

Peter: the Man and the Epistle.

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THERE is a point of view from which Peter seems to occupy a position in New Testament criticism quite as prominent as that assigned him in the life of the church by Roman Catholic believers. For not only does the determination of individual questions, like the authorship of the Epistle that goes by his name, depend upon our understanding of his attitude; but broader and more important questions are involved, like the historical validity of the Acts of the Apostles, and consequently the history of the Apostolic church; indeed the nature of original Christianity itself. All these questions shape themselves to us as we regard him and his views.

I. A great school of critics has made him a representative figure, standing at the head of a great party in the church: the Jewish Christian party. It has characterized this party with distinctive Jewish features, holding a certain fealty to the Jewish law and forms of worship. It has assumed the outbreak of a revolt against this party led by Paul, who first caused conflict in the church, then overthrow of the Jewish party, and, finally, revolution in the government, faith, and worship of the church.

Stated baldly, this was the position of parties in the Apostolic church as it was sketched under Baur's historical imagination. And his great influence has impressed the features of this sketch to a greater or less extent upon much of the criticism that has arisen since his day. The fact that these features have been changed somewhat, and that the process of change is still active in the world of New Testament criticism, presents inducements to those interested in such work to give time and thought to the problems included in the field under consideration.

At first glance the field seems rather narrow and unpromising, as we have but a single brief epistle from Peter's hand, and that not free from doubts as to its genuineness. But as one enters the field

it becomes broader, taking in Paul's references to Peter in the Epistle to the Galatians, certain speeches in Acts that are credited to Peter, some brief character sketches in the Gospels, which reveal certain mental traits that may fairly enough be taken as genuine, and, finally, the second Gospel, whose material, form, and motive are generally believed to be due to Peter's preaching.

We will turn first to the references of Paul in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians; because they are most explicit and direct to the problem in our inquiry: Peter's attitude to the Jewish law on the one side and to the Gentile Christians on the other. In them we have account of two conferences between Paul and Peter over this question. In the first (Gal. 2¹⁻¹⁰), Paul represents himself as going to Jerusalem to hold a private conference with them of repute (τοῖς δοκοῦσιν) in order to secure approval of his Gentile ministry, so that he might not have "run in vain." In this conference two parties appear beside that of Paul: the apostolic band and certain "false brethren." These last people had been "brought in privily" by some one, and had come in "to spy out the liberty" of Paul and his converts that they might lead them into bondage—to the Mosaic Law. There appears to have been a contention in the conference from which Paul came off victorious; since the apostles did not require Titus to be circumcised, but gave Paul the right hand of fellowship to go to the Gentiles.

We have in this report of the first conference of Paul with Peter an unqualified rejection by the apostles of the requirement of circumcision as a condition of admission to the church. But the report of the second conference is even more explicit in its definition of Peter's attitude. Soon after the first conference had ended Peter went up to Antioch and associated freely with the Gentile Christians, even to the extent of eating with them. But when certain envoys came to Antioch from James, Peter became timid before them and separated himself from the Gentiles because of his fear of the party these envoys represented. In writing of this conduct of Peter, Paul uses two words in defining its nature: ἀποκρίνομαι and its noun ὑπόκρισις.

How any one with this story of Paul's before him could imagine that this conduct represented Peter's real sentiments is one of the marvels of modern criticism. The attempt of Hausrath to show that in associating with Gentiles and eating with them Peter "had rushed impetuously into a position intrinsically foreign to him" (*New Testament Times*, English translation, iii. p. 175 f.), and then on sober second thought retreated, is not only without evidence in its favor,

but directly opposed by all the evidence at our command. Both the writer of Acts and Paul draw a sharp distinction between the attitude of Peter and that of the party of the circumcision on this matter of keeping the Mosaic Law. Then Paul states that Peter was acting from fear and contrary to his real feelings and convictions: in the expressive force of the verb he was playing a false part. He was hiding his real opinions; he was not walking uprightly, nor according to the truth of the Gospel.

The supposition that Peter adhered to his false attitude and made it the permanent thing in his ministry can be made only by one who has laid aside his knowledge of Peter's mental habit, or who considers him capable of deliberate and sustained defiance of conscience. One might as well suppose that Peter had made his denial of his Master the end of his relations with him. No; we have in this desertion of his Gentile brethren an instance of those occasional lapses from his better knowledge and ways of which the Gospels furnish other examples.

The cause of this particular display of weakness is not far to seek. In the Apostolic Council at Jerusalem there was a division of the missionary field; Paul was to go to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews (Gal. 2⁷). Under this arrangement Peter was not only under no obligation to champion the cause of the Gentiles, but he was bound to maintain harmony among the Jews, and avoid so far as possible every occasion of offence. So when the envoys came from James demanding that the Law of Moses be heeded by the Jews, Peter felt that to offend these men would be to wreck his work among his people. What he might do with entire freedom and confidence when among the Gentiles, became a threat to his success when he was called upon to act in the face of Jewish prejudices. He had not the courage to announce his faith in a universal bond of fellowship when that meant conflict with the accredited envoys of the head of the Jerusalem church. This was his temptation; and for yielding to it Paul declared that he was not walking according to the truth of the Gospel.

A brief further look at the details of Paul's rebuke will serve to define Peter's attitude more clearly. Paul writes to the Galatians that Peter had been accustomed to eat with Gentiles (2¹²), implies that he had lived as did the Gentiles (2¹⁴); and, moreover, held with him that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ (2¹⁶). Here, then, is Peter's attitude as it is interpreted by Paul: denial of the necessity of circumcision for admission of

Gentiles to the church, free association of Jews and Gentiles in the church, the rejection of the Mosaic Law as the justifying principle, and the adoption of faith in Jesus Christ in its place. And the only significance his separation from the Gentiles had was a cowardly denial of his own principles made for the eyes of the strict Jewish party in the church.

We have a very instructive and interesting result when we apply this conclusion to the criticism that has declared Acts to be unhistorical in treating the conduct and teaching of Peter as friendly to the Gentiles. If Paul's representation be taken as trustworthy, Acts has not overstated Peter's universalism. His eating with Cornelius is only an instance of the practice he followed afterward at Antioch ; and his utterances in the Apostolic Council are in close accord with Paul's statements. As this result becomes plain to New Testament students, not only will the historical validity of Acts be acknowledged in this particular, but the whole superstructure of the school of criticism founded on the false interpretation of Peter's attitude will crumble to the ground.

Not only was there no conflict between Peter and Paul ; but they were in full accord on all those positions that have been held as characteristic of Paul's attitude. What conflict there was was between Paul and the party of the circumcision. Peter had no other share in it than to be betrayed into temporary cowardice when it had waxed hot. This is a very different thing from being a leader in the conflict. And by no stretch of a just imagination can Peter's cowardice be construed to indicate the original attitude of either himself or of the rest of the apostles. Even the attitude of James cannot be judged from the surface indications of this single event.

II. From the standpoint of this conclusion the criticism of τ Peter takes on a very different appearance from what it usually has under the treatment of the adverse critics. For they seem to proceed upon the assumption that what we find in the teaching of Paul cannot have been held by Peter ; and that all they need to do to secure the rejection of any document accredited to Peter is to show the presence in it of "Pauline" ideas. But we must consider that both Paul and Peter were Jews, and so must have held common Jewish notions. Moreover, we must take into account the fact that both were converted from Jewish Messianic beliefs by the resurrection of Jesus ; and so they must have held common Christian notions. We must eliminate both these classes of ideas from the problem before we can declare what is distinctively Pauline and what is dis-

tinctively Petrine. The first great problem in every safe work of criticism is to determine the full content of the common Christian faith.

It has also been assumed that the Epistle was written for Paul's churches, and that so Peter could not have written it. The same fallacious assumption of deep antagonism is hidden behind this position. Besides, the assumption that the churches addressed were of Paul's founding is unwarranted. If we look at the address in the Epistle, we shall find two very significant classes of facts. We have no record of Paul's ever having preached in Pontus, or Cappadocia, or Bithynia. On his second missionary journey he " essayed to go into Bithynia, but the spirit of Jesus suffered him not " (Acts 16⁷). Regarding Asia we note the fact that on the same journey Paul was forbidden to preach the word in Asia (Acts 16⁶), but at the conclusion of this journey he reasoned with the Jews in Ephesus (Acts 18¹⁹). That there were churches in Asia other than those founded by Paul is as certain as anything in New Testament criticism. The churches addressed in the Apocalypse were Jewish in their faith and composition. These form one class of facts. The other is found in the reference in Acts 2^{9, 10} to those converted by Peter at the Feast of Pentecost, in which Jews and proselytes from Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia are mentioned. These facts drive us to the conclusion that not only were the churches mentioned in the address of the Epistle not of Paul's founding, but that they probably held some relation to Peter. The fact that there was a church in Rome existing before Paul ever visited the city, and of sufficient importance to call for the writing of his greatest epistle, should warn us that there was a field of work, and movements in it, not described in detail in the Acts of the Apostles.

But it is said that 1 Peter shows marks of having been written for Gentile readers. That there were Gentiles in the communities to which the Epistle is addressed is without question ; but this does not indicate the general or fundamental character of these communities, especially when they are called "sojourners of the Diaspora" (1¹), and are besought to have their "behavior seemly among the Gentiles" (2¹²). A singular reference to the wives (3⁶) contains the statement that they have become (*ἐγενήθητε*) children of Sarah. These two classes of indications can have but one explanation: that the churches to which the Epistle is addressed were founded on Jewish ground, and contained such Gentile members as Jewish synagogues permitted, in numbers greatly increased when the synagogues became churches.

So generally is the opinion held that the writer of 1 Peter knew and used Paul's epistles that it seems almost presumptuous to call the opinion into question; but an examination of the alleged parallels will help us understand better the relation existing between the two writers. Comparing 1 Peter 2⁶ with Rom. 9³⁰ we find that they both bring together quotations from Is. 28¹⁶ and Is. 8¹⁴. The combination of the elect cornerstone with the rock of offence is the common idea; but the differences between Paul's use of the two passages and Peter's are so great that no one can safely assert that Peter was dependent upon Paul in this case. Paul says nothing about the elect element; he combines the two passages, writing only of the rock of offence. In this he does violence to the original. On the other hand Peter treats the two passages separately, dwelling at length upon the elect of God. This suggests to him the thought of the disobedient; this calls to his mind Jesus' reference to the cornerstone disallowed of the builders; and this suggests the rock of offence. Moreover, the application of the two passages is very different in Romans from that in 1 Peter. In Romans the rock of offence concerns the unbelieving Jews; in 1 Peter, the disobedient who have stumbled at the word. It is also worth remarking that with Paul the passage has a dialectic and in 1 Peter a practical use.

1 Peter 3²², paralleled by Rom. 8³⁴ and Eph. 1²⁰, gives us the common idea of ascension to the right hand of God, clearly an apostolic notion, and a necessary product of conversion from Jewish Messianic belief to Christian. 1 Peter 1¹⁴ 4³ and Eph. 2³ 4¹⁹ give us references to the lusts of the flesh, a confessedly apostolic expression. If we examine the terms employed, we shall find but a single word common to the two passages out of a full dozen, and that the common and almost necessary term *ἀσέλγεια*. How two writers could have referred to the common enemy of the Christian faith with less use of common phraseology it would be hard to imagine. The connection with this of the appeal to the expectation of the last days was also a common apostolic habit.

The exhortation to servants, wives, and husbands found in 1 Peter 2 and 3, paralleled in Eph. 5 and 6, has been cited as showing dependence of Peter upon Paul; but such appeals were common long years before the days of the apostles. And when one examines the two sets of passages he will find that the only features they have in common are these great social relations themselves. The teaching differs in form and content, and the language is wholly unlike. The same may be said of the injunction to be subject to the civil rulers, an

ancient Jewish precept found frequently in pre-Christian Jewish literature. If one believes that the Apostolic church had any common faith and dealt at all in any common topics and relations, he will find himself driven to insist that all such common features shall be excluded from the tests of dependence, or if they are admitted, that they shall be used only when they show plain marks of common rhetoric. He who holds himself to tests of this nature will find the problem taking on a very different appearance from that given it by the critics who have rejected the Epistle as spurious.

When we turn from the consideration of individual passages to the doctrines of the Epistle, we find that it contains passages that remind us of the teachings of Paul: such as the connection of the resurrection with salvation ($1^3 = 1 \text{ Cor. } 15^{17}$), and with baptism ($3^{21} = \text{Rom. } 6^4$); the connection of faith with salvation ($1^9 = \text{Rom. } 1^{16}$); the hostility of the flesh to the soul ($2^{11} = \text{Rom. } 8^6$); Christ's suffering in the flesh and being quickened in the spirit ($3^{18} = \text{Rom. } 6^{10}$); and Christ's bearing our sins in the body that we might die unto sin and live unto righteousness ($2^{24} = \text{Rom. } 6^{2\text{ff}}$). This last parallel is so striking that it fixes our attention and calls for special examination. But when we read Paul's treatment of the idea, we find that he assumes that his readers are familiar with it and believe it, although they have never seen his face or heard his voice. It is then a common Christian notion which Peter must have held irrespective of any relation whatever to Paul.

Side by side with these resemblances to Paul we have some striking resemblances to James: as the temptations of the believers securing proof of their faith ($1^{6,7} = \text{Jas. } 1^{2,3}$); love covering a multitude of sins ($4^8 = \text{Jas. } 5^{20}$); God resisting the proud, but giving grace to the humble ($5^5 = \text{Jas. } 4^6$); humbling one's self under the hand of God that He might exalt him ($5^6 = \text{Jas. } 4^{10}$); and especially the emphasis laid upon obedience and good works as a condition essential to salvation, which is found in all parts of our Epistle.

It has been charged that τ Peter gives a weakened form of Paul's doctrines; but this is to miss its chief characteristic. For whenever the two writers agree in any teaching, Paul gives it a dialectic aim and τ Peter gives it a practical aim. The doctrine of faith in the two well illustrates this difference. In Paul's writings it is the attraction which exists in the soul of the believer toward the life of Christ, which results in a common experience; while with Peter it is trust in the unseen, cleansing the heart by reliance upon God. The righteousness of Paul consists in the accord of the believer with God;

while that of Peter consists in right conduct. Paul's regeneration is secured by sharing the life of Christ through faith; with Peter it is wrought out by obedience. The death of Christ with both Paul and Peter redeems men from sin into righteousness; but with Paul it is an experience which the Christian shares by faith, while with Peter it is an example to be copied by Christ's followers.

Turning now to the speeches of Paul and Peter as given in the Acts of the Apostles we are confronted by an equally striking similarity with that exhibited by the epistles of the two writers. Whatever one may think about the origin and authorship of these speeches he must deal with this similarity as a part of the problem. The speech of Paul at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13¹⁶⁻⁴¹) has been considered an imitation of Peter's speech at the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 2¹⁴⁻³⁸). But with all the common ideas, — which, it must be remarked, were such as all converts from Judaism must have held, — there is this difference: Paul aims to convert his hearers to faith in Jesus as the Christ; and Peter aims to convict his hearers of sin in assenting to the crucifixion of Jesus, and to secure their repentance for the act, and the consequent forgiveness of their sins. With Paul the appeal is to convictions; with Peter the appeal is to motives.

Examining next the Gospel of Mark, whose material, form, and motive have generally been traced to the preaching of Peter, we find that Papias called attention to the fact that it had no methodical arrangement (*σύνταξις*), but disposed its materials in accordance with the practical aim of Peter in his preaching. In passing, a single remark as to the lack of methodical arrangement, which has so puzzled critics, may be pardoned. All we need to see in this remark of Papias is evidence that Mark's Gospel was not built in accordance with the generally received opinion of that day as to the order of Jesus' ministry. To call the modern idea of Mark's Gospel into the field is to be guilty of a very misleading anachronism. But this is a little aside from the line of our inquiry. The significant fact in the testimony of Papias is the practical nature of the Gospel of Mark. And our Mark is in full accord with the testimony of Papias. The doctrinal aim is almost altogether absent from this Gospel. It gives rather a series of pictures of Jesus' ministry designed to secure and strengthen faith in him as the Messiah. Then the prominence of the suffering of Christ in the plan of the Gospel is significant when compared with the prominence of the same idea in the speeches of Peter in Acts and in the teachings of 1 Peter. It is singular that the practical religious aim of this Gospel should give it the same position

midway between the Judaism of Matthew and the universalism of Luke that 1 Peter holds between the Epistle of James and the Epistles of Paul. This correspondence can hardly be an accidental one.

An examination of the character of Peter as it is touched upon in the Gospels and in Acts reveals a trait that helps to explain this peculiarity of the Epistle : his disposition to conform to the opinions of the people with whom he comes in contact. This trait is too prominent and well known to require mention of instances. But it sufficiently explains how Peter, in writing to a circle of Jewish-Christian churches with a large Gentile element, could use the universalism of Paul with the practical teaching of James and the stress which James put upon conduct. As one reads this Epistle with the teaching of the Epistles of Paul and of James in his mind, he thinks instinctively of the three men as they stood in the Council at Jerusalem : Paul fighting for the admission of the Gentiles to the church and their freedom from the bonds of the Mosaic Law ; James yielding the admission of the Gentiles without the rite of circumcision, but insisting upon their adoption of the morals of Judaism ; and Peter declaring for Paul's doctrine of faith in Christ as the sole bond of union, but agreeing to the conditions imposed by James. This is precisely the attitude of 1 Peter ; and the fact that it is declared in detail in Acts, and explicitly stated by Paul in Gal. 2, points conclusively to the genuineness of 1 Peter. A harmony so pervasive, so just, and so sober is clearly beyond the skill of the pious forgers of the second century.