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IS SECOND PETER A GENUINE EPISTLE TO
THE CHURCHES OF SAMARIA?

INTEREST has been quickened of late in the Second Epistle of Peter, so perplexing just at the moment when one arrives at some conclusion regarding it, by the appearance of several works of the first importance. There is Zahn's learned and exhaustive defence of the Epistle in his *Einleitung in das neue Testament*, giving weight to some of Spitta's rather erratic theories. Dr. Chase also has laid students under obligations by his able articles on Petrine literature in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, in which he abandons the apostolic authorship of the Second Epistle. And now we welcome a worthy edition of the Epistles of Peter and Jude by that eminent authority on the first centuries, Professor Charles Bigg, who is a strenuous advocate of the genuineness of the Second Epistle. In view of the mature judgment of two such patristic scholars as Dr. Zahn and Dr. Bigg, there is insufficient warrant for Mr. Moffatt to say in his *Historical New Testament* that "the composition of this writing during the course of the second century, and probably in its first half, cannot be regarded any longer as one of the open questions in New Testament criticism."

These recent researches have prepared the way for a theory as to the destination of the Epistle, which, it seems to me, solves the outstanding problems. The evidence, in my judgment, is strongly against the opinion of Spitta and Zahn that the recipients were Jewish Christians; nor can one agree with Dr. Bigg that, as "First Peter will satisfy the conditions of 2 Peter iii. 1 fairly well," the same circle of readers is probably addressed in both Epistles. But if 2 Peter was written by the Apostle through an "interpreter" from Antioch, shortly before he went to Rome, to the Churches of Samaria, most of the difficulties in the way

of accepting it as genuine will disappear. In support of this hypothesis it will be necessary to examine the literary affinities of the letter, its Petrine element, the nature of its teaching and its attestation.

I. THE LITERARY AFFINITIES OF 2 PETER.

1. *The Old Testament.*

There are very few direct quotations from the Old Testament in this Epistle. The most obvious is in iii. 8, one half of which is evidently taken from Psalm xc. 4, where the LXX. agrees with the Hebrew. The author is true to the meaning of the Psalm. No loitering falsifies the promises of God; the prophecy as to the Day of the Lord proclaimed in the far past to the fathers, and afterwards repeated in the Gospel of Christ, though not yet fulfilled, will assuredly prove true. God is maturing purposes of mercy; our distant ages are but as yesterday in His sight, and a thousand of our coming years are only His tomorrow.

Some of the language of iii. 13 is probably suggested by Isaiah lxxv. 17, lxxvi. 22. Also the original of the first saying of ii. 22 is almost certainly to be found in Proverbs xxvi. 11, because the second half of the verse, "so is a fool that repeateth his folly," exactly suits the argument of our passage. Possibly it was current in Greek, for it is called "a proverb"; but if so, it was independent of the LXX., which reads τὸν ἑαυτοῦ ἔμετον; and the Hebrew is by far the most probable source for the saying as it stands here, especially in an author who seems to be indebted to Proverbs in other parts of this Epistle.

The indirect influence of the Old Testament on St. Peter is very much greater and more striking because its conceptions often are the warp of the argument. Prophecy, unintelligible to the original prophet, finds its meaning

and the fulfilment of its forecasts only in the Christian facts; the experiences of the old Israel are the most cogent illustrations of the life of the new (i. 19, 20; ii. 1 ff.).

The citation of Noah and the Flood (ii. 5; iii. 5, 7), Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah (ii. 6-8) as warnings is probably due to the words of Christ (Matt. xxiv. 37, 38; Luke xvii. 26-29). But there is a subtle proof that our author had drunk deep of the spirit of the Old Testament stories. In the Gospel narratives Christ speaks of the days of Noah and of Lot only as days of judgment. This would have suited Peter's threat of doom on the false teachers; but in harmony with the account in Genesis, which sets forth the gracious discipline of God with the world, he adds, "but preserved Noah and seven others," "delivered righteous Lot," believing that God cannot forget the righteous remnant of the Christian Church, but that "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation."

The example of Balaam, though possibly a commonplace, is enlarged by our author from Numbers xxii. to suit his own purposes (ii. 15, 16).

Reminiscences from Proverbs will account for most of the imagery of ii. 17. The figure of a flowing fountain, full of meaning in Palestine, is often found in the Old Testament (cf. especially Proverbs x. 11, xiii. 14, xiv. 27, xvi. 22; Jer. ii. 13) to denote that the fear of the Lord is the truest wisdom. This may have given rise to "these are wells without water," so vain are these libertines with their empty words as compared with the Apostles who preached the power and parousia of the Saviour. The second metaphor describing the avarice of the false teachers, "mists driven by a storm," may be derived from Proverbs xxi. 6, xxv. 14. In contrast to the true prophet of the Old Testament (i. 21) these men come upon the Church with their lies and greed, like racing scud in a squall, dimming the light of truth. Also the third clause, "for whom the

blackness of darkness is reserved," sounds like a combination of Proverbs xxi. 16, with the thought of the fate of the angels (ii. 4); cf. also the last words of Proverbs xxi. 6. The true prophet points to a bright day whose dawn will be ushered in by the morning star (i. 19), but thick darkness awaits the false teacher. It should be observed that the Hebrew and not the LXX. is the most probable source for these comparisons. Another favourite expression of Proverbs, ἡ ὁδὸς τῆς δικαιοσύνης (viii. 20, xii. 28, xvi. 17, 31, xvii. 23), occurs in 2 Peter ii. 21 (cf. ii. 2, 15). Possibly echoes of Proverbs xxi. 24, 26, in which the insolently wicked who scoffs not at belief but at law is defined (Τοῦ), may be found in 2 Peter ii. 10, 13.

The third chapter especially must have been written by a Hebrew who was saturated with the thought and spirit of the Old Testament. His cosmogony and the account of the Flood are evidently based on Genesis i. 6-9, vii. 11. Every stage of the process of creation begins with "God said" (cf. 2 Peter iii. 5, 7, "by the word of God"). In later Jewish theology the instrument in creation is the Memra, or in Philo the Logos. Paul, John, and the author of Hebrews extend the idea by assigning the agency to the Son. The author of 2 Peter abides by the original conception of Genesis, and may intend to give in passing an answer to those who hold that matter is eternal. As in Genesis, the firmament separates the upper waters from the earth, which rose out of the lower waters (ἐξ ὑδάτος καὶ δι' ὑδάτος, iii. 5, chiasmically arranged, as so often in 2 Peter), and at the Flood the waters from above pouring down, and those from below rushing up (δι' ὧν) overwhelmed the earth (cf. also Ps. cxlviii. 4).

Another strand in the pattern of the thought of 2 Peter is the Old Testament prophecy of the Day of the Lord, defined and coloured, as we shall see, by the sayings of Jesus. This promise goes so far back that it is now treated by

many as a delusion (iii. 4), though the Flood should be a warning that judgment will come in the future as it did in the past. "In the Old Testament prophets the Day of the Lord is to be a day of judgment and thereby also of salvation. Around this Day as a day of judgment all the terrible pictures of gloom and the dissolution of nature gather" (A. B. Davidson). With 2 Peter iii. 7, 10, compare Psalm xcvii. 1-5; cii. 25, 26; Isaiah xiii. 9-13; xxxiv. 4, li. 6, lxvi. 15, 16; Malachi iv. 1. Also, "the eternal kingdom" (2 Peter i. 11) is not improbably drawn from Daniel vii. 14, 27, which gives a description of the final victorious rule of one like unto a Son of Man.

One cannot avoid the impression that the author of 2 Peter was better acquainted with the Hebrew Bible than with the LXX.; for not only does he deal freely with his passages, and depart from the LXX. where we can with some degree of certainty check him, but there is no trace of Alexandrianism in his thought. Imagery and ideas are Hebraic.

2. *The New Testament.*

The Gospels. The two most manifest points of contact with our Gospels are found in the account of the Transfiguration and in the eschatology. 2 Peter i. 16-18 presents substantially the same situation as that given in the synoptic narrative of the Transfiguration, with the splendour of the Divine presence and the accompanying voice in attestation of sonship. The reading of B, *ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός μου οὗτός ἐστιν εἰς ὃν ἐγὼ εὐδόκησα*, adopted by W. H., Weiss, and Nestle, is not identical with any in our Gospel records. Peter is nearest to Matthew, who reads *οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα*. Nor are the words taken from the utterance recorded in the Gospels at the Baptism. If our Gospels were before the writer of this Epistle, it is also difficult to account for the omission of the words "hear Him," which would have suited his

purpose so well. The Transfiguration showed that Jesus is what the Apostles claimed Him to be, the Revealer of the Father, possessed of such divine power that His commands must be obeyed, and that His parousia is certain. If the writer had to meet the objections of false teachers, who claimed that the Resurrection was a spiritual fact already come in their own life, his only possible appeal was to the Transfiguration, when they had got a glimpse of the essential honour and glory with which He was to be crowned at the Resurrection (cf. Heb. ii. 9). From the Transfiguration Jesus returned to earth to resume His work. Further, the event was witnessed by the three Apostles alone. Many saw the risen Christ. Only those of the innermost circle can speak with the fullest authority concerning the nature of their Lord.

The eschatology of 2 Peter also reproduces the main outlines of the teaching of Christ as given in the Synoptics. At the approach of the Son of Man in glory the world will dissolve before His majestic holiness (cf. *δι' ἣν παρουσίαν*, 2 Pet. iii. 12 with Mark xiii. 26 and parallels). The heavens will pass away (2 Peter iii. 10, 12; Mark xiii. 31 and parallels). With the collapse of the firmament, the stars fixed therein, will fall melting (*στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσεται*, 2 Pet, iii. 10, 12; Mark xiii. 24, 25 and parallels; cf. Isa. xxxiv. 4). Terror and dissolution will overtake the earth and all therein (2 Pet. iii. 10, 11; Luke xxi. 26, 33 and parallels). "The promise of the Lord Jesus" (iii. 13), though expressed in the language of Isaiah lxv. 17, lxvi. 22, and an apocalyptic idea (cf. Enoch xci. 16; Apoc. xxi. 1), probably underlies such statements as Matthew xix. 28, xxv. 31. A blending of prophetic phraseology of the Old Testament with an apostolic term may be seen in the unique phrase "the parousia of the Day of God" (iii. 12).

There are some additional features. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief" (iii. 10), an apostolic commonplace

(1 Thess. v. 2 ; Rev. iii. 3, xvi. 15), is based on a saying of Christ (Matt. xxiv. 43 ; Luke xii. 39). Our author shares the conviction of the apostolic era, also to be traced back to Christ, that the times before the return of the Messiah will be degenerate. Signs of the end are found in 2 Peter in the false teachers (Mark xiii. 22, 30 ; Matt. vii. 13-15, 22, 23, xxiv. 11, 24) ; and evidently under the influence of the teaching of Jesus he employs the examples of Noah, and Lot and Sodom to fledge the arrow of his threatenings (2 Pet. ii. 5-7, iii. 5-7). A rich interpretation is given to 2 Peter iii. 3, 4, 10-12 by the parables of Matthew xxiv. 45-51 ; Luke xii. 35-46 ; and the consummation of the eternal kingdom at the appearing of the Son of Man (2 Peter i. 10, 11, iii. 13, 14) finds its best illustration in Matthew xxii. 1-14 ; xxv. 31-34, 46.

Many scholars hold that a leading purpose in the composition of the Gospels, especially Mark, was to counteract doubts as to Christ's return on the part of those who were growing disheartened through their delayed hope. We find the same restiveness and discontent in 2 Peter. It reflects the questionings to which the Gospels supplied an answer : its eschatology is of the Synoptical type.

Of indirect references to gospel history there are some which, though not so evident as the foregoing, are more or less obvious. The most natural interpretation of 2 Peter i. 3 is that the writer has in his mind the personal call of Jesus to himself and other disciples to follow Him, and the discovery that He is the Revealer of the Father full of grace and truth (John i. 14, 42). In the Old Testament *δόξα* and *ἀρετή*, almost synonymous conceptions, were applied to Jehovah, and Peter transfers them to Jesus as the one through whom full knowledge of God was brought to him (Isa. xlii. 8, 12). For this reason " God " and " Jesus Christ " are combined under one article (2 Pet. i. 2).

The remarkable saying of Jesus in Matthew xi. 27, Luke x.

22, affords a striking parallel to 2 Peter i. 3, 8. Along with this go ideas found in the parable of the sower (Matt. xiii. 11-13, 23; Luke viii. 10, 15). Those who possess the honest and good heart, the Christian *καλοκαγαθοί*, will be fruit-bearing. To them are given the mysteries of the kingdom. These mysteries are dispensed only through the Son, who, having all power, reveals a knowledge of the Father to those who are morally receptive. Not only does the word *ἐπίγνωσις* (*ἐπιγνώσκω*) occur both in Matthew and 2 Peter, but the thought of Peter agrees with that of the Gospel. Nothing but a character fruitful in virtue is receptive of true knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Revealer of God. Such knowledge in its turn confers power for life and godliness. It is worthy of notice that the distinctive addition in Luke x. 23, 24 finds its closest parallel in 1 Peter i. 10.

As we shall see when we consider the false teaching of this Epistle, there is such affinity in the thought and expression of 2 Peter ii. 19-21 with Matthew xii. 28, 29, 43-45, Luke xi. 21, 22, 24-26, that we may safely regard this passage as the Gospel source to which the words *τὰ ἔσχατα χεῖρονα τῶν πρώτων*, and possibly *ὑποστρέψαι* are traceable. Whether Luke xiii. 7, 8, is a sufficient source for 2 Peter i. 8, iii. 9, 15 is uncertain. There is greater probability that the favourite designation of the Christian life as "the way" (ii. 2, 15, 21) is an Old Testament expression finding its completion in Christ "the Way," and that "the holy commandment" (ii. 21) is His command to follow Him in that way. In this connexion 2 Peter i. 10, 11 may be compared with Matthew vii. 14.

A review of these passages shows that the author of this Epistle is familiar with gospel incidents and imbued with its teaching; but he follows no one Gospel in preference to the others. Sometimes he is in greater accord with Matthew, again with Luke, and there is one reminiscence of an event recorded in John (2 Peter i. 14, John

xxi. 18, 19). It is almost certain that our written Gospels were not before him, so independent is he of them, and so delicately allusive to what in them is put with a different turn. Corroborative evidence of this is found especially in 2 Peter i. 19, in which written prophecy is said to be the source of illumination for Christians until the Day of the Parousia dawn. After Matthew had been issued such an utterance as this would have been almost inconceivable. Also the most reasonable explanation of i. 15, 16 is that the author hopes to leave a trustworthy written record of that life, into the secret mysteries of which he with but few others had been initiated. Another confirmation is afforded by the words of ii. 21, which suggest that so far the sayings of Christ had been transmitted by tradition (cf. 2 Thess. ii. 15).

The Pauline Epistles. Traces of Pauline thought are very scanty. In i. 1, "the righteousness of God" is not the peculiar Pauline conception, but is the quality of one who is a just God and a Saviour for all, and no respecter of persons (cf. Acts x. 34). The word *ἐπίγνωσις*, though common in the later Epistles, has been sufficiently accounted for by Synoptic usage. Moreover, the Christology of these Epistles, especially its cosmic significance, has no parallel in 2 Peter iii. 5, 7. Nor does the word *καλεῖν* occur in the favourite Pauline meaning; and the doctrine of the indwelling Spirit of the risen Christ in the believer is nowhere to be discovered, however much the essential element may be in i. 3. A similar temper to that of the scoffers is perhaps reflected in the Epistles to the Thessalonians, and somewhat close analogies with 2 Peter iii. 14 are presented by 1 Thessalonians iii. 13, v. 23. Also Romans ii. 4, ix. 22, and in fact the general teaching as to the fulness of the times, agree with the Petrine doctrine of the divine long-suffering (2 Pet. iii. 9, 15). Those who abused Christian freedom (2 Pet. ii. 18, 19)

may have justified themselves by a distortion of Pauline teaching (iii. 16).

Attention has often been drawn to coincidences with the Pastoral Epistles. Both contain similar phrases and ideas. Such words as these are in mutual use *αἰρετικός* = *αἵρεσις*, *αὐθάδης*, *ἀρνεῖσθαι*, *βλασφημεῖν ἐμπλέκειν*, *ἐντολή*, *ἐπίγνωσις*, *ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν* = *ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι*, *εὐσέβεια*, *μιαίνειν*, *μῖασμα*, *μιασμός*, *μῦθος*. But they may be paralleled in Philo or the language of the time. The doctrine of the false teachers of the Pastorals is a "teaching of demons." They are blasphemous, and walk according to their own passions. Maintaining that the resurrection is already past they deny the Parousia (2 Tim. ii. 18). Self-aggrandizement is their motive (1 Tim. vi. 5; Tit. i. 11). They are a sign of the last days (2 Tim. iii. 1). These similarities, however, may be accounted for by the religious conceptions that were widely current in the Orient, and by the common vocabulary for such ideas, which would be more or less familiar to an amanuensis from a Greek city of Syria or Asia Minor. They are outbalanced by fundamental differences of situation and error, which, we shall see, forbid our assuming any kinship between the writings.

The most perplexing feature of the relation to Paul remains in verses iii. 15, 16. Our author evidently puts the letters of the Apostle Paul on the same level as his own (15); and that this is not quite so high as the Old Testament is clear from two considerations: (1) His own writings are a reminder of the Gospel preached by himself and other Apostles, but not yet written (i. 12, 15, 16). His readers are to hold fast to "written prophecy" along with the commandment of the Lord delivered to them by their Apostles (i. 19, ii. 21, iii. 2). (2) The prophet of the old Testament was controlled by the Holy Spirit and spake as God gave him utterance (i. 21), whereas Paul wrote with wisdom (iii. 15). Now in his own letters Paul claims that

the true Christian may possess such wisdom (1 Cor. ii. 6, 7, 13, xii. 8), though he himself has special revelations from God (1 Cor. ii. 16, xi. 23; 1 Thess. iv. 15), and is peculiarly inspired (1 Thess. ii. 13; Gal. i. 8, 9, 11). But he places the other Apostles alongside himself. His letters or written commands are of equal authority with the word of mouth (2 Thess. iii. 14; 1 Cor. v. 3; 2 Cor. x. 11). 2 Peter and the Pauline Epistles present similar points of view. Apostolic writings do not rank quite with the old Testament, but they are of no less importance than oral teaching. It is difficult to see why τὰς λοιπὰς γραφάς might not mean such apostolic letters. We know from 2 Thessalonians ii. 2, iii. 17 that forgers had set to work early; and these false teachers also might have had little hesitation in distorting Christian literature to suit their own ends.

Further, verse 16 leaves the impression that the writer was acquainted with all the letters of Paul, though his readers were not. The passage would suit a situation in which Paul was still writing. At least there is no sign that any collection of his Epistles was circulating anywhere. In view of the impression made on 1 Peter by the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians we are bound to put 2 Peter, assuming it to be genuine, at an earlier period of the Apostle's career. On the other hand, if 2 Peter be not genuine, how are we to explain the fact that one who claims to have known all Paul's writings, and who intends to convey the idea that he was on friendly terms with him, has escaped with such meagre traces of his influence? For after 90 A.D. or thereabouts sub-apostolic literature is saturated with Pauline thought. It is indeed questionable whether "distort" is the word that would be employed to describe the attitude of immoral Gnostics of the second century towards the Old Testament. Most of them rejected its authority entirely; and how would a wresting of the Old Testament Scriptures be used to sanction an abuse of freedom?

Even the errorists of this letter, who are presumably like those described in iii. 16, seem to have despised the Old Testament, if we may so infer from the repeated injunctions to give heed to prophecy (i. 19-21; iii. 2, 4-7). The words *αἱ λοιπαὶ γραφαί* imply that apostolic doctrine is one, and that to distort Pauline doctrine or any other is to reject a common Gospel (2 Thess. ii. 15; Gal. i. 6-9; ii. 7-9; Rom. xvi. 17, Tit. i. 9; Heb. xiii 8; 2 John 9; 2 Pet. ii. 21, iii 2; Acts. ii. 42). We have only a suggestion here and there of the large correspondence that must have passed between the Christian Churches, besides the writings of the Apostolic Age that remain to us, just as the glint on a solitary sail may be all that tells out on the ocean of the vast commerce of the high seas.

Hebrews. This Epistle presents more affinities with 2 Peter than any single letter of Paul's. Similar conceptions of the fulfilment of prophecy in the utterance of a Son occur in 2 Peter i. 17-21, and Heb. i. 1; and of danger from apostasy, coupled often with warnings from the history of Israel, in 2 Peter ii. 1, 5, 6, 19-22, iii. 4-7; Heb. iii. 6-iv. 13, vi. 1-8, x. 26, 27. Delay of the Parousia is a fertile source of discontent in both (2 Pet. iii. 3, 4, 9, 10; Heb. x. 37-39). Other parallels are the use of "the fathers" of old Testament prophets (2 Pet. iii. 4; Heb. i. 1); "honour and glory" of Christ (2 Pet. i, 17; Heb. ii. 9). *Θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως* (2 Pet. i. 4) may be compared with Hebrews iii. 14, xii. 10; 2 Peter i. 10, 11 with Hebrews ix. 15, xii. 28. On the other hand, there is not a tinge of Alexandrian thought in 2 Peter. The author is a Hebrew with a strong ethical sense, and no speculative idealism of any sort.

3. *Non-canonical writing.*

The Book of Enoch. The construction of Peter's world-system is based on Genesis and the Prophets, and far surpasses that of Enoch both in simple dignity and the awfulness of its future. But Peter ventures on the swirl

and riot of the apocalyptic current, though it is only to snatch a piece of flotsam wherewith to illustrate his warnings.

The description in 2 Peter ii. 4 is evidently suggested by the punishment of the angels in Enoch x. 4-6, xviii 11-xxi. The abyss, chaotic and horrible, in which the angels are confined in preliminary punishment is called Tartarus in the Greek version (xx. 2). "Pits of darkness" might come from x. 4-6, and "plunging them down to hell" from xviii. 11-xxi. If in 2 Peter ii. 11 *δόξας* be taken in its most obvious meaning to describe the fallen angels of ii. 4, leaders in the hierarchy of evil powers, which were supposed to envelope the world like a spiritual atmosphere (Eph. vi. 12), we have here a strong resemblance to Enoch. In Enoch ix. 1 it is said that the four archangels, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael ("angels greater in might and power") look down from heaven and see the evil wrought by the fallen angels (*τὰ ἄσπρα, αἱ δυνάμεις τοῦ οὐρανοῦ*, Enoch xviii. 14). The souls of men cry out to them, "Bring our judgment (*κρίσιν*) to the most high" (cf. "to bring before the Lord *βλάσφημον κρίσιν*," 2 Pet. ii. 11). The angels cry in response, "Lord of lords, God of gods, King of kings, the throne of Thy glory standeth unto all the generations of the ages . . . all things are naked and open in Thy sight . . . See then what Azazel hath done, how he hath taught all unrighteousness on earth. . . . What are we therefore to do in regard to this?" Then the Lord gives the archangel authority to bind Azazel and place him under jagged rocks in the desert and cover him with darkness until the final day of judgment (2 Pet. ii. 4). Again in Enoch lxviii. Michael and Raphael stand appalled at the sight of the wickedness of the angels, and the majesty of the Divine presence. This conduct is an extreme contrast to that of the false teachers who rail irreverently at what they assert to be an impotent spirit world.

It is just possible that the comparison of the libertines with

“ unreasoning beasts ” (ii. 12) may have been suggested by Enoch lxxxvi.-xc., where we have an account of how the fallen stars mingling with the sons of men beget evil offspring symbolized by wild beasts. The doom of the error-ists will be that of the fallen angels (*αὐτῶν* probably refers to *δόξαι*).

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