

NEW TESTAMENT ESSAYS

STUDIES IN MEMORY OF
Thomas Walter Manson
1893-1958

sponsored by
PUPILS, COLLEAGUES
AND FRIENDS

edited by
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*Lecturer in New Testament Language
and Literature in the University
of Leeds*

MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Published by the University of Manchester at
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
316-324 Oxford Road, Manchester 13

Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner Ltd., Frome and London

GALATIANS 1:18 *ΙΣΤΟΡΗΣΑΙ ΚΗΦΑΝ*

by

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FOR *ιστορησαι Κηφᾶν* (v.l. *Πέτρον*), Gal. 1:18, the Authorized Version has 'to see Peter' and the Revised Version 'to visit Cephas'. These renderings of the verb come as a surprise when we recall its use in older Greek as shown for example in the article on *ιστορέω* in Liddell and Scott with its explicit reference to this passage: 'visit a person for the purpose of inquiry, *Κηφᾶν*, *Ερ. Gal. 1:18*'. None the less versions and ancient commentators seem content with the range of meanings indicated by the Authorized Version and the Revised Version.

The Authorized Version is supported by the three versions whose evidence is most important, the Latin, the Coptic and the Syriac. The Latin according to Wordsworth and White has uniformly *uidere*. The Coptic, both Sahidic and Bohairic, treats the word as the equivalent of 'see'. The Peshitta and Harclean Syriac use forms of *hʒ'*, the primary meaning of which in both Hebrew and Aramaic is 'to see'. Photius refers to this interpretation: *ἡ οὕτως. παρὰ Πέτρον οὐκ ἔμαθον, μόνον εἶδον αὐτόν. παρὰ Ἰακώβου οὐκ ἔμαθον, κάκεινον γὰρ μόνον εἶδον.*¹

The later commentators were not content with this interpretation which they seemed to know. Chrysostom,² to whom Cramer's *Catena* makes no substantial addition, has three points: (1) he perceives that *ιστορησαι* must here mean more than 'see', *οὐκ εἶπεν, ἰδεῖν Πέτρον, ἀλλ' ἰστορησαι Πέτρον, ὅπερ οἱ τὰς μεγάλας πόλεις καὶ λαμπρὰς καταμανθάνοντες λέγουσιν*, (2) he will not allow the meaning 'to get information, knowledge from Peter', *οὐκ ὡς μαθησόμενός τι παρ' αὐτοῦ οὐδὲ ὡς διόρθωσίν τινα δεξόμενος*, (3) he decides for the sense *ἰδεῖν αὐτόν καὶ τιμῆσαι τῇ παρουσίᾳ*. Theodoret³ concisely supports points (2) and (3), *Καὶ τοῦτο πάλιν δείκνυσιν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀρετὴν τῆς ψυχῆς. Καὶ γὰρ μὴ δεόμενος ἀνθρωπίνῃ διδασκαλίᾳ, ἄτε δὴ ταύτην παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῶν ὄλων δεξάμενος,*

τὴν πρόεπονσαν ἀπονέμει τῷ κορυφαίῳ τιμῇ. Τοῦτον γὰρ χάριν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀπεληλύθει, οὐχ ἵνα τι παρ' αὐτοῦ μάθῃ, ἀλλ' ἵνα μόνον θεάσῃται. Δείκνυσι δὲ καὶ τὸ φίλτρον. The Latin version of Theodore of Mopsuestia⁴ certainly agrees with (2): *euidens est ergo quoniam neque tunc ut aliquid disceret ascendit.* He may have (3) in mind also: 'et ut ne uideatur per omnia contempsisse apostolos: "deinde post annos tres ascendi Hierosolimis uidere Petrum." et ita affectum quem erga Petrum uidendum habebat explicans, et quod sollicitudinem expenderet, ut redderet ei quod debebat.'

As the Latin has *uidere* for *ἱστορῆσαι*, the Latin commentators cannot easily make Chrysostom's distinction between *ιδεῖν* and *ἱστορῆσαι*. Victorinus⁵ has Chrysostom's point (2) in mind and develops (3): 'deinde subiungit causam, uidere Petrum. Etenim si in Petro fundamentum ecclesiae positum est, ut in euangelio dictum; cui reuelata erant omnia Paulus sciuit uidere se debere Petrum; quasi eum, cui tanta auctoritas a Christo data esset, non ut ab eo aliquid disceret.' Ambrosiaster⁶ has the same interpretation. Jerome⁷ takes it up: 'nam et quod uisus (Al. jussus) sit ire Hierosolymam, ad hoc isse ut uideret apostolum, non discendi studio, quia et ipse eundem praedicationis haberet auctorem; sed honoris priori apostolo deferendi.' Pelagius⁸ could hardly be briefer: 'uidendi gratia, non discendi.' Augustine's⁹ comment is: 'Si cum euangelizasset Paulus in Arabia, postea uidit Petrum, non ideo ut per ipsum Petrum disceret Euangelium; nam ante eum utique uidisset: sed ut fraternam caritatem etiam corporali notitia cumlaret.'

These quotations have much in common, enough perhaps for us to be able to outline the history of the ancient exposition of this passage. The oldest interpretation is that of the versions which treat *ἱστορῆσαι* as the equivalent of *ιδεῖν*. As Photius notes this interpretation and Chrysostom rejects it, it existed in Greek and the Latin and Syriac renderings suggest that it is as old as the second century. The fact that much of Chrysostom's comment is shared by Latin commentators who were either a little earlier than he or his contemporaries shows that his interpretation is older than the middle of the fourth century. Perhaps it belonged to the Antiochene tradition of exegesis.

The point of departure for this later interpretation is Chrysostom's distinction between *ἱστορῆσαι* and *ιδεῖν*. The renderings of the versions are inadequate and even the Latin commentators,

though they have to expound *uidere* frequently, read more into the word than it can be expected to mean of itself. The commentators are equally clear that the meaning of *ιστορεῖν* 'to get knowledge or information' is inapplicable. They argue that St. Paul had already received the requisite knowledge by revelation and so had no need to visit St. Peter for that purpose. In agreement with Chrysostom most commentators make St. Paul visit St. Peter to pay his respects. For St. Augustine it is merely a token of friendship. For Victorinus and Ambrosiaster it is an acknowledgment of the primacy of Peter.

In support of Chrysostom's contention that *ιστορησαι* is not merely an equivalent of *ιδεῖν* is the following evidence on the use of the word. It appears first in Aeschylus and continues in use throughout Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine times, but it occurs only here in St. Paul, and, except for three passages in I Esdras where it means 'narrate', it does not appear elsewhere in the LXX, the Pseudepigrapha, the New Testament, or the Apostolic Fathers.

It is said that the more we use a word the less it means. If we may reverse this, the more rarely we use a word, the more of its full meaning it is likely to retain when it is used. While this maxim does not hold good universally, it seems applicable to the present instance. St. Paul we may assume would not have chosen a word unparalleled in his own vocabulary and so rare in Biblical Greek, had he not wanted it to bear a meaning which could not have been expressed as well by a commoner term. To this extent to treat *ιστορησαι* as a mere equivalent of *ιδεῖν* is unsatisfactory and unconvincing.

This point being granted, we may examine the other possible meanings of the word. St. Augustine thought that it described a fraternal visit, other commentators that it was used of the visit paid by an apostle to his superior colleague and even read into the occasion a reference to the primacy of Peter. Modern suggestions are that it means 'to get to know, to become acquainted with'. Finally, there is the meaning suggested by Liddell and Scott mentioned above.

Liddell and Scott's article on *ιστορέω* is probably the best guide to the meaning of the word. It can be supplemented by the quotations in Schlier's commentary, in Bauer's *Wörterbuch* and in Sophocles' *Lexicon*. These together with the references in the indices to the principal authors of the time give us enough material

to discern how the word is used in the New Testament period. In view of this sufficiency of early evidence and of the possibility of the word gradually changing its meaning there seems no reason to enquire how writers later than the beginning of the second century used it.

Liddell and Scott give as the first meaning of *ιστορέω* 'inquire into or about a thing', 'inquire about a person'. With this meaning the verb takes an accusative of the thing or person in question. As it can also take an accusative of the person of whom inquiry is made it sometimes takes a double accusative. From this double use of the accusative our alternatives arise.

Let us begin our *ιστορία* or inquiry by examining the first meaning that Liddell and Scott give, that of inquiry into or about a person or thing. Plutarch¹⁰ has an interesting example of the use of *ιστορεῖν* for 'getting information' about both persons and things. Aristippus is so excited by what he hears of Socrates that he is beside himself, *ἄχρισ οὐ πλεύσασ' Ἀθήνας εἰς διψῶν καὶ διακεκαυμένον ἤρῶσατο τῆς πηγῆς καὶ τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ τοὺς λόγους αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἰστόρησεν*. He found out about the man, his utterances and his philosophy, But we may exclude at once the explanation that *ιστορήσαι Κηφᾶν* meant 'to inquire into, investigate, Cephas'.

ιστορεῖν with the accusative of the thing means 'to inquire into it, to examine it for the sake of knowledge'. It can then come to mean 'to go and examine it' first for the sake of knowledge and then out of curiosity. From this comes the sense of visiting famous monuments or cities to which Chrysostom referred. It is amply illustrated from the papyri in Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*. It is noteworthy however that this use of the term is confined to things. There seems to be no examples where it is necessarily used of persons. We can see something of this distinction in English. We can talk of visiting the Tower of London, but when we speak of visiting Gladstone or Churchill our meaning is quite different. It is at this point then that Chrysostom's suggestion comes to grief. He refers solely to great cities. An example of the word used of persons in New Testament times which demonstrably and necessarily has this sense has still to be produced. We must not be misled by a clause in Josephus.¹¹ He describes how Lot's wife was turned into a pillar (*στήλην*) of salt and goes on: *ιστόρησα δ' αὐτήν, ἔτι γὰρ νῦν διαμένει*. Josephus

does not mean that he has paid a tourist's visit or a social call on Lot's wife but that he has investigated the pillar.

There remains however one other proposed development of this meaning of *ιστορεῖν* to examine. It is sometimes suggested that it means 'visit' in the sense of 'pay a call' on someone, a social activity. For this there is no convincing Greek example and we can suspect that the ambiguity of such English words as 'visit' has been responsible for the suggestion. Nor is it clear why St. Paul should visit St. Peter, but should see St. James without visiting him.

Our examination of the construction of *ιστορεῖν* with the accusative of the person as the object of the inquiry has shown that none of the proposed meanings of the word derived from this construction are satisfactory. Convincing examples of such meanings are lacking and the interpretations fail to suggest a reason why St. Peter alone as distinct from St. James should be the object of such an activity.

There remains the interpretation suggested by Liddell and Scott. It requires no linguistic defence. It retains its full meaning, thus satisfying a condition suggested by the rarity of its occurrence in Biblical Greek and Early Christian texts. The only question is: does it satisfy the conditions of the context? St. Paul seeks information from St. Peter and not from St. James. Is there any information that the one had to give him that the other could not provide? St. Peter had been an eyewitness and disciple of Jesus. St. James could not claim to be a comparable informant about the teaching and the ministry. We know then of one kind of information for which St. Paul would go to St. Peter rather than St. James, information about Jesus' teaching and ministry.

There may seem to be one difficulty in the suggestion that St. Paul would have sought information about Jesus from St. Peter. According to Gal. 1:12 St. Paul did not receive his gospel from men nor was he taught it but it came to him through a revelation of Jesus Christ. If St. Paul received his gospel by revelation, what need had he to get information about Jesus from St. Peter? That would put him in the position of being taught, which he denies. This difficulty turns on the meaning of *εὐαγγέλιον* in Galatians. If the word there means information about Jesus the difficulty is insuperable: if however it means something different then the difficulty disappears.

In a study of the meaning of *ὀρθοποδεῖν*¹² it was argued that the phrase described some kind of progress toward the truth of the gospel. This exposition has implications for the meaning of *εὐαγγέλιον*. Thus the two inquiries into the interpretation of *ἱστορῆσαι Κηφᾶν* and of *ὀρθοποδεῖν* find this point of contact in the significance of *εὐαγγέλιον*.¹³ For the present we may conclude that provided that the meaning of *εὐαγγέλιον* raises no difficulty, *ἱστορῆσαι Κηφᾶν* at Gal. 1:18 is to be taken as meaning 'to get information from Cephas'.

NOTES

¹ Staab, *Pauluskommentare aus der Griechischen Kirche* (1933), 605.

² Field, *Chrysostomi Homiliae in Epistolas Paulinas*, iv, 29, or Migne, *P.G.*, lxi, 651.

³ Migne, *P.G.*, lxxxi, 468.

⁴ Swete, *Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Minor Epistles of St. Paul*, i, 14.

⁵ Migne, *P.L.*, viii, 1155.

⁶ Migne, *P.L.*, xvii, 364.

⁷ Migne, *P.L.*, xxvi, 354.

⁸ Souter, *Pelagius's Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St. Paul*, ii, 311.

⁹ Migne, *P.L.*, xxxv, 2110.

¹⁰ Plutarch, *Moralia* 516C, *De Curiositate* 2; iii, 314 in the last Teubner edition.

¹¹ *Ant.* i, 203.

¹² *Neutestamentliche Studien für Bultmann*, 269-74.

¹³ I propose on another occasion to examine the meaning of *εὐαγγέλιον* in Galatians.