

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

II.

RELATION TO 1 PETER.

IF 2 Peter stood by itself and did not seem to challenge comparison with the first Epistle (2 Peter iii. 1), there would be fewer objections raised against its composition by the Apostle whose name it bears. But in situation, breadth of interest and range of doctrine, the second Epistle differs so materially from the first, that it is very difficult to believe that they were written to the same readers, somewhat difficult even to acknowledge them as the handiwork of the same author. A close inspection however will reveal subtle marks of the same apostolic ownership.

I. *Differences between the two Epistles.*

(a) Lexical and of style. The first Epistle is written in good easy Greek with few eccentricities. It is free from anything like pseudo-classicalism, is enriched with figures, and has more quotations from the LXX. woven into its texture than most New Testament books. In 2 Peter the Greek is very curious. It was evidently written by a Hebrew, who often limps in his attempts at Greek style. Many of its sentences are involved, its connexions are at times obscure, its use of particles is meagre, strange expressions are numerous, and there is frequent repetition of phrases and words.¹ Finally, though there are probably two or three direct quotations from the Old Testament and numerous obligations to it, the LXX. does not seem to have been laid under especial contribution.

(b) Doctrine. In 1 Peter the Divine names most frequently employed are "God," "God the Father," "Christ," absolutely as the Messiah, and "Jesus Christ" as an

¹ Dr. Bigg shows that repetition is also characteristic of the style of 1 Peter.

historical person distinct from God the Father. In 2 Peter the designation "Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ" under one article so identifies the two persons that God is known through Jesus Christ the Saviour. Two favourite titles are "the (our) Lord Jesus Christ" alone or with "Saviour" added, the latter of which does not occur in 1 Peter. Again, the work of the Messiah, His sufferings, death and resurrection are enlarged on in 1 Peter. He is the example, the shepherd and bishop of souls. The resurrection is the proof of the glory of the Messiah, the ground of the believer's hope in an eternal inheritance. In 2 Peter the thought of Jesus as the Messiah is not altogether absent (i. 11, 17); but He is regarded chiefly as the revealer of God, dispensing power for life and godliness to those who have a true knowledge of Him. He is their Lord and Saviour, whom they know rather than love as in 1 Peter. There is no reference to His resurrection.

(c) Christian life. Change of situation will partly explain the differences of this nature. The readers of the first Epistle are suffering persecution, which so far is confined to social disabilities but threatens to develop. Hence the sufferings of Christ, both as an example and in their redemptive value, became an important motive in their life. So little is offered by the present that they cast themselves in hope upon the future, which must soon disclose relief when the revelation of Jesus Christ will terminate imminent evils.

In the second Epistle we are face to face with an attack of strategical libertines who offer unstable converts full freedom for sensual pleasure, and lay their fears by extravagant assertions that the return of the Lord to judgment is only a delusion. To counteract such seductive error the Apostle reminds his readers of the certainty of the Lord's return, and bids them grow in knowledge of a living Saviour who alone can give them power for a holy life.

In view of these differences we must infer that both letters were not written to the same circle of readers, for the interval of the few years which at longest can have elapsed between the two Epistles is not sufficient to explain the divergences. It increases the problem of the genuineness of 2 Peter immensely, if we must suppose that after having written a letter influenced by Pauline thought as the first Epistle is, the author sent 2 Peter so free from that type of thought to the same readers, who were confessedly acquainted with the writings of Paul (2 Peter iii. 15). Nor can 2 Peter iii. 1, 2 be regarded as anything but the vaguest description, if indeed it is one at all, of such a ripe fruit of Apostolic Christianity as we possess in the first Epistle.

II. *The Petrine element in 2 Peter.*

Our standard is mainly the first Epistle, the genuineness of which is assumed. The speeches of Peter in Acts, which are usually admitted to contain historical elements of primitive apostolic doctrine, supply some material; and critical research justifies us in regarding the Gospel of Mark as drawn from a Petrine source.

To take the last first. The author claims in 2 Peter i. 16 that he was one of the apostolic eyewitnesses of the most intimate events of our Lord's life, and that in his preaching he set forth the power and parousia of Jesus Christ the Lord. Christ is also possessed of glory and virtue and is a Saviour who has purchased His people (2 Peter i. 3, ii. 1). This is a very fitting description of the Christ of our second Gospel. Mark also, which seems to have served as a framework for the other synoptics, has the transfiguration as one of the chief moments in its history. Throughout Jesus is the strong Son of God, who saves from sin, who gave His life a ransom for many, and who will come again to judgment. The Christ preached to the readers of our Epistle, and in Rome by the Apostle Peter, had been seen in life from the same point of vision.

In Acts also some close parallels with 2 Peter may be observed. If we interpret, as we may with good reason, "a like precious faith with us" (i. 1) of the admission of Samaritan readers to full Christian privilege, equivalents for "the righteousness of God" may be adduced from Acts x. 34, 35, xv. 9, 11, 14. Peter's disclaimer in Acts iii. 12, that he had wrought the miracle "by his own power or godliness" is not dissimilar to 2 Peter i. 3, which states that Jesus Christ is the source of endowment for the believer with all power necessary for life and godliness. In Acts x. 42, 43 Peter declares that Jesus Christ is the Messiah of the prophets, and Judge of living and dead (2 Peter i. 16, 19; iii. 10, 11, 12, 14). In this connexion the similarity between 2 Peter iii. 11, 12 and Acts iii. 19-21 is of peculiar importance, delay in the coming of Christ being attributed in both to lack of repentance. In Acts the appearing of the Lord, when all things shall take on the glory of the Messianic Kingdom, is dependent on the repentance of Israel; 2 Peter represents God as longsuffering towards a perishing world, and wishing that all may repent and so hasten the advent of Him who shall create new heavens and a new earth. This conception may be traced perhaps to a saying of our Lord (Mark xiii. 10; Matt. xxiv. 13, 14). "The early preachers of the Gospel felt that it was in some sense within their power to hasten the end by extending the Kingdom" (Swete). A similar thought as to the longsuffering of God occurs in 1 Peter iii. 20.

1 Peter.

1. (a) Language and style. Inscriptions and papyri have afforded so many parallels in contemporary speech to the language of the New Testament, that it is of little purpose to cite such words as, *ἀναστροφή*, *ἀσέλγεια*, (*ἐπι*)-*χορηγεῖν*, *κοινωνός*, *ἴδιος*, *ἀγαπᾶν*, which are common to both Epistles. More stress may be laid upon the use of *ἀρετή* (though we cannot be sure that it is employed in the same

sense in both Epistles), (ἄ)σπιλος καὶ (ἄ)μωμος (ἀμώμητος), ἀπόθεσις, ἀκαταπαύστους ἀμαρτίας (πέπανται ἀμαρτίας), ψυχή of persons, compounds of στηρίζω, τιμή, τίμιος, and the benediction χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη πληθυνθείη.

Like the first Epistle the second contains many figures. The Christian life is a growth and fruitful; a walk in which some may stumble but which leads into the Eternal Kingdom; a nomadic existence or pilgrimage. Death is compared with striking a tent or putting off a garment. Prophecy is a light shining in a murky place till daybreak. Apostles are initiated into mysteries. Purchase is the symbol for redemption. The false teachers traffic in souls. Judgment is awake on its journey. Other figures are supplied from nature (ii. 17).

(b) The use of the Old Testament. An author's mind is better indicated by the books from which he draws the strands of his thought even than by direct quotation. Whether the latter comes from the original or the LXX. might depend upon an amanuensis, but a man's favourite authors vouch for his type. In 1 Peter we have this shading, but proportionately much more of the delicate tracing of exact quotation than in 2 Peter. Of the nine or ten instances four are taken from Isaiah, three from Proverbs. The direct quotations in 2 Peter come from Proverbs, Psalms and Isaiah, while the indirect indebtedness to Proverbs and Isaiah is very large. This agreement with Proverbs in both Epistles is the more remarkable, because of the five indubitable quotations from Proverbs in the New Testament three occur in 1 and 2 Peter. The favourite historical example of 2 Peter is Noah and the Flood, which is used twice: this incident is also found in 1 Peter iii. 19, 20 in a unique passage with another note of similarity to 2 Peter iii. 9, to which reference has already been made. The atmosphere and spirit of both Epistles are Hebraic, not Alexandrian.

(c) New Testament. The meagreness of the second Epistle in reminiscence of our Lord's teaching as compared with the first has been urged to its discredit, but if our previous analysis be correct this objection loses most of its force. There is, it is true, much less appreciation of the Epistles of Paul, but from iii. 15 it appears that the orbits of the two Apostles crossed each other, and changed circumstances might have brought these two great lights of that period into the closer conjunction that we find in our first Epistle.¹ The case of the mutual affinities of the two Epistles with Hebrews is striking, for 1 Peter is fully as much *en rapport* with certain features of Hebrews as we have seen 2 Peter to be.

(d) The Book of Enoch. Professor Rendel Harris and Dr. Bigg make out a strong case for the acquaintance of 1 Peter with this book (1 Peter i. 12, 13 ; iii. 19, 20 ; Enoch i. 1, ix. 1, x. 4, 5, 12, 13. EXPOSITOR, Sept. and Nov. 1901). To both Epistles the mysterious underworld and the fall of the angels or the state of their antediluvian offspring, lend a distinctive note. In the second Epistle Enoch is used somewhat more extensively to point the warnings than for doctrine in the first.

2. Doctrine.

(a) Christian facts. Peculiar error, such as the claim of a Simon Magus, would naturally lead a writer to emphasize the fact that Jesus Christ is the true revealer of the Father. He in truth is the Son on whom His good pleasure rests. He also is of surpassing power, Lord of an eternal Kingdom, the Saviour from sin, the Judge of the world. This is the teaching of 2 Peter. But traces of the favourite conception of 1 Peter that Jesus is the Christ are not wanting. In 2 Peter i. 17-21 the argument is to prove that the historical manifestation of Jesus Christ explains Old Testament

¹ Dr. Bigg thinks that the influence of Paul on 1 Peter has been much exaggerated.

prophecy. His is an eternal Kingdom (i. 11) ; the utterance of i. 17, a Messianic declaration. This is especially noticeable in the reading of B, *ὁ ἀγαπητός μου*, a distinctively Messianic title, not merely an epithet of *ὁ υἱός μου* (see J. Armitage Robinson's note on *Ascension of Isaiah* in Hastings' D.B.).

Much difficulty has been occasioned by the omission of references in 2 Peter to the Resurrection, which is central for the thought of the first Epistle and the speeches of Peter in Acts. But its displacement by the Transfiguration may probably be explained by the claim of the false teachers that the Resurrection was a purely spiritual experience. We know that this doctrine had found its way into the Churches of Corinth and Asia Minor by the time that Paul was writing his great Epistles. Possibly also there may have been the beginnings of an error, which afterwards assumed great proportions, that the real Christ left Jesus at the Passion. In either case the Resurrection of our Lord would suit the purpose of our Epistle less than the Transfiguration, which was an anticipatory gleam of the future glory of the Resurrection melting again after a moment into the light of common day. It showed that Jesus, who was full of glory and virtue, was the veritable Messiah possessing a hidden majesty. It explained the power of His miraculous life, and justified His promise of the Parousia. It was a seal of His Lordship and Return which could not be disputed, for He came back from it to human life to teach, work, and suffer, not merely to vouchsafe intermittent glimpses of His glorified body to His disciples as He did after His Resurrection. According to 1 Peter i. 21, the Resurrection conferred supreme glory on Jesus: the incident of 2 Peter i. 17 was an earnest of that permanent splendour.

As in 2 Peter, so in the first Epistle the certainty of the Parousia, and of judgment is insisted on (1 Peter iv. 7, 17) ; and if an impression of greater immediateness is conveyed

in the latter, this may be accounted for by the later date of 1 Peter, and by a more acute crisis in the Church. The belief in the Parousia never vanished from the Apostolic age. Like a white-sailed missioner of succour, it stood in the offing ready to come to the rescue of a beleaguered Church, on which the world might from time to time repeat its attack. The Church constantly found relief from the storm and stress of the present in the conviction, the more intense the suffering the more vivid the certainty, that the Kingdom of Satan could not long continue, that the victorious Return of the Son of Man must be near. Suffering makes the instant Parousia the logic of events in 1 Peter : judgment on sin no less certainly involves the Return in 2 Peter, however distant it may be.

Along with the absence from both Epistles of the Pauline doctrine of the indwelling Christ, is that of the cognate function of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer for the renewal of his character. But in both there occurs a view of the work of the Spirit which is unique in the New Testament. The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets of the Old Testament impelling them to the utterance of words as to the coming Messiah which they desired to understand, but could not. The picture of the historical Jesus Christ alone gives body to, and renders intelligible, the prophetic foregleams of the Messiah, because the Spirit of God was the same in both dispensations—(1 Peter i. 10-12 ; 2 Peter i. 19-21).

It must also be admitted that the redemptive work of Christ is much more prominent in the first Epistle than in the second. One reason doubtless is because the actual and threatened suffering of the readers of the first Epistle was a temptation to them, and was rendered reasonable only by the redemptive example of the suffering Messiah. But the same fundamental doctrine is found in 2 Peter ii. 1, and throughout the Epistle Jesus Christ is called the Saviour.

(b) The Christian life. Baptism is of primary importance in both Epistles (1 Peter i. 2, iii. 21; 2 Peter i. 9). It is the supreme crisis in which old sins are cleansed away, to be followed, however, by progressive sanctification and increasing moral character. Growth in grace is essential in both; for life is a new birth from the living seed of the Word of God, and must be nourished by proper food (1 Peter i. 23, ii. 2; 2 Peter i. 8, iii. 18). According to the first Epistle, the believer is granted a gradual unveiling of Jesus Christ, which will culminate in full glory at the Return. According to the second, the Christian life is an advance in the knowledge of the Divine glory and virtue of Jesus Christ, till in the future we become sharers in the Divine nature (see Hort's note on 1 Peter i. 13; 2 Peter i. 3, 4). The duty of Obedience runs through both Epistles like a vibrant note, and it takes its tone from the possession of truth (1 Peter i. 22; 2 Peter ii. 2, 21). It is a law of holy living which brings true freedom (1 Peter i. 15, 16, ii. 16; 2 Peter ii. 19, 21, iii. 11). The chords in the lyre of human character are similar in both—faith (1 Peter ii. 7, 8); virtue (ii. 9); knowledge (iii. 7); self-restraint (ii. 11, 12); endurance (iii. 14, iv. 7); godliness (i. 17, ii. 5, 17); love of the brethren (ii. 17, iii. 8, iv. 8-10); love (ii. 13-25); which are the scale of 2 Peter i. 5-7. Future judgment for the unbeliever haunts the mind of both writers as an awful doom, against which holy conduct is the only preparation (1 Peter i. 17, iv. 7, 8, 17-19; 2 Peter ii. 3, 9, iii. 10-14). A pilgrim in this perishing world, the Christian pitches his tent here only for a season. He is but a resident alien, and the promises of God are to be fulfilled in the eternal Kingdom to come, the incorruptible and unfading inheritance now an object of hope (2 Peter i. 4, 11, 13, 14; 1 Peter i. 1, 4, ii. 11).

In view of the foregoing, it can hardly be denied that there is a very great similarity between these two Epistles.

In fact their teaching is fundamentally of the same type and distinct within the New Testament. However, to explain their remarkable differences we must assume that they were directed to different readers, were written by different secretaries or "interpreters," and that 2 Peter was earlier than 1 Peter. It is impossible to say how much of his own style and expression, moulded by contact with the Apostle Paul, Silvanus may have contributed to the first Epistle. But the fact that Peter employed him to write that letter, and, if tradition be true, had Mark also as his "interpreter," lends much probability to the supposition that he commissioned some Greek-speaking Jewish Christian of Antioch to put into shape the rugged and vigorous thought of our second Epistle. It may be added that Clement of Alexandria mentions another "interpreter" of Peter, Glaucias, whom Basilides claimed as his teacher.

Without going into a thorough discussion of the language, which is rendered unnecessary by the work of Dr. Chase and Professor Bigg, we may draw some inferences as to the writer of the letter. Similarities with Philo, Josephus, and the inscriptions of Asia Minor (see Deissmann's *Bible Studies*) justify us in supposing that he was familiar with the religious thought and expression of the imperial period. As we see from the inscription of Caria, such terms as ἀρετή as applied to the Deity, and θεία δύναμις were current; and possibly the phrase θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως may have been moulded by a stock idea. The frequent inelegancies, solecisms, repetitions, the lack of ease in the use of particles, and the occurrence of Hebraic expressions, along with the examples of religious language which, in Deissmann's judgment, was in vogue in Asia Minor and Syria, support the hypothesis that the writer was a Jewish Christian of Syria, whose Greek, if not native to him, might have been learned in commerce or from cultured Proselytes or Gentile Christians.

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