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by
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WAS PETER EVER IN ROME?

"The Church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you." I Peter 5. 13.

As tradition is a very flimsy basis to rest a great doctrine on, especially when, as in this case, it is mixed up with absurd and inconceivable legends, Roman ecclesiastics have made diligent search in the Bible to find a text to prove that Peter was in Rome.

It was from the first a silly escapade. It would prove nothing could it be shown beyond a doubt that Peter had visited Rome. Many of us have found our way to that interesting city, and yet no one has been good enough to designate any of us as bishop of Rome.

It turned out, however, a wild goose chase. The Bible obstinately refused to lend itself here to manipulation. At last, in sheer desperation, the above text in Peter was fixed upon as the best adapted to their purpose. It was argued, "Does not John in the Apocalypse call Rome Babylon, and why may we not suppose that Peter referred to her here under that figure, and if it be said that John denounced mystical Babylon, and designated her 'the mother of harlots,' we can say that he had in his mind, not Popish Rome, but Pagan Rome, and so we shall have one fairly decent text of scripture to prove that Peter was in Rome." It was a very lame attempt at bolstering up a great dogma on which the very life of the Roman Church depended. It goes on the unwarrantable supposition that Peter was writing a symbolical treatise, instead of like Paul, a plain unvarnished letter in prose. The manoeuvre defeats itself. If Babylon is to have a mystical meaning attached to it, who is to determine whether it shall stand for Rome, or Jerusalem, or Antioch, or what. Peter had a good reason for being explicit. It

was natural that he should let his readers know beyond a doubt the exact spot from which this letter and its salutations came, as Paul does in his epistles. And so while this epistle of Peter contains internal evidence of its having been written at literal Babylon, and distinctly mentions that Babylon was the place from which the salutations came, it possesses no evidence whatever of having been written at Rome, as the Pauline epistles do. Moreover, the discoverers of this text made a slight mistake when they forgot that John, in the Book of Revelation, does not refer to Rome as BabyIon, but as "Babylon the Great." There is no need to go beyond the literal significance of the term. There was a literal Babylon in those days from which Peter would be most likely to send a letter "to the strangers scattered abroad throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." It was contiguous to these countries, and hence the phrase used by Peter above "elected together with you," as if he said, the Jews of this city Babylon and you, all of whom are neighbours and have been ministered to by me, have, you are aware, been born into the Kingdom of Christ about the same time. This Babylon was a most suitable place for the apostle of the circumcision to live in and labour in. According to Josephus, it at that time contained Jews, of the ten tribes, who did not return from captivity, in *infinite myriads*, (Antig. xi, 5), a myriad being ten thousand.

It is a thousand pities that we have to dispel the delusion that this text points to Peter's having been in Rome, for the literature outside the Bible is on this subject either legendary or wanting: and one would like to hear of Peter having had courage like Paul to brave the terrors of that imperial and persecuting heathen city, and sympathy to instruct and comfort his fellow-countrymen living therein. By all accounts that have reached us, these Jews of Rome were sadly in need of light. This, however, was not to be.

Early Christian Writers Silent.

The writings of the early Fathers have been searched with praiseworthy diligence and all in vain. Great stress is laid upon Clement of Rome having written a letter from that city about 95 or 96 A.D., to the divided Christian congregation of Corinth, in which Peter's name is mentioned with praise. We are told that Clement was "Pope of Rome," and so exercised jurisdiction over the distant charge of Corinth. It is unfortunate for this theory that the letter begins:--

"The Church of God, which sojourneth in Rome to the Church of God which sojourneth in Corinth," &c.

It is simply a letter which a Presbyter writes from one congregation to another, and if it prominently mentions the name of Peter, it says not a word about his having been in Rome, and by no method of legitimate induction can such an inference be drawn from any reference in this letter. Roman controversialists must be very hard pressed for arguments in favour of their pet theory when they quote from this epistle the following :—

"Let us set before our eyes the good apostles (Peter and Paul)
- Peter, who by reason of unrighteous jealousy endured not one nor two, but many labours; and thus, having borne his testimony, went to his appointed place of glory," &c.

And then the writer goes on to speak of Paul in still more eulogistic terms. There is nothing in any part of this letter more explicit than this, and it is the earliest known reference to Peter among Christian writers outside the Bible. Towards the close of the second century, the story had grown that Peter had visited Rome. And writers like Dionysius (170 A D), the first to formulate it, and Ireneus, who gravely tells us that his ministry continued for 20 years, and Tertullian of Carthage were deceived by it. Give a lie a good start, it is said, and it will be a long time before the truth catches up on it.

Modern Scholars Opposed.

Scholars in recent times, however, have investigated the matter, and can trace this story to its corrupt source. They have detected it growing as stories usually grow, and have pronounced it a mere legend. Lightfoot thinks that Peter may have visited Rome "in the latter part of 63 or the beginning of 64," after Paul's "first imprisonment." and then only for a couple of months, but he admits that there is no proof whatever of this. The great majority of eminent scholars, unhesitatingly say, "No, all the facts are against Peter's having been in Rome at any time." To this class belong Lipsius, Baur, Winer. De Wette, Schwegler, Zeller, Hausrath, Holtzman, Mayerhof, &c

It is easy to show from the scriptures that the Roman claim as to Peter's having been Bishop of Rome from 42 A.D. until 67 A.D., or a period of 25 years, is an anachronism and a pure fabrication. And we shall not go outside the Douay Bible to prove it.

The Douay Bible Hostile.

According to the chronology of the Douay* Bible, the imprisonment of Peter, narrated in Acts 12., occurred in 42 A.D. Scholars generally place this in 44 A.D., but let us say 42 A.D. There was no word then of his leaving Palestine, and going on a long and tedious journey to Rome. The Council of Jerusalem, referred to in Acts 15., according to the same authority met in 49, which again is two years earlier than the best chronologists say it met. At that Council Peter was present, and spoke like an ordinary member, and gave an account of his missionary labours, which did not include work at Rome. The treatment to be meted out to the Gentiles was the subject for discussion, and he is only able to mention his

*The Douay version of the Bible is ONLY used here to help to prove the argument.

having had a hand in the conversion of Cornelius and his friends, and that "*A good while ago.*" At this Council it was agreed that Paul and Barnabas "should go to the Gentiles," and that "James and Cephas (Peter) and John" should go "unto the circumcision" (Gal. 2. 9). This covenant, we are told by Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians, was ratified by "right hands of fellowship," the most solemn form of covenanting among the Jews. It is clear that up to that time Peter's work had lain amongst "the circumcision," and if subsequently he had gone to Rome, except to enlighten the few Jews that were there, he should have turned his back upon his past record, and he should have violated a solemn compact deliberately and publicly entered into. We may be quite sure he did nothing of the kind. That he faithfully kept the covenant, we may infer from the fact that sometime afterwards, when in Antioch he, to please the Jews, refused to eat with the Gentiles, and was withstood and rebuked by Paul (Gal. 2. 11). His conduct on that occasion showed clearly that he had but a very slender experience of work among the Gentiles, and few dealings with them. We need not ask what took him to Antioch. It was the caravan route in those days between Jerusalem and Babylon where he lived, and the provinces to whose people he ministered.

Not at Rome in 53AD

In the year 53 A.D., wherever Peter was, he could not have been in Rome; for in that year, as we learn from Acts 18. 2, the Emperor Claudius "commanded all Jews to depart from Rome," and as a consequence Aquilla and Priscilla came to Corinth, and met Paul there, but they don't seem to have given any hint to Paul or Luke his companion, as to Peter's having been at any time in Rome.

What says the Epistle to the Romans?

The Douay Bible again informs us that Paul's Epistle to the Romans was written "about 24 years after our Lord's ascension," that is, it evidently intends to set it down as written about 57 A.D. In that letter to the people of the imperial city, there is not the remotest reference to Peter's being then in Rome, or ever having been in Rome, or having had any hand in founding the Church of Rome. Paul's writing this letter to them and going afterwards to visit and encourage and strengthen them, is in itself evidence that Peter never had been in their midst. Paul's motto was not to "build on another man's foundation" (Rom. 15, 20). or "boast in another man's line of things made ready to hand" (2 Cor. 10. 16) : and yet he now writes them a letter full of instruction and comfort, in which he expresses a desire to see them and "impart some spiritual gift" (Rom. 1. 11), ie. some miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost imparted by the laying on of the hands of an Apostle.

It is worthy also of note that in this Epistle Paul sends greetings to 26 different persons, known to him or reported to him as living in Rome, but the name of Peter is not amongst them. No wonder that Harnack and Lightfoot and Sanday and other eminent scholars assert that up to that time, i.e. 57 or 58, Peter had had nothing whatever to do with founding or building up the Church of Rome.

In a footnote to Acts 28. II, the Douay Bible rightly informs us that Paul arrived in Rome in 61 A.D., and preached the Gospel in his own hired house until 63 A.D. In that chapter we are told that many of the Jews of Rome came to meet him "as far as Appii Forum and the three Taverns," but Peter was not one of their number. These Jews turned out to be very ignorant personages; for when Paul called the chief of them together, he found that they knew nothing of him or his history, and nothing of christianity except that it was "a sect everywhere spoken against"; and so Paul expounded the gospel at large

unto them "from morning to evening" (Acts 28. 23). Does this tally with Peter's having been Bishop of Rome for 25 years, beginning with 42 A.D.?

Luke's Silence Significant

Luke was the historian of both Peter and Paul, and yet he never mentions these two Apostles having met in Rome, nor says a word about the former having visited Paul, or sent a letter of sympathy to him during the whole of those two years he lived in his own hired house and received gladly all that came. Surely if Peter had been Bishop of Rome then he would have lived in Peter's house. Though they had a tiff at Antioch, they were still the best of friends, Peter having the frankness to acknowledge that he was in the wrong.

Paul's Epistles

During his imprisonment in Rome, the Douay Bible tells us that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians "29 years after our Lord's ascension " (62 A.D.), the Epistle to Philippians "about the same year," the Epistle to the Colossians " about the same time," and the Epistle to Timothy "not long before his martyrdom," or 67 A.D. Yet in not one of these is there any mention of Peter's being at Rome. If Peter had been Bishop of Rome then, or in Rome at all, this would be simply inexplicable. Nice treatment indeed for a Bishop, and a Bishop who was the head of the Apostolic College and the foundation of Christ's Church! Can we forgive Paul and Luke? Was there a conspiracy to ruin him? Salutations are sent to the Colossians from Aristarchus and Mark, and Epaphras, and Luke, and other distinguished Christians in Rome, but not one from Peter "the First Bishop of Rome," It would surely be a large tax on our credulity to suppose that he was then reigning as Bishop in Rome, and sent no greetings to these struggling

Christian churches throughout the world.

From the Epistle to the Philippians, we learn that Paul in Rome had been in pecuniary want, and got aid all the way from Philippi, which he very delicately, but gratefully acknowledges in that letter having received at the hands of Epaphroditus (Phil. 4. 18). If Peter had ruled there as Bishop, would he have been allowed to want for anything that human sympathy could supply?

This is not all. In some of these epistles we have direct positive testimony that Peter was not then with Paul or near Paul. In Colossians, after referring to certain persons by name, among whom the name of Peter does not appear, he says, "These only are my helpers in the Kingdom of God who have been a comfort to me." Again in 2. Tim. 4. 11-16, written according to the Douay Bible "not long before his martyrdom" or about 67 A.D., we read, "Only Luke is with me. At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." Here Romanists find themselves on the horns of a dilemma. They must either yield to the inevitable and acknowledge that Peter was not in Rome when this epistle was written, or else so degrade their bishop as one of the most despicable cowards, that he would not be worth contending about, and that it would be no honour for any Church to have him as its Head.

This covers the whole period during which Peter is said to have been Bishop of Rome, i.e., 42 A.D. to 67 A.D., and lo! we have discovered the story to be a myth. We have found him during that period busily engaged elsewhere. We have proved for Peter an *alibi*, which, if he had been charged with committing crime in Rome during those years would have been considered sufficient to exculpate him in any court of law where justice reigned. We have seen that in no literature sacred or profane has it any solid foundation to rest upon, that even the Douay Bible itself knocks the theory to pieces, and that it is pooh-poohed by all scholars who have any reputation

to preserve. And yet on this dogma the interests of millions of souls are made to depend. What cruelty! What unspeakable deception!

Contrary to all Scripture precedent it places the lowly Peter, who would not receive homage from Cornelius, in the Primate's chair: in the teeth of the most authentic history it places that chair and its occupant in Rome: in spite of the protests of his own epistles it keeps the spectre of that ill-used apostle in that heathen city, like a fish out of water, for 25 years, while he himself is labouring among the Jews of Babylon and Palestine: without the semblance of a testamentary document it gives to that apparition a Roman papal successor: ignoring the record of many a break it makes a line of successors extend down to the present time: setting aside the only Redeemer of men it declares that there is no salvation for any who do not believe this to be the heavenly-appointed channel of Divine Grace.

Sooner or later this huge unmitigated lie must recoil on the heads of the inventors. The house is built on the sand, and the usual consequence must follow. May the inmates themselves when that day arrives be saved alive. Systems change and decay, but the truth that saves is eternal, and truth we may not hope to reach through falsehood. The falsest being in the universe is the Prince of Darkness. "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it." The truest being in all creation is the Creator of All Things." God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Christ could not have better represented Deity than by saying, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," or more clearly pointed out the way of salvation than by remarking to Pilate, "everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." The most extravagant hope He held out before the minds of His disciples was, "the Spirit of Truth will guide you into all truth." On such lines alone was success to be achieved by them. The fall of Judah was complete when the prophet Isaiah cried. "Truth is fallen in the street and

equity cannot enter." One of the most remarkable traits of the inrush of millennial glory, on the other hand, will be that "truth shall spring out of the earth and righteousness shall look down from heaven." Behold already the roseate streaks of the dawn. Ye watchmen on Zion's walls unloose the bolts, swing back the bars, and "open ye the gates that the righteous nation which keepeth truth may enter in."

This is why we Protestants condemn such things as an "Index Expurgatorius," and the denial of the right of Private Judgment, and the withholding of the Bible from the laity, and why we believe in free discussion, and take as our motto "buy the truth and sell it not." An educated and enlightened pastor pandering to the lowest prejudices of his people, is to us an anomaly. We can't understand superstition and falsehood becoming so much a part of a church's teaching that its friends should fear that if the false were expelled religion *in toto* would go with it. Amazement but feebly expresses the feeling with which we read of Cardinal Bellarmine, a trusted theologian of the Roman Church saying : -

"If the Pope should err by enjoining vices or forbidding virtues, the Church would be obliged to believe vices to be good and virtues bad, unless it would sin against conscience." (De. Pontif. ix., 5).

Paul once put a hypothetical case like that, substituting Angel for Pope, with quite a different conclusion, "Though we or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that we have preached, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1., 8). As well might Bellarmine have said, "If the Pope taught that the earth is flat, or a part of anything is greater than the whole, or two and two make five, the Church must believe it." It must do nothing of the kind. It must do the opposite. Unbelief in that case becomes a religious duty. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie and do not the truth," (I John 1. 6).

Let us Protestants not be misunderstood. We have no pique against the Apostle Peter. We look upon him as, in spite of all his faults, a brave, frank, and outspoken man, in whom the grace of God came to be remarkably exemplified, and the gospel of Christ to have a faithful and fearless exponent. We entertain no hostility to the ancient city of Rome. We admire the patriotism and bravery, the civilisation and in many respects admirable laws, of its early inhabitants. We visit it again and again, to learn on the spot, more of that famous heathen city, that once ruled the world, but no awe of "*aeterna urbs*" [*Eternal City*] warps our moral judgments. We have no grudge against the members of the modern Church of Rome. In those prosperous countries in which we are in the majority, and have the upper hand, we have accorded to them the same civil and religious liberty, the same social and political privileges enjoyed by ourselves, and this line of action we intend to continue to the end. But we believe that the saved man, who shall enjoy eternal fellowship with God, is one who attains unto the truth as it is in Jesus, hates unrighteousness, loves truth, and " speaketh the truth in his heart."

"He in Gods' presence, his abode
for evermore shall have:
O, do thou truth and mercy both
prepare that may him save."
Ps. 61.7. (Metrical Version)

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