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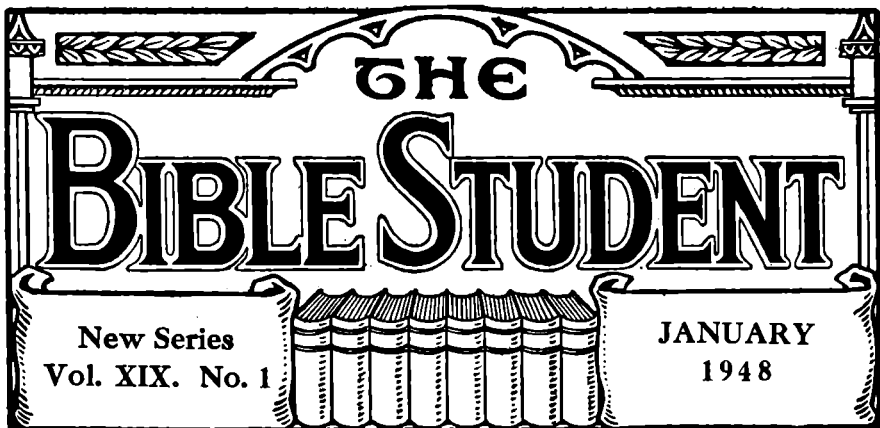
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"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"

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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

PETER'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

BY R. M'GORMACK

Unfortunately, the Apostle Peter had no biographer, and the materials we have for the later portion of his life are extremely scanty.

Let us first set down briefly what information we can gain from the New Testament, with approximate dates.

- A. D. 42 or 44. .. Acts 12:17: Peter is released from prison in Jerusalem, and goes to "another place."
- A. D. 46 or later. Galatians 2:1-10: At Jerusalem. Agreement with Paul as to their respective ministries.
- A. D. 49. Acts 15: At the "Council" of Jerusalem.*
- A. D. 49. Galatians 2:11-14: At Antioch. Rebuked by Paul.*
- A. D. 54. 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22: Possibly at Corinth, though more probably not.
- A. D. 55 or 57. .. 1 Corinthians 9:5: Travelling about as a missionary with his wife.
- A. D. 57 or 58. .. Acts 21:18: Paul visits Jerusalem. Peter is not there.
- A. D. 63. 1 Peter 1:1: Previous to this date he had apparently travelled through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.
- About A. D. 63. .. 1 Peter 5:13: At Babylon, whence he writes his First Epistle.

These dates, as I have said, are only approximate. It is not necessary for our present purpose to be more precise. It should be said, however, that Sir W. M. Ramsay places the date of 1 Peter about A. D. 80, and the martyrdom of the apostle in the same year. This would suit my purpose equally well with the date given above, but the general opinion is that the martyrdom took place between A. D. 64 and 67, and I do not wish to raise unnecessary controversy by diverting attention from the main point.

* Possibly the position of these two occurrences should be reversed.

The question naturally arises, How did the apostle spend the last 20 or 25 years of his life, say from A. D. 42 or 44 onwards?

The agreement as to the division of labour is thus stated by Paul in Galatians 2:9: "James, and Cephas, and John . . . gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision." Not Peter only, it will be noticed, but James, Peter, and John. To James, as being the most zealous of the three for the Jewish religion (Acts 15:21; 21:18-24; Gal. 2:12), was committed the care of the home church of Jerusalem, leaving Peter free to go elsewhere.

This agreement between the apostles must not be interpreted too strictly. "The subsequent history of St. Paul," says Bishop Chase, "shows how far he was from regarding this understanding as laying down rigid and cramped limits for his activity. As he felt free to teach the Jews at Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus, so we may be sure Peter would not consider that he was precluded from teaching Gentiles, whether by word or letter. Neither side could alter, or wish to alter, the terms in which the commission from the Lord had severally come to them. Paul had been sent to Israel as well as to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 26:17), the older apostle to the Gentiles as well as to Israel (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). At the same time Paul's language in Galatians 2:8, drawing a comparison between his own activity in the Gentile world and Peter's among the Jews, implies that the years of Peter's life of which the Acts preserves no record were marked by successful work among his own people."*

A recent attempt to reconstruct the later life of Peter† credits him with founding the Church of Rome in A. D. 42, and staying there three years; then at Jerusalem, A. D. 46

Makes Antioch the centre of his missionary work, A. D. 47-54

At Corinth, A. D. 54

Second visit to Rome, A. D. 55, 56

Missionary labours in Asia Minor, say A. D. 56-63

Third visit to Rome, and martyrdom there, A. D. 63-65

* Hastings' *D. B. Art*, "Peter (Simon)."

† *The Church of Rome in the First Century*, by G. Edmundson.

The martyrdom at Rome is now assented to by most writers, but the two earlier visits to that city are not, nor is the visit to Corinth. But what we wish to call attention to is the *suggestion that Peter spent say seven years in missionary journeys through the provinces of Asia Minor named in 1 Peter 1:1*, and the further suggestion that he may have visited some of them during the seven years during which he is said to have made Antioch his head-quarters.

But there are some who do not admit a journey or journeys by Peter through Asia Minor; so this question must be briefly examined. On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) there were at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia (three of the provinces named in 1 Peter 1:1)* besides other countries. Some of these were doubtless converted, and would spread the knowledge of the new faith on their return home. For many years the apostles did not travel beyond the limits of the Holy Land, but when the new converts, who doubtless visited Jerusalem occasionally, or perhaps regularly each year at one or more of the Feasts, learned that Peter had been preaching at Cæsarea—and that to *Gentiles*—and that he had been as far north as Antioch, would they not do their utmost to persuade him to travel farther north still? And just as we read in Acts 8:14 that, “when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John,” so we may suppose that when Peter heard that there were unorganised bodies of Christian Jews in the northern provinces of Asia Minor, he would make a strong effort to go there.

The patristic testimony supports this view. Origen, early in third century, a most careful and well-informed writer, says, “Peter, in Pontus, and Galatia, and Bithynia, Cappadocia also, and Asia, seems to have preached to the Jews of the Dispersion,” where the word “seems,” (*eoiken*) would appear to refer, not to the places where, but to the persons *to whom*, he preached. Eusebius, the

* Sir W. Ramsay points out that in Acts 2: 9 the enumeration, “Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,” is distinctly popular and Greek in style. In making such an enumeration a Roman would not have omitted Galatia nor would he have mentioned Phrygia, for to a Roman Phrygia had no political existence. St. Peter (1: 1) employs the terms in the Roman sense (*Ch. in Rom. Emp.*, pp. 149, 110).

most learned man of his day, who had access to sources of information which have not come down to us, besides recording Origen's testimony, makes a similar statement on his own account in slightly different words; and the fact that he refers to the opening words of Peter's Epistle does not prove that he had no other authority; he writes as though his readers would consider that quite sufficient proof. Epiphanius says the apostle *often* visited Pontus and Bithynia. Jerome states that he preached in the five provinces before A. D. 42. That there is no earlier testimony extant is not surprising when we consider the scantiness of the Christian writings which have come down to us from the second century.* Indeed, we should scarcely have been aware of the amazingly strong hold which Christianity had obtained in the northern provinces of Asia Minor by the beginning of the second century had it not been for the correspondence of Pliny, the Governor of Bithynia and Pontus, with the Emperor Trajan, A. D. 112.† And of this correspondence little was known until a single MS. of unknown age dropped, as it were, from the clouds about the year 1500 and mysteriously disappeared a few years later. Meanwhile, happily, it had been copied and printed.

And now let us turn to Paul. About A. D. 50 he had paid a second visit to the churches he had founded in Southern Galatia, and thought of turning westward, but was "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the Word in Asia" (Acts 16:6). So he and his companions turned northward, and "assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not" (v. 7). And it is a remarkable fact that though Paul on a subsequent occasion travelled right across the province of Asia (Acts 19:1), he never stayed anywhere in it until he reached Ephesus on the sea-coast, where he resided for about three years.‡ His preaching attracted attention far and wide (Acts 19:10), and he had converts from Colossae and apparently the neighbouring towns of Laodicea and

* See, however, M'Giffert's notes to Eusebius' *H.E.* iii. 1, for early traditions from other sources.

† Half a century later Lucian says: "Pontus was full of Atheists and Christians" (which were to him, apparently, synonymous terms), and that in spite of his persecution.

‡ Acts 20: 31. Sir W. Ramsay points out that this may mean anything between two and three years. Cf. Acts 19: 8-10.

Hierapolis (Col. 4:13), but he never visited them (Col. 2:1). While he remained at Ephesus he was to be found "daily in the school of Tyrannus" (Acts 19:9).

To return to Peter. He was a man of action, a restless man, "constantly on the move," as Dr. Bigg says, willing to take risks, willing to do anything and go anywhere for the sake of his Master. Even before his special call to open the door of the Church to the Gentiles, he had made journeys through Judæa and Samaria (Acts 8:14-25; 9:32). *How, then, did he spend his time, if not as a travelling missionary, as indeed is stated in 1 Corinthians 9:5?* And where would he be likely to go, if not to the countries of some of his first converts, those made on the Day of Pentecost? And these converts, on their part, would, above all things, desire that their families and their fellow-countrymen should hear the man whose preaching had been the means of their conversion. At Antioch he was already more than half way on the road to Cappadocia and Pontus. And without supposing the least antagonism between Peter and Paul, and allowing Paul's claim that he had "laboured more abundantly than they all" (1 Cor. 15:10), may not the successful labours of the latter have made Peter feel that what Paul had done in one direction, he (Peter) could do in another? Such a spur, however, would not be needed. Indeed, after the agreement made between them, he would be neglecting his duty if he did not endeavour to evangelise the Jews of the Dispersion.† So, having gone through Pontus and Cappadocia, whither a good road led northward from Antioch through the Cilician Gates,‡ he would naturally turn to North Galatia, thence to Asia, returning through Bithynia to Pontus. When the Spirit of God forbade Paul to preach in Asia and Bithynia, we may be sure it was only because He had appointed another to do the work. And that *other* was Peter.

Paul tells us that he made it his aim so to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was already named, that he might not build upon another man's foundation (Rom. 15:20); that God had appointed to him a sphere of labour which he did not wish to go

† Jews abounded throughout Asia Minor at that time. See Bigg on 1 Pet. p. 70; Schürer in Hastings' *D.B.* 5: 93.

‡ Ramsay, *Ch. Rom. Emp.*, p. 10.

beyond, nor to intrude in another's province (2 Cor. 10:13-16). And we may be sure that Peter would be animated by the same spirit, and that in addressing his Epistle to the northern provinces of Asia Minor he was writing to churches which were for the most part personally known to him, and which would recognise his authority. As there is a tradition that Andrew preached in Asia Minor, it may be that he accompanied his brother there. Other apostles are also said to have laboured in the same region.*

To sum up. Peter wrote a letter to the five northern provinces of Asia Minor (if we count Bithynia and Pontus separately, as he does). In three of them Paul had never preached, nor even set foot, so far as we know; he had actually been forbidden by the Spirit from preaching in one of these that lay before him on one occasion, the one which would have led naturally to the other two. In a fourth province, Asia, he was also forbidden to preach, except in one city on the sea coast, Ephesus, where he appears to have received Divine permission to labour ("if God will," Acts 18:21).† There remains the fifth province, *Galatia*. This consisted of two main divisions, which had been joined together by the Romans. "These two parts, north and south, are separate and distinct, not merely geographically and racially, but also in time of conversion, in type and nature, and in the influences which acted on them."* North Galatia was in specially close relations with Bithynia and Pontus, far closer than with Asia.† Taking

* Perhaps this would explain the words, "your apostles," in 2 Peter 3: 2. if we agree with Dr. Bigg and others in the Petrine authorship of that epistle. Cf. 1 Corinthians 9: 2.

† The brief visit to Troas (Acts 20: 6) was simply an incident of travel. We see the utter groundlessness of Prof. B. W. Bacon's language when he speaks of Peter's "address to 'the elect of the dispersion' in a group of the *Pauline* provinces (1 Peter 1: 1)."—*Ency. Brit.*, xv 145.

Another American writer has, in a recently published book, made a similar error. He says: "The Book of Revelation begins with a collection of letters, represented as dictated by Jesus and individually addressed to Seven Churches of the province of Asia, a missionary field which, beyond any other, Paul had made his own" (*New Testament Problems*, by E. J. Goodspeed). The Book of Revelation was written after both St. Paul and St. Peter were dead.

* Ramsay, *Exp. Times*, xxiv. 331.

† Ramsay, *Galatians*, pp. 143, 166.

all the circumstances into consideration, we are justified in coming to the conclusion that *Peter and those working with him evangelised North Galatia and the other northern provinces of Asia Minor, and that in addressing his epistle to them, he was writing to churches with which he was personally acquainted.* Else, as has been asked, why did he write to those churches rather than to the Churches of Syria and Greece, where we have proof that he was known? And having regard to the agreement between the two apostles, and to Paul's aim not to trespass in another man's province, we can see that Paul would avoid North Galatia and go elsewhere, as the Spirit led him. The world was large enough for both of them.

Incidentally, two questions suggest themselves as arising out of, though not necessarily connected with, the present inquiry:

(1) Whether the reason why Paul never visited Colossae may have been that it was outside the sphere allotted to him?

(2) Whether, considering the way in which Peter is spoken of in the Epistle to the Galatians, the "different Gospel" alluded to in Galatians 1:6 may have come from North Galatia, or a neighbouring province, as a *perverted* view of Peter's preaching there?

Whatever else may be said of the early Church, this is undoubtedly true, that its back was toward the world and its face toward the coming of the Lord. Its course was steered not alone by the chart of its creed but by the pole-star of its hope. The fore-gleam of the day illumined its dark hours, and saved it from present fears. Its moral and ethical life found surest impulse in the certainty that Christ would come, just as it had found firm foundation in the certainty that He had come; and the inspiration of its splendid sacrifices, conflicts and triumphs was in this same sure consciousness. 'Now' was always 'the day of salvation' and hence of earnest effort to win men to Christ, since tomorrow might be the day of glory.

—Dr. J. Stuart Holden.