

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PETER AND
JOSEPHUS.

THERE are two questions in New Testament criticism which have acquired new aspects during the last few years. One of these is the authenticity of the Second Epistle of St. Peter; the other is the key to the interpretation of the Apocalypse. In different ways both questions are of great interest, and it is most desirable that scholars should arrive at that *consensus* of opinion respecting them which has been gradually attained respecting many other questions, once fiercely disputed, now practically settled.

In this paper I have been asked to say a few words on the first of these two questions. I do not of course intend to enter into the whole discussion, but shall confine myself to a single point of capital importance.

In 1882 my friend Dr. Abbott published in THE EXPOSITOR three original papers on the Second Epistle of St. Peter. The first was headed "*Had the Author read Josephus?*" the second, "*Had the Author read St. Jude?*" The third, "*Was the Author St. Peter?*"¹ He decided the first and second questions in the affirmative; the third in the negative. In the course of his papers he entered into much minute criticism. I was myself at the time studying these epistles for my *Early Days of Christianity*, and my deep interest in the subject led me to write a criticism of his views.² I ventured to give my reasons for differing

istics of the Amorites from the paintings at Abu-Simbel, which would account for their not being found again by Mr. Petrie. At any rate it was from "the east caves" at Abu-Simbel that he learned that the Shasu of southern Palestine had blue eyes, with red hair, eyebrows, and beard (*Egypt's Testimony*, etc., p. 123).

¹ THE EXPOSITOR, second series, vol. iii., pp. 49-63, 139-153, 204-219.

² THE EXPOSITOR, second series, vol. iii., pp. 401-423.

from him on the first question, or at any rate from withholding my assent from what he regarded as absolutely proven. I agreed with him as to the second point, though I did not accept his argument as to the complete *inferiority* of the author of 2 Peter to St. Jude. On the third question I admitted the existence of difficulties, but endeavoured to prove that the very contemptuous estimate which Dr. Abbott had formed of the "Second Epistle of St. Peter" was not justified by the linguistic and other strictures to which he had subjected it. I dealt with the same questions again in *Early Days of Christianity*.¹

Since these papers were written, Dr. Salmon has published his *Historical Introduction to the Study of the Books of the New Testament*, of which the second edition appeared in 1886. In that book he has devoted nearly forty pages (512-551) to an examination of the question.

It would take me far too long to discuss his whole argument. He agrees with the view that the writer of 2 Peter borrowed from St. Jude, and, in spite of Professor Lumby's argument in the *Speaker's Commentary*, I am unable to imagine how any one familiar with literature can come to any other conclusion. He also criticises (as I had done) Dr. Abbott's sarcastic comment on the supposed "Baboo Greek" of the Epistle. Into all this I shall not here enter. The more crucial question is, Did Josephus borrow from the Epistle, or the author of the Epistle from Josephus? To my mind no third explanation is possible. Consequently I have been driven to what Dr. Salmon calls "the not very hopeful line of defence," that Josephus may have borrowed from 2 Peter. Whether this be "a not very hopeful line of defence" or otherwise I cannot tell. The decision is not helped by Dr. Salmon's *ipse dixit*. I pointed out that, though Josephus shows (so far as I am aware) no *decisive* proofs of familiarity with any other book of the New

¹ Vol. i., pp. 190-193.

Testament, there is nothing impossible in the supposition that an isolated Christian tract may have fallen under his notice, and that some of its characteristic expressions may have lingered in his memory. Books (I said) have strange destinies. There is no knowing wheré they may not penetrate, what surprising results they may not produce, into what unexpected hands they may not fall. Josephus was a friend of Aliturus, the Jewish pantomimist, one of the favourites at the court of Nero. He knew Poppæa, who has been suspected by some of being a Jewish proselyte. He may even have had his share in calling Nero's unfavourable attention to the Christians after the fire of Rome. In old age he had attended in the antechambers of the persecuting Domitian. He was a personal friend of Agrippa II. Christianity had found its way both into the imperial and the Herodian palaces, and there is nothing outrageous in the suggestion that Christian literature which was in the hands of some of "Cæsar's household" (Phil. iv. 22) may, by some accident, have got into the hands of Jewish hangers on. It is certain that Josephus knew a good deal more about Christianity than he has chosen to indicate, and if other facts lead to the conjecture, why should it be deemed impossible that he may have read a chance Christian letter which some unhappy apostate may have placed at his disposal?

But, at any rate, I repeat without the least hesitation, that if this be a "not very hopeful line of defence," there is, to my mind, *no other*. I have argued that Josephus may have borrowed from 2 Peter, while at the same time I have pointed out one very serious difficulty (on which I shall touch later on) in such a supposition. But if he did not, then I, as an honest man, can come to no other conclusion than that the writer of 2 Peter borrowed from Josephus;—in which case he could not have been the Apostle. For the *Antiquities* of Josephus were not pub-

lished till about A.D. 94, and the latest date suggested by any writer for the martyrdom of St. Peter is A.D. 65. If it is "not a very hopeful line of defence" to suggest that Josephus may have read 2 Peter, it is an altogether desperate line of defence to argue, as Dr. Salmon does, that the coincidences in passages of the two writers are purely accidental. The hypotheses that the Epistle was written in Aramaic, and that it was only the Greek translator who borrowed from Josephus, or that both writers borrow from some third source, need not here be examined. No one seems to have seriously suggested them.¹

I ventured to say, and here repeat, that "beyond all shadow of doubt Josephus and the writer of the Epistle could not have written independently of each other"; and that "it would be impossible for me to feel respect for the judgment of any critic who asserted that the resemblances between the two writers were purely fortuitous." Dr. Salmon arrives at the opposite conclusion, and after remarking upon my "magisterial decision," proceeds to an assumption as gratuitously insulting as I could well have imagined. He leads his readers to believe that I had never looked at the passages of Josephus *in situ*; that I had not verified Dr. Abbott's references; that I had "not looked into the matter for myself"; and that I had "jumbled up in my mind the two counts of Dr. Abbott's indictment, that 2 Peter employs unusual and startling words, and that he copies from Josephus"! I have been accustomed for a quarter of a century to the impertinence of tenth-rate "religious" journalism, but I should have hoped that Dr. Salmon was himself too good a scholar and too fair-minded a man to

¹ It may however be noticed that Jerome could only get over the glaring differences of style between 1 Peter and 2 Peter by the suggestion that St. Peter used different Greek amanuenses. *Ep. 120 ad Hedib.* § 11: "Denique et duæ Epistolæ quæ feruntur Petre stilo inter se et caractere discrepant structuraque verborum. Ex quo intelligimus pro necessitate rerum *diversis eum usum interpretibus.*"

indulge in a method of depreciation so cheap and so false. I have been familiar with the writings of Josephus for many years, and Dr. Salmon has chosen to state the reverse of the fact when he charges me with not having examined the matter thoroughly for myself. The first thing I did was to take down my copy of Josephus and examine *in situ* (as he calls it) the passages in question. I have never stooped to notice unworthy criticism, nor have I ever, during a literary life which is now nearing its close, been in any hurry to defend my opinions from the attacks of hundreds of assailants. If I now notice the points at issue between Dr. Salmon and myself, I am not led to do so by the least personal concern in the matter—for I have learnt from Dante,

“Lascia dir le genti,
Sta, come torre, fermo,”—

but solely in the interests of truth. If it had been possible to argue the question without mentioning myself at all, it would have been far more in accordance with my wishes and my habits.

Dr. Salmon, after doing his best to disparage me beforehand in the eyes of his readers, takes issue with me on three points :

I agreed with Dr. Abbott in the view that words, in some instances not only unusual but startling, words which are in some instances *hapax legomena*, so far as the N.T. and the LXX. are concerned, occur together, in much the same sequence and connexion, in passages of brief compass, in the *Antiquities* of Josephus. Dr. Salmon says,—

1. “They do not appear in passages of what I should call brief compass. They are taken from a folio page of Josephus, and range from 2 Peter i. 3 to iii. 16.”

If I were to adopt Dr. Salmon’s methods, I should say that this was a loose statement, for the facts are these.

The first important group of resemblances in expression adduced by Dr. Abbott occurs in 2 Peter i. 3, 4, 16, and in *two paragraphs* of the Introduction of Josephus. The second important group of words occurs *mainly* in 2 Peter i. 12, 13, 15, 17, and in Josephus, *Antiquities* iv. 8 § 2.

Is it anything but a quibble to say then, that they do not occur within brief compass? And does it add nothing to the singular character of the phenomenon that they are crowded into the two passages of Josephus which would have been specially likely to attract attention; namely, the Introduction, resembling the introduction of the Epistle, and the last words of Moses, resembling the farewell message of St. Peter?

2. "They are not in *the same* sequence and connexion."

I did not say that they were "in the same," but "in *much* the same." They are so close together that the sequence and connexion are remarkable: in Josephus the order of resemblances is a, g, f, b, h, c, d, e; in 2 Peter g, c, d, b, h, e, f, a. "The case," says Dr. Salmon, "is as if one finding two pieces of stuff of different patterns and material should fix on some flowers or the like occurring here and there in each, should cut up both into scraps, *construct a patchwork out of each* (!) and then say, How like these pieces are to each other!" It would be impossible to use a comparison more misleading. It would be more true to say that (i.) we find two pieces, among a vast heap, which bear close, repeated, and most surprising resemblance to two others in a comparatively small heap; (ii.) that the pieces compared are once or twice absolutely identical in their marked peculiarities; and (iii.) that these peculiarities occur in no other pieces which we could select for comparison. Would not the inference be forced upon us that the designers of the strange patterns had not worked quite independently of each other?

3. "The words are not unusual and startling, and such as can fairly be called *hapax legomena*."

Dr. Salmon first makes a point by setting aside one or two resemblances to which it is not true that "Dr. Abbott asks us to give *weight*," for he said distinctly that they are "slight in themselves" (e.g. "the *power* of God"). Such a similarity is only worth any notice at all when it occurs with others which we believe to be decisive. But I cannot agree that the same remark applies to *τοιᾶσδε* in 2 Peter i. 17. The expression, "the *following* voice" (*φωνῆς . . . τοιᾶσδε*) is in itself a strange expression. It is still more so when we find that (1) the word *τοιᾶσδε* occurs nowhere else in the N.T.; and (2) not once apparently in the whole LXX.;¹ but (3) does occur in the very paragraph (or, lest a quibble should be founded on this, in the *last word* of the previous paragraph) of Josephus which furnishes a whole group of resemblances to 2 Peter. The force of inference arising from the *combination of many phrases*, even if one or two of them be not in themselves uncommon, does not seem to strike Dr. Salmon at all. The argument is this. Two prominent passages of Josephus bear marked resemblance to parts of 2 Peter, especially in the first chapter; and some of the expressions are so unusual that they cannot be due to accident. We find them combined with a group of others which, taken by themselves, would not have attracted any attention; but when they are considered in connexion with the others they would be taken into account in *any similar controversy* about literary resemblances. Dr. Salmon "counts it needless to discuss" *γινώσκειν ὅτι* and *δίκαιον ἡγεῖσθαι*; but whether he does or not, he may be sure that critics will take those coincidences into account when they occur with half a dozen of a similar kind, and when the former phrase, used to introduce a new clause, is rare in the N.T., and the latter does not

¹ Schleusner does not give a single instance.

occur elsewhere either in the N.T. or in the LXX. Dr. Salmon cannot see the force of the bare facts that in the passages in question *τοιόσδε, μνήμη, πλαστός, δίκαιον ἡγοῦμαι, μύθοις ἐξακολουθήσαντες, Θεοῦ* and *θεία φύσις* are never used elsewhere in the N.T., and *ἐφ' ὅσον, ἔξοδος, μεγαλειότης* only once elsewhere; that these are only a few of the resemblances between the passages in question, which are further strengthened by other resemblances like *καλῶς ποιεῖτε προσέχοντες* (2 Pet. i. 19; *Ant.* xi. 6 § 12); and that, further, the resemblances in language are rendered still more remarkable by resemblances in thought. But these facts would be quite sufficient to prove that there had been plagiarism on one side or the other, if the resemblances occurred in authors about whose date or independence no one had formed any preconceived opinion. They cannot be minimised, nor can the issue which they raise be confused by any special pleading however ingenious.

Nor must it be forgotten that, besides the coincidences crowded into two short spaces, there are other isolated similarities. Such are *ἰσότημος* (2 Pet. i. 1, here only in N.T.; *Jos., Ant.* xii. 3 § 1); the very strange phrase *λήθην λαβών*, "receiving oblivion" (i. 9, here only in N.T.; *Jos., Ant.* ii. 9 § 1); *σεσοφισμένος* (i. 16, here only in N.T.; comp. *Jos., B. J.* iv. 2 § 3; iii. 7 § 20: but in *Ps.* lvii. 5 *σεσοφισμένος* is used by Aquila and Symmachus in a different sense); *ἐπάγγελμα*, in the sense of "promise" (*Jos. c. Ap.* i. § 5); *ἐμπορένσονται* in the sense of "will make gain of" (ii. 3, here only in N.T., but in *Jos. Ant.* iv. 6 § 8); the phrase *πλαστοῖς λόγοις*, also here only in N.T., and resembling the *πλασμάτων* of *Jos., Ant.*, *Introd.* § 3; the late and bad word *ἔκπαλαι* (ii. 3); *βραδύτης*, of the Divine judgment (iii. 9); *χωρῆσαι*, in the sense of "go forward" (iii. 9; *Jos., B. J.* vi. 2 § 5); *ᾧ καλῶς ποιεῖτε προσέχοντες* (i. 19; *Jos., Ant.* xi. 6 § 12); *κυριότητος καταφρονούντες· τολμηταί* (ii. 10, compared with *τολμηταί καὶ*

θανάτου καταφρονοῦντες, Jos., B. J. iii. 9 § 3). These are by no means all that have been adduced by Dr. Abbott or previous scholars; and it is probable that diligent research would reveal many more.

Dr. Salmon fails to see the force of conviction which results from St. Peter's use of the astonishing expression in 2 Peter i. 3, τοῦ καλέσαντος ἡμᾶς ἰδίᾳ δόξῃ καὶ ἀρετῇ (N. A. C. Lachm., Tisch.). In the first place, the word ἀρετή is very rare in the N.T. It only occurs in the singular in this Epistle (i. 3, 5) and in Philippians iv. 8; and in the latter passage it is hardly adopted into the Christian sphere of thought, but is rather used in a general appeal *a minori ad majus* to converts who had been heathens. The Christian ideal required "holiness," which is something transcendently loftier than the Pagan ideal of virtue. It would therefore be enough to startle the most careless reader to find "*virtue*" attributed to *God*. Dr. Salmon says, "But we have τὰς ἀρετὰς concerning God in the first Epistle (ii. 9)." It is to me astonishing that he should have been content to say this without noticing my argument, which proves how absolutely irrelevant is the supposed parallel. Ἀρεταί and ἀρετή have entirely different meanings. Ἀρεταί is rendered "*praises*" in our A. V., and "*virtues*" in the margin. Both renderings are dubious. No Christian would dare to talk of "the *virtues* of God"; and in ordinary Greek ἀρεταί could not mean "*praises*." Our translators of 1611 only used the word because ἀρεταί is used by the LXX. in Isaiah xlii. 8, xliii. 21, for the Hebrew תְּהִלָּה, and is interchangeable with δόξα, "*glory*." The use of ἀρεταί therefore is no parallel at all. There is nothing in ἀρεταί (which has here a Hebraic meaning taken from the LXX.) which is at all surprising, and in point of fact it simply means the same as in the passage of Isaiah. "In omnibus his locis," says Schleusner, "ἀρεταί sunt maxime laudabiles perfectiones et proprietates Dei" (comp. Esth. xiv. 10).

But that our Authorized translators felt the difficulty involved in the ἀρετή of 2 Peter is clear, for otherwise they would not have rendered it by the impossible mistranslation, "who hath called us to glory and virtue." I have very little doubt that it was the strangeness of the phrase, that God "called us by His own glory and virtue," which caused the alteration of the reading in B.K.L. to διὰ δόξης καὶ ἀρετῆς; for there is nothing in the O.T., resembling the attribution of *virtue* to God. In Habakkuk iii. 2 we read ἐκάλυψεν οὐρανὸς ἡ ἀρετὴ αὐτοῦ; but there the word is simply used for γῆϛ, "glory" (comp. Ps. xix. 1), as in Zechariah vi. 13.

Now certainly it may be argued that 2 Peter uses ἀρετή in the sense of ἀρεταί, following these one or two instances in the LXX.; and it may also be argued (as Dr. Salmon argues) that he borrows not from Josephus but from Philo, who also uses ἀρετή of God in one or two passages.¹ But when we remember that the expression, in itself so rare, occurs in a passage of Josephus, which in a single page affords us four or five *other* expressions found in a page or two of this Epistle, and either not found at all, or very rarely found elsewhere in the N.T. or LXX., the argument that the two writers are not independent of each other becomes overwhelmingly strong. My greatest difficulty in holding that *Josephus* was the borrower arises from the fact that in *his* Introduction the expression at once explains itself. "Other legislators," he says, "following fables, transferred to the gods the shame of human sins; but our legislator exhibited God as the possessor of an uncontaminated *virtue*." He is thus contrasting the ideal of a *God of virtue* with gods who were the apotheosis of human vice.

¹ But it seems to me that in *Quis. Rer. Div. Haer.* (Mangey i. 488) ἀρετή does not mean virtue, but "glory," as the context shows; and in *De Somn.* (Mangey i. 635), the ἀρετή, "majestas," of God is in contrast to the μικρολογία of men.

Similarly with the *θεοῦ φύσιν* of Josephus as compared with the *θείας φύσεως* of 2 Peter i. 4. The adjective *θείος* only occurs in the N.T. in this Epistle (i. 3, 4); for τὸ θεῖον in Acts xvii. 29 is hardly a case in point. In the LXX. also *θείος* is very far from common. *φύσις*, both in the N.T. and the LXX., is applied elsewhere exclusively to *created* nature. It would never have occurred to a Jew to talk about "*the Divine nature*"; but Josephus, familiar as he was with the common phrases of Greek philosophy, would use the term freely enough.¹ But, says Dr. Salmon, *θεοῦ φύσις* is also a Philonic phrase, and he quotes *De Mose* (Mangey ii. 143), ἤδει γὰρ τὴν φύσιν τοῦ θεοῦ. He would have done better at least to quote the next word, ἤδει γὰρ τὴν φύσιν τοῦ θεοῦ ἔλεω. "He (Noah) knew that the nature (here = the disposition, or character) of God was merciful." Here the phrase is *not used in the abstract at all*, as it is in Josephus and 2 Peter, so that the quotation is irrelevant. But, apart from this, to ask why 2 Peter may not have borrowed the phrase from Philo, is simply to ignore the whole meaning and cumulative character of the argument. If Dr. Salmon could produce in any fifty pages of Philo's voluminous works *as many and as close* parallels to 2 Peter as have been adduced from two folio pages of Josephus, his question would have some meaning. Until he can do so it involves a simple *ignoratio elenchi*.

In conclusion, let me ask the serious and candid reader, who only cares to arrive at the truth, to do as I have done by writing out side by side the passages of Josephus and those of 2 Peter which are marked by close resemblance in thought and expression. Let him then calmly consider their weight and their singularity. If, after having done that, he still adheres to the opinion that they are of absolutely independent origin, his canons of literary criticism

¹ B. J. iii. 7 § 20; iv. 2 § 3. Also the *θείας κοινωνοί φύσεως* is the same order as *μακρᾶς κοινωνοί ταλαιπωρίας* in *Ant.* iv. 8 § 2.

must be so completely different from those to which I have been led during the whole of a studious life, that any further argument would evidently be useless.

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ANCIENT AND MODERN PROPHETS.

WE are not concerned with the idea of prediction, nor again with those ecstatic outbursts of dancing, music, and song, which are not wholly without a place even in Hebrew and Christian prophecy. The special attribute of the prophet on which we wish to dwell may be roughly expressed in the words, "Preacher of Righteousness." The received etymology of the common Hebrew word for prophet suggests fluent and fervid utterance, the utterance of truth in the fervour of God-sent enthusiasm; again the Greek word describes one who speaks for another, the interpreter or ambassador of the Divine will. In other cases the prophet is called a seer, and this name, however used at the time, may fairly remind us that an essential condition of the enthusiastic utterance of truth is that the speaker shall have beheld the Divine vision of the truth.

Insight, the ambassador's mission, the gift and duty of utterance, these have been the characteristics of the prophets of every age and nation. And the men who have borne the name of Prophet have been busy with all the business of life, from strayed asses to changing dynasties, from rites and ceremonies to the vindication of the liberties of the oppressed, to the foreshadowing of the suffering Messiah, to the open vision of the glory of God. The prophet has been as it were a manifestation of the Living Word, lending to the Divine message the fire of human emotion and the energy of human conviction, as when at