenty-seven years old Philip the tetrach of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis rebuilt Bethsaida which is east of the Jordan and called it Julias, in honor of the daughter of Augustus, emperor of Rome. The love of Jesus for the sea and the cities on its border is attested by the fact that He spent so large a part of the short active life which we know as a teacher in these parts and also that three of His disciples were residents of another Bethsaida, a Semitic fishing village. The cosmopolitan Jesus must have spent long seasons of His youth and early manhood with His relatives in this Semitic Bethsaida, making excursions from there to the cities around and near the Sea of Tiberias. It was a matter of but a day's journey from Nazareth to Ptolemais (Akka); and there the memories of Hellenized Egypt were abundant. Carmel lay south of Akka some three hours' journey. The erudite Jesus must have visited these places and we doubt not that he went further south, even to Alexandria. Jesus, as a youth and young man, could easily have mastered Greek and Latin; the Aramaic was native to him. His studiousness as a lad is shown by His conversations with the rabbis in the temple at twelve years of age. Ample opportunities for the acquisition of medicine were within His reach. Luke tells us that during His youth "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." The Greeks sought wisdom. Knowledge of medicine was with them one of the greatest departments of wisdom. The word "stature" is evidence that Jesus was comely and of impressive personality. His worshipfulness brought Him favor with God; His educated humanness won Him favor with man. The miracles of Jesus which may be classed as diseases and demoniacal possessions (barring those of raising the dead) may be explained by His knowledge of therapeutics and the propensity of the Constantine-educated ecclesiastics to redact the gospels so that they would make a common cure, made by Jesus, to be surrounded with the miraculous. The words of Jesus can have no adequate background

unless we assume that he had been a traveler in Greece and a resident in Rome. Perhaps some day will furnish us with evidence that Tiberius had as intimate friend Jesus of Nazareth. The noblest of Roman faces was that of Tiberius. And it is yet to be unravelled the reason He left Rome against the will of Augustus and remained seven years of His life, in His prime, and dwelt at Rhodes. In this island He was surrounded with the monuments of the most advanced ancient peoples and was in the very atmosphere of those noblest civilizations, which had been built on the Euphrates and Nile. It was in that island, where the memories of world-ruling empires were treasured up in inscriptions and in wonder-inspiring architectural remains. Jesus, with His Semitic and Hellenic culture, would have had a fascination for this most accomplished, most maligned, most wise Roman emperor. The character of Jesus can alone find satisfactory explanation by making Him the child of the Semites and the Hellenes, and the Romans. Our God and Light and Law were the three gifts, which He received from these mightiest of civilizations.

The words of Jesus may be classified with sufficient accuracy as parables, discourses, dialogues and conversations. The parables are but striking excerpts from popular discourses, generally spoken to a popular audience. Crowds followed Jesus. Crowds came to listen to Him. These large gatherings must have been orderly, else Roman authority would have put them down. They must have had as their drift a moral culture such as would lead to good citizenship and good tribute-paying dependents upon Rome; also they would have been prohibited. Jesus, the Orator, indeed must have had an irresistible fascination for those who were well and needed no physician. Most of His parables required no larger acquaintance with human history than could have been gathered in Aramaic and cosmopolitan Galilee. There is not an inflammatory demagogic teaching to be found in any parable. He rang true to His words, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." Jesus as a dialectician has scarcely a parallel among the scholars of Greece or Rome. The wisest doctors of the law could not entrap him. The narrow sharp-minded schools of the rabbins could not give the world-grasp, which Jesus possessed. Greece and Rome were His teachers. It is evident that the so-called Sermon on the Mount was no single discourse. I would venture to call them a collection of the subjects of many discourse, which Jesus spake in Tiberias and the cities and countries around the inland sea. If we only had the com-

plete discourses, we would have a social literature, which would be priceless. But mastery of the matter contained in them required acquaintance with the classics of Greek and Rome, both in history, oratory, and philosophy as well as accurate acquaintance with the Semitic literature of the Euphrates and the Nile. The conversations of Jesus were mainly an illumination of His words to His narrow and limitedly cultured disciples and followers. We will rightly grasp the wonderful personality of Jesus only when we leave the easy explanation of His work and words, which theologians proffer in their doctrine that being Son of God He had no need of doing anything but carpenter's work until thirty years old and then go out and blossom into the God-man. When we leave this easy explanation we shall follow Him in that unwearied labor, which led Him to be the "wandering Jew," until He had mastered the problems of civil, social and religious life for man, by observation and study of the great civilizations of the world.

A purely local man, genuinely religious, reader of the scriptures and a follower of the Temple-ritual, until the influence of Jesus set him free from the bonds of religious ordinances and the Pharisaic cultus was Peter. There is no reason to doubt that he was a resident of the fishing village of Bethsaida, that he caught fish from the waters of the Sea of Tiberias, that the new Roman life about the sea and the older Grecian mode of living were well known to him, but only as such an onlooker, as a poor toiler at the nets would acquire. The synagogue was his Sabbath assembly-place; for the regular festivals he went to Jerusalem. There he beheld the glorious place of Herod and the temple he built; and the Roman circus, probably the king's work was under the shadow of the Holy Place. But religious habit and family traditions held this Peter to his ancestral faith, the newer Roman ways and the culture of the aesthetic Greek always waged war, in his practical common mode of thinking, with the exclusive narrow Ezraitic Judaism, which was his creed and cultus. The view that Jesus lived in the house of Peter's father in Bethsaida seems best, when Mary after the death of her husband, Joseph, went with her children by him to Bethsaida, leaving Nazareth. All of her children save Jesus became fishermen. Peter would then have knowledge of the search of Jesus for knowledge, would also know how he "grew in favor with God and man." He would wonder at His proficiency in medicine, at His cosmopolitan culture. When Jesus offered him and his brother Andrew another calling, knowing His power and accomplishments,

they followed Him. It was not in obedience to any divine authority due to an abnormal parentage which controlled these two sensible fishermen.

Peter saw Jesus heal his wife's mother, saw him resuscitate the daughter of Jairus, saw Him, when on the sea amid the storm, absolutely calm and without fear, and bidding those in the boat to put away their fears. Peter saw Jesus when He was transfigured and talked with Moses and Elias, saw Him, when in Gethsemane He wrestled in prayer, sweating as it were drops of blood. It was Peter who said first, "Thou art Christ the Son of God." This Peter went about with Jesus, kept close to Him, helped Him in doing good. He watched Jesus in His healing services to His fellows without pay; he heard Him plead for good morals, good citizenship, and all because it was well pleasing to God. He saw diseased bodies recovered by the physician's care, he saw men and women awaken to newness of life, leaving worldliness and building character under the words of Jesus. The high priest and the Pharisees, whited sepulchres, lost their hold on this rugged religious man. Peter later saw a band of men seize Jesus and drag Him before Pilate; he was around when the high priest condemned Jesus to death; he fought for Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane and denied him in the courtyard of the judgment-hall. It was at the end catastrophe for Peter. The scholar, the orator, the physician, the man who had had crowds follow Him to hear Him, to have His medical help, this man Peter saw condemned to death, without a friend near by, without a disciple around except himself. Peter might well ask, "Where is His kingdom? How can His disciples sit upon thrones?" Then too no help came even from God His Father. Peter might well have said, "I know not this condemned, this friendless man, this man of sorrows." Peter left the judgment-court with a heart full of grief and without faith in Christ the Son of God, if this creed meant a God-man, empowered, yes panoplied with all the power of God. But what his eyes had seen, he could not deny; he had seen the most gifted man, the most skillful physician, the most winsome person of His time, whom the poor and the rich followed after. He knew Jesus taught that good morals, good citizenship, and great brotherly love, embracing every man, were the sacrifices acceptable to God and also that man might be born again and through the new birth have access by his own prayers to God and so talk with God as a friend. But his hope in Jesus, as a political leader, as the establisher of an earthly kingdom, had perished.

The appearances of Jesus after His death and burial to Peter himself, to the women, to other disciples, and the ascension of Jesus, rebuilt the ruins of the faith of Peter and gave him a fuller creed, which was, Jesus, Son of God, crucified, and arisen from the dead. The little company at Jerusalem met together, refreshed their memories of Jesus; and they knew that they alone were left to herald the gospel, which Jesus attested by His life and His death. The Acts of the Apostles give us the fullest accounts of the activities of Peter. The footsteps of His Master he almost literally follows. He seems to tell us that he like Jesus was sent to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. A matter of unclean meats keeps him from accepting Cornelius, the Roman centurion, until a vision comes to him, correcting his error. A matter of circumcision makes difference between him and Paul. This local man Peter has a new creed for the guidance of his life; but in matters of ceremony he follows the customs of his family and people.

Peter, who had denied Jesus, is His witness at the Pentecost gathering, when three thousand were converted to faith in the Crucified One. Peter traveled through Judea, Samaria, Galilee, over the same territory in which Jesus journeyed often. He preached at Antioch, at which place Paul and Barnabas won great numbers of Gentiles to faith in Jesus Christ. The charm of Peter for believers in these places, where he went, was the intimate personal knowledge which this plain bold disciple had of Jesus. He loved the temple at Jerusalem as a place of prayer, not as the sanctuary, where daily sacrifices were offered for sin. The priesthood of the Jews and the Pharisaic burdensome religious observances he discarded. He retained circumcision, it was sign of Abrahamic descent; he administered baptism, it was the ordinance established by John and approved by Jesus. This ordinance was testimony to a changed mind in matters relating to God. No photograph of a man can be truer than the portrayal of Peter in his two epistles. The style of these writings is that of a man, surcharged with an ardent love for Jesus Christ. It is addressed to Jewish Christians, which were dwellers, not citizens, in cities of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia. Tiberias had banished the Jews from Rome, Caligula had persecuted them; Claudius had shown them little favor. The rabbis and Pharisees cared for the Temple and the Ezraitic Jews; to the Christian Jew the most helpful word would come from Peter; and when old he sends to them these unparalleled epistles of the new Testament. These Christian Jews according to

Peter were a chosen generation, being called in Jesus Christ; a royal priesthood, having the anointing of the Holy Spirit; a holy nation, for the Christ-call is to good and right living; a peculiar people, singled out by their manner of worship in assemblies, by their loyalty to the emperor in matters of Cæsar, by their obedience to employers in matters of service, by exemplary conduct in matters of the home-life, by continuance in well-doing in times of stress and persecutions. Every day's experience, whether in prosperity or adversity, was to be an occasion of joy; for they were doing the will of God in Jesus Christ. It is in vain that we seek in these writings of Peter any world-wide mode of expression, such as we find in the cosmopolitan Paul. The environment of Palestine moulded Peter so far as his education was concerned. The close companionship, he held with Jesus, consecrated all his practical sense and resolute independence to the furtherance of faith in Jesus Christ, Son of God, who had risen from the dead. Our everyday man, who in these times seeks help in the toilings of his life, will place his hand in the hand of Peter and follow him in the way which Jesus led. The Theologian with his dogma-fetters will laud Paul; but their will-of-the-wisp vagaries, coming from Constantine-theology, fascinating as they are as mental fabrications, become shattered when they fall upon the rock-like practical religious faith of Peter. The theology of Paul will ever be stimulating to the educated Christian, but the Constantine and Mediaeval Pauline theology have had their value in days gone by; to-day they have ceased to be vitalizing forces in our strenuous life. We are on the eve of a new Pauline interpretation, which will open up a greater day for the Christian religion; but until this interpretation has been given us, the Petrine theology is the salvation of today's world, and it is summed up in these words, Serve God, Serve your rulers, Serve your employers honorably and for God's sake; Retain good morals in the family, in the state, in your own life; Believe in the Son of God, in His resurrection, in your own resurrection and in access to God the Father; and Wait in patience for the revelation of the glory of the sons of God.