

THE 2ND EPISTLE OF PETER

- I. Authorship.
- A. Internal evidence of a Petrine authorship is stronger than that of 1st Peter:
 1. The writer makes an explicit claim as being Simon Peter. 1:1
 2. Recalls Jesus' prediction concerning his death. 1:14 cf. Joh.21:19
 3. The claim as an eyewitness to the transfiguration. 1:16-17 cf. Mat.17:1-2ff
 4. Acknowledges sending to his audience a previous epistle. 3:1
 5. Specifically identifies himself with the apostle Paul. 3:15
 - B. Yet, in spite of internal evidence, 2nd Peter has been one of the most contested books of the N.T. canon.
 - C. Many claim 2nd Peter as a forgery and literary product of an unknown 2nd Century (c.150AD) author.
 - D. The issue has been and continues to be due to the dissimilarity of writing style with 1st Peter.
 - E. While critics have and still do exist, their argument is most effectively deflated in the simplest of ways by Peter himself closing his 1st epistle noting Silvanus as the scribal agent behind its writing "Διὰ Σιλουανοῦ...δι' ὀλίγων ἔγραψα – *through Silvanus...through few [words] I have written*".
 - F. Peter's writing of the 1st epistle was predicated upon the two agencies of "Silvanus" and an "abridged format" putting it into its present form.
 - G. This clearly indicates a style of writing not unique to Peter.
 - H. This simple and obvious fact is preferred over even the most sophisticated rhetoric of intellectuals whose morbid interest is controversy and debating about words. Cp.1Tim.6:3-4
 - I. There are those conservatives that try and compromise the rejection of Petrine authorship with its canonizing in the N.T. asserting that a follower of Peter wrote in his name under inspiration.
 - J. This approach smacks of blaspheme. Why would the H.S. inspire a believer to write Scripture under a form of deceit?
- II. Canonization and authenticity.
- A. Peter was accepted into the N.T. canon via:
 1. The Council of Laodicea (363).
 2. The Council of Hippo (393).
 3. The Council of Carthage (397).
 4. Admitted into the Vulgate by Jerome (340-420).
 5. It was accepted into the Barococcio Canon (206 AD) that included 64 or the 66 books in the Bible excluding Esther and Revelation.
 - B. Further, early Church fathers recognized its canonical validity:
 1. Anathasius in his Festal Letter (367 AD) contained a list of 27 N.T. books that agrees precisely with our own.
 2. Origen's (185-253 AD) testimony, though ambiguous, distinguished between the 2 epistles, allowing for Peter's possible authorship in the 2nd epistle "with doubt". His ambiguity is contradictive however, as he expressly quotes several passages of 2nd Peter without indicating any doubt.

THE 2ND EPISTLE OF PETER

3. Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD) wrote the first commentary on 2nd Peter, though now lost.
 - C. While 2nd Peter is excluded in the Old Syriac (c.200 AD) and Old Latin (c. before 200 AD) texts, these texts also exclude Hebrews, James, and 1st Peter.
 - D. There are no known extant 2nd Century writings making any express quotations from 2nd Peter (mention Peter as the source of quote).
 - E. The most important external piece of evidence for the use of 2nd Peter in the 2nd Century is the *Apocalypse of Peter* (120-140 AD; spurious) containing some striking coincidences with 2nd Peter. It is concluded that this pseudo book is dependent upon 2nd Peter, rather than vice versa.
 - F. The earliest and most important internal evidence of its use 1st Century is the quotation of 2Pet.3:2-3 in Jud.17,18, assumed as written after 2nd Peter c.70-80 AD.
 - G. A weighty argument in favor of 2nd Peter's authenticity is its acknowledged superiority to all other known pseudonymous writings. Farrar remarks, "Who will venture to assert that any Apostolic Father – that Clement of Rome, or Ignatius, or Polycarp, or Hermas, or Justin Martyr – could have written so much as twenty consecutive verses so eloquent and so powerful as those of the Second Epistle of St. Peter (Farrar, F.W., *The Early Days of Christianity*).
 - H. There is nothing doctrinally in the epistle that contradicts N.T. Apostolic teaching or any other hints of heresy or other unique markings (extra biblical) designating spurious writings otherwise excluded from the N.T. canon.
 - I. Dr. Bob Utley, *Written Commentary Introduction to 2nd Peter*, appeals to the renowned Biblical archaeologist W.F. Albright, who was instrumental on validating the Dead Sea Scrolls, asserting that the epistle was written before 80 AD because of its similarities to the Scrolls.
- III. Date, place and recipients of writing.
- A. Church tradition asserts Peter died in Rome while Nero was Caesar and therefore cannot be dated later than 68AD, the year of Nero's death.
 - B. It was written after 1st Peter (63-64AD) and near the end of Peter's life (1:14).
 - C. Since Peter died before Paul, we would date the epistle ~65AD.
 - D. It is generally held that 2nd Peter, like his first epistle, was written from Rome.
 - E. He is issuing a follow-up to his first letter to the saints in Asia Minor (cp.1Pet.1:1) as made clear in 2nd Peter 3:1.
- IV. Occasion and purpose of writing.
- A. The occasion for 2nd Peter was the outbreak of heretical teachings within the assemblies addressed in 1st Peter.
 - B. The false teaching was characterized by antinomianism (liberal perversion of grace):
 1. Some false teachers went so far as to deny the Lord (2:1).
 2. They were daring and irreverent (2:10c,12).
 3. They lived immoral lives (3:3).
 4. Scoffed at the promise of the Lord's return (3:3-4).
 5. Seduced unstable souls (2:14,18).

THE 2ND EPISTLE OF PETER

- 6. They caused the way of the truth to be maligned (2:2).
 - 7. They were characterized by insubordination to established authority (2:10b).
 - C. Whereas 1st Peter was for the purpose of exhorting these believers regarding their enemies outside the Church, 2nd Peter is warning against falling victim to the heresy infiltrating from within the Church.
 - D. It is a call to continued spiritual growth, the antidote to false teaching (1:10-12; 3:18).
 - E. It appears that 2nd Peter is spurred due to the beginnings of Gnostic heresy that would continue to be battled by the Apostle John in his 1st epistle some ~20+ years later. *See Introduction to 1st John.*
 - F. Their distortion of grace was tantamount to denying the doctrine of the STA kin to Christ's Person and work on the cross impacting the Christian life.
 - G. Instead they employed mysticism (mystery doctrine) as the way to arrive to sinless perfection.
 - H. Their approach combined both legalism (self-righteousness) and liberalism, with liberalism the obvious evidence of their heresy (legalism is often effectively hid by a godly-crust, cf.2Tim.3:5).
- V. A pertinent characteristic of 2nd Peter.
- A. The keynote of the epistle is "knowledge". Words of "knowing" or "knowledge" are used 17x. The intensive form signifying "full-knowledge" is used 6x.
 - B. Peter's apologetics against Gnosticism is to attack their claim of "superior knowledge" that elevated them into a higher plane with the "true knowledge" of BD as defense.
 - C. John's approach was to emphasize the need for isolation of the STA with R_B for righteousness to fight their liberal claims otherwise. Cf.1Joh.1:8 – 2:2
 - D. As John's epistle makes clear, Gnosticism found a home in the Church and it is of no wonder that attacks against canonization would be intense as Peter openly blasts these heretics.
- VI. Summary.
- A. 2nd Peter was slow to receive recognition within the Church.
 - B. It competed with a flurry of pseudo Petrine books on into the second century i.e., Acts of Peter, the Acts of Andrew and Peter, the Acts of Peter and Paul, Passion of Peter and Paul, Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles, the Apocalypse of Peter and the Preaching of Peter.
 - C. If 2nd Peter was the product of a forger, then that person had to assume a certain amount of misrepresentation. "The real author of any such work had to keep himself altogether out of sight, and its entry upon circulation had to be surrounded with a certain amount of mystery, in order that the strangeness of its appearance at a more or less considerable interval after the putative author's death might be concealed (Journal of Theological Studies, ii. 19, by Moffatt)."
 - D. Such a work is termed a "pious fraud" and merits no place in the N.T. canon.

THE 2ND EPISTLE OF PETER

- E. The conservative view eliminates all implications of deception in the personal references in the epistle, and furnishes the best and least confusing solution to the problem.
 - F. We concur with Ebricht: “When we discover an epistle which has the dignity and originality and high ethical character of Second Peter, in which are no anachronisms that the most searching investigation can discover, and in which are found no absurd miracles or foolish legends or heretical teaching contrary to the spirit and character of Peter, but in which there are touches that remind one of the fiery apostle described in the Acts and the Gospels, and in the very body of which there are claims of Petrine authorship, and which commended itself in the course of years to the general body of Christians when tested in the crucible of experience, then it is a fair conclusion that we have here a genuine message of the Apostle-Preacher Peter, and the world of the twentieth century can profit greatly by heeding his threefold message (*The Petrine Epistles, A Critical Study of Authorship*, The Methodist Book Concern, 1917).”
 - G. Denial of Petrine authorship presents us with “an insoluble psychological riddle” in the words of Frommuller: “Is it possible that a man animated through and through with the spirit of Christianity, who expressly renounces all cunning fabrications, should have set up for the Apostle Peter, and have written this Epistle in his name? Intentional fraud and such illumination – who is able to reconcile them? (“The Second Epistle General of Peter”, *Lange’s Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, p. 5).
- VII. Brief Outline.
- A. Introduction: 1:1-4.
 - B. Growing in grace: 1:5-11.
 - C. Grounded in the truth: 1:12-21.
 - D. False teachers: Chptr.2.
 - E. Living in the hope of His coming: Chptr.3.