THE APOCALYPSE OF PETER

A JEWISH CHRISTIAN APOCALYPSE
FROM THE TIME OF BAR KOKHBA

1. Why study the Apocalypse of Peter?

The Apocalypse of Peter deserves to be studied for the following reasons:

1. It is probably the most neglected of all Christian works written before 150 C.E. It has, of course, suffered the general stigma and neglect accorded to apocryphal works by comparison with those in the canon of the New Testament or even those assigned to the category of the Apostolic Fathers. But whereas other Christian apocryphal literature of the earliest period — such as apocryphal Gospels or the Ascension of Isaiah — have very recently been studied in some depth and are beginning to be rescued as significant evidence of the early development of Christianity, the Apocalypse of Peter has been given very little serious scholarly attention. Surely for those who are interested in Christian origins any Christian work from the first century or so of Christian history deserves the closest study.
2.— In section II of this book I shall argue that the *Apocalypse of Peter* derives from Palestinian Jewish Christianity during the Bar Kokhba war of 132-135 C.E. This makes it a very rare example of an extant work deriving from Palestinian Jewish Christianity in the period after the New Testament literature. It deserves an important place in any attempt to consider the very obscure matter of what happened to Jewish Christianity in Palestine in the period after 70 C.E.

3.— Outside Palestinian Jewish Christianity, the *Apocalypse of Peter* evidently became a very popular work in the church as a whole, from the second to the fourth centuries¹. It seems to have been widely read in east and west. In some circles at least it was treated as Scripture. Along with the *Shepherd* of Hermas, it was probably the work which came closest to being included in the canon of the New Testament while being eventually excluded. After an early period of popularity, however, it almost disappeared. This must have been largely because in its major function — as a revelation of the fate of human beings after death — it was superseded by other apocalypses: in the Latin west and in the Coptic and Syriac speaking churches of the east by the *Apocalypse of Paul*, in the Greek east by the *Apocalypse of the Virgin Mary*. For a number of reasons these proved in the long run more acceptable, and the *Apocalypse of Peter* very nearly perished altogether. But the fact that for two or three centuries it seems to have appealed strongly to the Christian religious imagination makes it an important historical source.

4.— The *Apocalypse of Peter* preserves Jewish apocalyptic traditions. Because of the prevalent artificial distinction between the Jewish apocalypses and the Christian apocalypses, this is the respect in which the *Apocalypse of Peter* has been neglected even more than in other respects. But there is in fact relatively little that is distinctively Christian about the *Apocalypse of Peter*. Much of its content reproduces Jewish apocalyptic traditions. It can therefore be used, of course with appropriate caution, as a source for Jewish apocalyptic ideas of the early second century C.E. And it reminds us how very much Judaism and Christianity had in common at that period.

As these four reasons for studying the Apocalypse of Peter suggest, our study of the work in this article will focus on the original work in the context in which it was first written. This is only one aspect of the way in which the Christian apocryphal literature needs to be studied. Many Christian apocryphal works (and the same is true of Jewish apocryphal literature) are best understood as developing literature: works which developed as they were transmitted over many centuries in a variety of cultural contexts. They were translated, expanded, abbreviated, adapted. In some cases the attempt to reconstruct an original text may be quite impossible or inappropriate. However, in the case of the Apocalypse of Peter we may fairly confidently assign it a date and place of origin, and also, despite the fact that most of the text does not survive in its original language, we may be fairly confident of the content of the original work. There are places where we may not be able to be sure of the original text, but by and large we can know what the first readers read. So in the case of the Apocalypse of Peter, the historical exercise of placing the work in its original context is a justifiable one and will yield significant historical results.

2. The Text of the Apocalypse of Peter.

The Apocalypse of Peter was probably written originally in Greek and certainly was known in Greek to the Church Fathers. (Whether a Latin version was known in the Latin-speaking churches in the early centuries is much less certain.) Unfortunately, because, after an initial period of popularity, the Apocalypse of Peter fell out of favour in most of the church, very little of it survives in Greek. We have only two small manuscript fragments (the Bodleian and Rainer fragments) and a few quotations in the Fathers. (For details on these fragments and quotations, see the Bibliography below.) In addition, there is one lengthy fragment in Greek (the Akhmim fragment), but this is a secondary, redacted form of the text, which cannot be relied on as evidence of the original form of the Apocalypse of Peter (see below). For our knowledge of the apocalypse we are therefore largely dependent on the Ethiopic version. This version, which contains the full contents of the original second-century Apocalypse of Peter, is the only version of the Apocalypse of Peter known to be extant. It was probably, like most Ethiopic versions of apocryphal works, translated from an Arabic translation of the Greek, but an Arabic version has not been discovered. Any study of the Apocalypse of Peter must therefore depend
heavily on the Ethiopic version. Probably this is one reason why, since the identification of the Ethiopic version by M. R. James in 1911, the Apocalypse of Peter has received very little scholarly attention. Scholars have been dubious whether the Ethiopic version can be trusted to give us reliable access to the second-century Apocalypse of Peter. Those who have studied the matter with some care, such as M. R. James himself and, more recently, D. D. Buchholz, have not shared such doubts. But some indication of the reasons for trusting the Ethiopic version must be given here, in order to justify our use of it in this book.

Only two, closely related manuscripts of the Apocalypse of Peter are known. (For details, see the Bibliography.) In both manuscripts the Apocalypse of Peter is the first part of a longer work ("The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead"), the rest of which was clearly inspired by the Apocalypse of Peter. This continuation of the ancient apocalypse, which probably originated in Arabic, would be of considerable interest if we were studying the later history of the Apocalypse of Peter. But for our present intention of studying the Apocalypse of Peter in its original, early second-century context, the important point is that we can be sure that the text of the Apocalypse of Peter itself has not been affected by this later continuation of it. The section of the Ethiopic work which is the ancient Apocalypse of Peter can be distinguished from the rest with no difficulty. Whereas the Apocalypse of Peter itself is written as though by Peter in the first person, the later continuation begins by introducing Peter's disciple Clement, who writes in the first person and reports what Peter said to him (according to a literary convention of the later Pseudo-Clementine literature). Moreover, Buchholz has demonstrated that the writer responsible for the continuation of the Apocalypse of Peter which we have in the Ethiopic text did not tamper with the content of the Apocalypse of Peter itself. He merely added; he did not modify².

The general reliability of the Ethiopic version as faithful to the original text of the Apocalypse of Peter can be demonstrated by four main points:

1.— There is the general consideration that the Ethiopic translation of apocryphal texts seems, as a general rule, to be faithful translation, and such works were not usually adapted or

². D. D. Buchholz, Your Eyes Will Be Opened, op. cit, p. 376-386. Buchholz argues for some minor changes, but I do not find his argument that these are due to the author of the continuation at all compelling.
modified in the Ethiopic tradition. This contrasts with some other languages in which apocryphal works have been transmitted — such as Slavonic and Armenian — where creative development of the text has often taken place in those traditions. Of course, the Ethiopic may well include erroneous translations and textual corruptions — and in the case of the Apocalypse of Peter these are certainly present — but deliberate adaptation of the text is rare.

2.— The general reliability of the Ethiopic version is confirmed by the two small Greek fragments and the patristic quotations.3

3.— There are passages in the second Sibylline Oracle, probably from the late second century, which are clearly closely dependent on the Apocalypse of Peter as we know it from the Ethiopic version and confirm the reliability of the Ethiopic version.4

4.— Detailed study of the Apocalypse of Peter repeatedly confirms that the content of the work in the Ethiopic version belongs to the period in which the ancient Apocalypse of Peter was written. All the parallels with other literature show this. There is hardly a single idea in the Ethiopic Apocalypse of Peter which can only be paralleled at a date much later than the early second century.

These reasons for confidence in the general reliability of the Ethiopic version do not mean that it is reliable in every detail. The translation is clearly sometimes erroneous and was apparently made by a translator whose command of Ge’ez was very limited, so that the Ethiopic text is frequently obscure. But such obscurities can often be clarified by careful use of parallels in ancient Jewish and Christian literature.

As well as thus justifying our predominant reliance on the Ethiopic version in this book, it may be necessary also to justify the fact that little reference will be made to the Akhmim Greek fragment. This fragment is part of a manuscript, probably of the eighth or ninth century, which also contains a section of the Gospel of Peter (the only substantial section of this work which has survived) and parts of 1 Enoch, and which was placed in the grave of a Christian monk. It is clear that the manuscript is a small collection of texts about the other world, and was placed in

5. This is the judgment of P. Marrassini.
a grave in accordance with the traditional Egyptian practice of providing the dead with a guide to what they will encounter after death 6. The problem with the fragment of the Apocalypse of Peter is that it differs significantly in several ways from the Ethiopic version. But some of its important differences from the Ethiopic version are at points where the patristic quotations and the Bodleian fragment confirm the originality of the form of the text in the Ethiopic version 7. So it has now come to be universally accepted by those who have examined the issue carefully that the Akhmim fragment is a deliberately edited form of material from the Greek Apocalypse of Peter. It may not even be, as such, a fragment of the Apocalypse of Peter itself: it may well be a fragment of another work which utilized the Apocalypse of Peter as a source. There is still a case to be made for the view of some earlier scholars that it is actually another section of the Gospel of Peter 8. In any case, although it may sometimes help us to clear up an obscurity in the Ethiopic version of the Apocalypse of Peter, it must be used with great caution in studying the Apocalypse of Peter. Priority must be given to the Ethiopic version.

3. Outline and Summary of the Apocalypse of Peter.

The Apocalypse of Peter can be divided into three main sections, whose contents can be briefly outlined as follows:

I. Discourse on the Signs and Time of the Parousia.

1:1-3 The disciples' enquiry.
1:4-8 The parousia will be unmistakable.
2 The parable of the fig tree: the false Messiah and the martyrs of the last days.

II. Vision of the Judgment and its Explanation.

3 Picture of the judgment and Peter's distress.
4 The resurrection.
5 The cosmic conflagration.
6:1-6 The last judgment.

7. See references in n. 3 above.
I. Discourse on the Signs and Time of the Parousia (chapters 1-2):

[Although it is not made clear by the opening of the work, the events take place after Jesus’ resurrection.] Jesus and his disciples are on the Mount of Olives. They ask him about the signs and the time of his parousia and the end of the world. Jesus warns them not to believe the false claimants to messiahship who will come. His own coming to judgment will be in unmistakable glory.

In order to indicate the time of the end, Jesus gives them the parable of the fig tree: when its shoots become tender, the end of the world will come. When Peter asks for explanation, Jesus tells another parable of a fig tree: the barren fig tree which will be uprooted unless it bears fruit. The fig tree in both parables is Israel. The sprouting of the fig tree will take place when a false messiah arises and Israel follows him. When they reject him, he will put many to death. They will be martyrs. Enoch and Elijah will show them that he is not the true messiah.

II. Vision of the Judgment and its Explanation (chapters 3-14):

Jesus shows Peter a vision of the judgment of all people at the last day. Peter is distressed at the fate of sinners, but his claim that it would have been better for them not to have been created is rejected by Jesus, who promises to show Peter the sinners’ deeds (in order to enable him to appreciate the justice of their condemnation).

A long prophecy (by Jesus) of the judgment of sinners follows. It begins with an account of the resurrection, which must take
place so that all humanity may appear before God on the day of judgment. God's word will reclaim all the dead, because for God nothing is impossible. Then will follow the cosmic conflagration, in which a flood of fire will consume the heavens and the sea and drive all people to judgment in the river of fire. Then Jesus Christ will come and be enthroned and crowned as judge. All will be judged according to their deeds, which will appear in order to accuse the wicked. The river of fire through which all must pass will prove their innocence or guilt. The angels will take the wicked to hell. The demons will also be brought to judgment and condemned to eternal punishment.

There follows a long description of the punishments in hell. A specific, different punishment is described for each of twenty-one types of sinner. The types of sinner and their punishments are:

1) those who blasphemed the way of righteousness — hung by tongues;
2) those who denied justice — pit of fire;
3) women who enticed men to adultery — hung by necks;
4) adulterers — hung by genitals;
5) murderers — poisonous animals and worms;
6) women who aborted their children — in a pit of excrement up to the throat;
7) infanticides — their milk produces flesh-eating animals;
8) persecutors and betrayers of Christ's righteous ones — scourged and eaten by unsleeping worm;
9) those who perverted and betrayed Christ's righteousness — bite tongues, hot irons in eyes;
10) those who put the martyrs to death with their lies — lips cut off, fire in mouth and entrails;
11) those who trusted in their riches and neglected the poor — fiery sharp column, clothed in rags;
12) usurers — in pit of excrement up to the knees;
13) male and female practising homosexuals — fall from precipice repeatedly;
14) makers of idols — scourged by chains of fire;
15) those who forsook God's commandments and obeyed demons — burning in flames;
16) those who did not honour their parents — roll down fiery precipice repeatedly;
17) those who disobeyed the teaching of their fathers and elders — hung and attacked by flesh-eating birds;
18) girls who had sex before marriage — dark clothes, flesh dissolved;
19) disobedient slaves — bite tongues continuously;
20) those who gave alms hypocritically — blind and deaf, coals of fire; 
21) male and female sorcerers — on wheel of fire in the river of fire. 

The elect will be shown the punishments of the damned. The latter cry for mercy, but the angel in charge of hell, Tartarouchos, tells them it is now too late for repentance. The damned acknowledge the justice of their punishment. But when the righteous intercede for the damned, Jesus Christ the judge will grant their prayers. Those for whom they pray will be baptised in the Acherusian lake and will share the destiny of the elect. The elect will enter Jesus Christ's eternal kingdom, with the patriarchs, and his promises to them will be fulfilled. 

Concluding the prophecy of judgment, Jesus now addresses Peter personally about his future. He is to spread the Gospel through the whole world. He is to go to Rome, where he will die a martyr « at the hands of the son of the one who is in Hades » 9.

III. Visions of the Reward of the Righteous (chapters 15-17): 

Jesus and the disciples go to «the holy mountain», where the disciples are granted five revelations. The first is of Moses and Elijah, appearing in resplendent beauty as heavenly beings. When Peter asks where the other patriarchs are, they are shown the heavenly paradise. Jesus says that this destiny of the patriarchs is also to be that of those who are persecuted for his righteousness. 

When Peter offers to construct three tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah, he is severely rebuked by Jesus, but promised a vision and an audition (the third and fourth of the five revelations) to enlighten him. The vision is of the tent which the Father has made for Jesus and the elect. The audition is of a voice from heaven declaring Jesus to be God's beloved Son who should be obeyed. Finally, the disciples witness the ascension of Jesus, with Moses and Elijah, through the heavens. Jesus takes with him « people in the flesh ». The disciples descend the mountain, glorifying God, who has written the names of the righteous in the book of life in heaven.

9. Quotations from the Apocalypse of Peter (Ethiopic version) are based on a preliminary English translation by Paolo Marrassini, from his edition of the Ethiopic text. This edition and an improved English translation will appear in the Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum volume on the Apocalypse of Peter.
I. THE LITERARY AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

1. Literary Context.

We cannot be sure whether the title *Apocalypse of Peter* is original. It does not occur in the Ethiopic version, which has a lengthy title or prologue which certainly does not belong to the original text. But the title *Apocalypse of Peter* is already used by the Muratorian Canon and by Clement of Alexandria, and so it may well be original. It is true that many of the works which now bear the title Apocalypse came to be so called only at a later date (quite apart from those which have been so called only by modern scholars), but the period in which the *Apocalypse of Peter* must have been written — the early second century C.E. — is one in which it is plausible to hold that the term ἀποκάλυψις could be being used as the description of a literary work containing the account of a revelation given by a supernatural being to a prophet or visionary.

But whether or not its title is original, the *Apocalypse of Peter* certainly belongs to that rather broad genre of ancient literature which we call apocalypses. Indeed, its date — in the early second century C.E. — places it in a golden age, perhaps the golden age of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature. The period between the two great Jewish revolts (between 70 and 132 C.E.) produced the greatest of all the Jewish and Christian apocalypses: the *Book of Revelation*, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* — works in which the genre of apocalyptic became the vehicle for truly great literature and truly profound theology. A considerable number of other extant Jewish and Christian apocalypses also date from the late first and early second centuries: the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the *Ladder of Jacob*, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, the Greek *Apocalypse of Baruch* (3 Baruch), the *Shepherd of Hermes*, and quite probably also the *Parables of Enoch*, the Slavonic *Apocalypse of Enoch* (2 Enoch), and so-called 5 *Ezra*. It is hard to be sure whether this period really was exceptionally productive of apocalypses, or whether that impression is due to the accidents of survival. There certainly were more Jewish apocalypses in earlier periods, such as the early first century C.E., than have survived, and it is always very important to remember that all extant ancient Jewish apocalypses, with the exception of *Daniel* and the apocalyptic works found at Qumran, have been preserved by Christians. Many which were not congenial to Christian use may not have survived. With due allowance for these factors, however, it does seem probable that the writing of
apocalypses especially flourished in the period from 70 C.E. to about the middle of the second century. The reasons will be partly that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 C.E. posed for Judaism issues of theodicy and eschatology which were most suitably wrestled with or answered in the literary genre of apocalypse, and partly that much of early Christianity remained during this period a strongly eschatological religious movement which therefore found one of its most natural forms of expression in the apocalypse. I do not make the mistake of considering eschatology the sole content of apocalypses but most of the apocalypses I have mentioned do in fact focus especially on matters of eschatology, as the Apocalypse of Peter also does. Of course, during the same period — the second century — the genre apocalypse was also adopted and adapted by Christian Gnostics as a vehicle for the kind of revelations they wished to present.

The Apocalypse of Peter has some close links, by way of themes and traditions, with some of the Jewish apocalypses of its period: 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, the Parables of Enoch. If, as I shall argue, the Apocalypse of Peter is a Palestinian Jewish Christian work, these links with contemporary Palestinian Jewish apocalypses are especially interesting. They help to explain the preservation of these Jewish works by Christians, by showing us the context of Palestinian Jewish Christian apocalyptic in which these Jewish apocalypses would have been of interest. It was doubtless in such Christian circles as those from which the Apocalypse of Peter comes that Jewish apocalypses such as 4 Ezra were read and then passed on to the wider church which later preserved them.

That there is actual literary dependence by the Apocalypse of Peter on any extant Jewish apocalypse is much less certain. The links which exist are explicable as common apocalyptic tradition, current in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic circles of that period. It is an important general feature of the apocalypses of this period that they are all dependent on blocks of traditional apocalyptic material. The more one studies the way the same traditions reappear in various apocalypses, the more it becomes impossible to suppose that literary borrowing from one apocalypse to another can fully explain the recurrence of traditional

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10. This mistake has been corrected especially by C. Rowland, The Open Heaven (London: SPCK, 1982).
11. Cf., e.g., M. E. Stone, Fourth Ezra (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), p. 21-22, on such blocks of traditional material in 4 Ezra.
material. Apocalyptic traditions must have existed in some form, oral or written, independently of the apocalypses in which such traditions are now incorporated. (Of course, such traditional material is also sometimes preserved in works which are not apocalypses, such as the Biblical Antiquities of Pseudo-Philo or the letters of Paul.) We do not know the sociological context in which these apocalyptic traditions were handed on, whether as oral traditions in circles of apocalyptists or as written notes passed between learned individuals. But certainly what passed from one apocalyptist to another was not just ideas, but blocks of tradition.

Every apocalypse is therefore a mixture of tradition and originality. The truly great apocalypses — Revelation and 4 Ezra, for example — are works of remarkable creativity, in both literary and theological terms. The traditional material they certainly incorporate is used in highly creative ways. In these works the use of tradition is consistent with considerable originality and with very carefully studied composition. In other cases, traditional material has been put together by a much less gifted writer and a much less profound thinker. In one sense, the Apocalypse of Peter is one of the least original of the apocalypses. Blocks of traditional material seem to be incorporated often more or less as they stand. Virtually all the contents of the Apocalypse of Peter probably already existed in some form, some as Gospel traditions, most as Jewish apocalyptic traditions. Probably no passage of more than a few verses was freely composed by the author. But this does not mean that the author is a mere compiler of traditions. The combination and redaction of his material has been done with a certain real skill. His creative redactional activity has made of the traditional material he used a particular whole with a coherent message. While the Apocalypse of Peter is not a great example of the genre, while its literary and theological merit is small, it is nevertheless a literary work in its own right. If we are to appreciate what it meant to its contemporaries and later readers, we must study its traditional components not only as blocks of tradition, but as they relate to each other in this particular literary whole.

So the Apocalypse of Peter turns out to have a double interest. Because of its very conservative preservation of apocalyptic traditions, it is actually a source of knowledge of Jewish apocalyptic traditions. It has rarely been treated in this way, because of the artificial distinction which is prevalent between the apocalypses which belong to the so-called Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and those which belong to the so-called New Testament Apocrypha. So far as apocalypses go, this distinction between
Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and New Testament Apocrypha is wholly artificial. The Christian tradition of writing apocalypses was almost entirely continuous with the Jewish tradition. In the second century, as I have indicated, even Jewish apocalypses recently written were read and imitated by Christians. The Jewish and Christian apocalypses of the period must be studied together. Moreover, there is no useful distinction between Christian apocalypses written under the name of Old Testament figures such as Ezra and those written under the name of New Testament figures such as Peter. The latter are no less closely related to Jewish apocalypses than are the former.

So the Apocalypse of Peter is of interest for its preservation of those apocalyptic traditions which were common to Christian and non-Christian Jews of the period. But it is also of interest as a work in its own right, with a message of its own. As such, it was no doubt read mostly by Christians, though it may also have functioned as missionary literature used by Christian Jews in their mission to non-Christian Jews. In any case, it reached not only its immediate readership of Jewish Christians but a wide Christian readership throughout the church for a century or more after it was written. Something about it evidently proved popular and relevant.

One important literary feature does distinguish the Apocalypse of Peter as a Christian apocalypse from the Jewish apocalypses to which it is closely akin. It is a revelation of Jesus Christ to the apostle Peter. In being pseudonymous, it differs from the Johannine Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas, whose authors broke with Jewish apocalyptic tradition by not hiding behind an ancient pseudonym but writing in their own names as recipients of revelation, as Christian prophets. But like those Christian apocalypses, it is a revelation given by Jesus Christ. The Apocalypse of Peter is probably the earliest extant Christian apocalypse which uses an apostolic pseudonym. The difference which this makes to its literary form is that the narrative framework — which most apocalypses have — is in this case a Gospel narrative framework. It begins with Jesus and the disciples on the mount of Olives; it ends with Jesus’ ascension to heaven. The revelation is thus placed within the Gospel story of Jesus, specifically within the period of the resurrection appearances. It purports in fact to record Jesus’ final revelatory

teaching to his disciples prior to his departure to heaven. In a sense this gives it the character of a testament of Jesus, but it would be a mistake to make too much of this testamentary character of the *Apocalypse of Peter*: apart from revelation of the future, it shares none of the standard features of the Jewish testament literature. It is better to think of it as an apocalypse set at the end of the Gospel story of Jesus.

As an apocalypse set at the end of the Gospel story of Jesus, the *Apocalypse of Peter* is an example of a genre of Christian apocalypses which seems to have become very popular in the second and third centuries: the revelatory discourse of Jesus to one or more disciples or the revelatory dialogue of Jesus with the disciples after the resurrection. Like the *Apocalypse of Peter*, such works are often set on the mount of Olives or some other mountain; they often end with an account of the ascension. Unlike the *Apocalypse of Peter* they usually begin with an account of the risen Jesus’ appearance to the disciples; in this respect, the *Apocalypse of Peter* is rather peculiar. The way it does open makes it unlikely that an account of an appearance of Jesus has been lost at the beginning, but means that there is actually no way of knowing that the scene is set after the resurrection until one reaches the account of Jesus’ ascension at the end of the work.

The genre of the post-resurrection revelatory dialogue is often thought of as a Gnostic literary genre. It did indeed become very popular with the Gnostics. But it did not originate with them. Non-Gnostic examples of the genre — such as the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Epistle of the Apostles*, the *Testament of our Lord* and the *Questions of Bartholomew* — are not imitations of the Gnostic use of the genre. They show that the genre itself originated before Gnostics adopted it. Those who wished to attribute to Jesus Christ further revelations additional to those known from the Gospel traditions evidently found it appropriate to place such revelations in the period of the resurrection appearances. This was because these additional revelations presupposed the teaching of Jesus already given in the Gospel traditions. They interpreted and developed the teaching of Jesus that was already...
known. They often refer back to the teaching Jesus had given before his death and offer further explanation of what Jesus had meant or further information on subjects that Jesus' earlier teaching had not sufficiently covered. Such further revelation may be eschatological, as it is in the Apocalypse of Peter, in a large part of the Epistle of the Apostles, and in the oldest, apocalyptic part of the Testament of our Lord. The Gnostics then found this genre the obvious literary vehicle for conveying the esoteric, Gnostic meaning of Jesus' teaching.

In the Apocalypse of Peter there is one very explicit reference back to the earlier teaching of Jesus in the Gospel traditions, whose full meaning is now revealed to Peter by further revelation. This is in 16:5-6. Jesus has given Peter a vision of paradise, which is said to be a revelation of «the honour and glory of those who are persecuted for my righteousness» (16:5). Peter comments: «Then I understood that which is written in the scripture of our Lord Jesus Christ». The reference is certainly to Matthew's Gospel, evidently the only written Gospel the author of the Apocalypse of Peter used 15, and to the beatitude in Matthew 5:10: «Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven». The Matthean saying, and the subsequent reference to reward in heaven, leaves the nature of the heavenly reward undeveloped. The apocalyptic revelation of paradise in the Apocalypse of Peter, precisely the kind of apocalyptic revelation which is notably absent from the Gospel traditions, is thought by the author of the Apocalypse of Peter to be needed to fill out the mere hints given in the pre-resurrection teaching of Jesus.

We should understand the way the Apocalypse of Peter begins in a rather similar way:

«As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, his own «approached him. We bowed down and begged him privately «and asked him, saying, "Tell us, what will be the signs of your «coming and of the end of the world? — so that we may know «and understand the time of your coming, and instruct those «who will come after us, those to whom we shall preach the «word of your Gospel and whom we shall put in charge of «your church, so that they too may hear and apply themselves «to understand the time of your coming" » (ApPet 1:1-3).

Ostensibly this does little more than reproduce, with a little expansion and adaptation, the opening of the eschatological discourse of Jesus in Matthew 24. But the author is not intending to give, as it were, a version of that eschatological discourse, moving it from its Matthean place before the resurrection to a post-resurrection setting. Rather he is intending to represent Jesus, in response to the disciples' questions, as taking up the same subject again and this time going into much more detail on many aspects of the eschatological events. The whole of Jesus' discourse, which continues to chapter 14, is intended to develop what is undeveloped and to add what is lacking in the Matthean eschatological discourse. The way in which this is done, of course, is by resort to Jewish apocalyptic traditions. Just as the eschatological discourse of Jesus in chapters 1-14 is not a version of the Matthean eschatological discourse, but another post-resurrection eschatological discourse, intended to supplement the first, so the narrative of chapters 15-17, which is modelled on the Matthean account of the transfiguration of Jesus should not be mistaken for a version of the transfiguration narrative. It gives no support to the idea that the transfiguration was originally a post-resurrection tradition, transferred in our Synoptic Gospels into the ministry of Jesus. Chapters 15-17 of the *Apocalypse of Peter* actually do not describe a transfiguration of Jesus at all. It is the glorious appearance of Moses and Elijah which is featured, not the glory of Jesus. The point is that the author is simply using material from the transfiguration narrative in order to develop a new account of an apocalyptic revelation of the glorious destiny of the elect. He saw in the Matthean transfiguration narrative hints which could be developed further in a post-resurrection setting. Again he draws on Jewish apocalyptic traditions in order to develop them. In summary we can say that the *Apocalypse of Peter* is a revelation by the risen Christ to Peter and the disciples, set within a post-resurrection Gospel narrative framework. It borrows materials from the Gospel traditions which were especially susceptible to development in an apocalyptic direction. It develops them by means of Jewish apocalyptic traditions, which form the greater part of its content.

As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, his own approached him. We bowed down and begged him privately and asked him, saying, «Tell us, what will be the signs of your coming and of the end of the world? — so that we may know and understand the time of your coming, and instruct those who will come after us, those to whom we shall preach the word of your Gospel and whom we shall put in charge of your church, so that they too may hear and apply themselves to understand the time of your coming». Our Lord answered us, saying to us, «Be careful not to be led into error, not to become doubtful and not to worship other gods. Many will come in my name, saying that they are the Messiah. Do not believe them, and do not approach them, because, as for the coming of the Son of God, it will [not] be recognized, but like a bolt of lightning which is visible from the east to the west, so shall I come on a cloud of heaven, with great power in my glory, with my cross going before me. I shall come in my glory, shining seven times more brightly than the sun. I shall come in my glory with all my holy angels, when my Father

Matthew 24

When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him, privately, saying, «Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?»

Jesus answered them, «Beware that no one leads you astray.

For many will come in my name, saying, “I am the Messiah!” (...) do not believe it (...) For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man. (...) and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven (...) [16 27 For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father,
sets a crown on my head, so that I may judge the living and the dead, and so that I may repay everyone according to his deeds.

21 As for you, learn from the fig tree its parable. As soon as its shoots have sprouted and its twigs have become tender, at that time will be the end of the world.

7 (...) Indeed, I have said to you, “when its twigs have become tender”, [meaning that] in the last time false Messiahs will come, and they will promise, “I am the Messiah, who have come into the world”.

11 (...) Many will die and there will be martyrs, because Enoch and Elijah will be sent to make them understand that he is the impostor who is to come into the world and who will perform signs and wonders in order to deceive. »

24 (...) and produce great signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. »

2. Historical Context

It is unusual to be able to give a precise date and place of origin for an ancient apocalypse, but I think that in the case of the Apocalypse of Peter we can do so with considerable confidence. In this section I shall argue that the Apocalypse of Peter can be dated during the Bar Kokhba war, i.e. during the years 132-135 C.E., and that it was written in Palestine, deriving from the Jewish Christian churches. If this is correct, it makes the Apocalypse of Peter a very significant document for the history of Palestinian Jewish Christianity. It is perhaps the only work of
second-century Palestinian Jewish Christianity which survives in its complete and original form.

The argument for the date and place of the Apocalypse concerns especially the first two chapters and the last two chapters of the work 17. In chapters 1-2 the author has adapted and expanded parts of the Synoptic apocalyptic discourse as found in Matthew 24. The wording of the Apocalypse of Peter in these chapters is in several places very close to the specifically Matthean redaction of the Synoptic apocalyptic discourse, and so we can be sure that the author knew the text of Matthew 24 itself. But he has used Matthew 24 very selectively: he has in fact drawn on only eight verses of that chapter — or, to put it another way, he has used only two sections of Matthew 24: v. 3-5 and v. 24-32. To these borrowings from Matthew 24 he has added additional traditional material from other sources in order to develop those themes in Matthew 24 in which he was interested. So by observing his selection and expansion of material from Matthew 24 we can see how his apocalyptic expectations were focussed. As we shall see, they are focussed, in these first two chapters of the Apocalypse, on just two themes.

The first three verses of the Apocalypse of Peter are the disciples’ question, to which the rest of the first two chapters are Jesus’ response:

«As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, his own « approached him. We bowed down and begged him privately « and asked him, saying, “Tell us, what will be the signs of your « coming and of the end of the world? — so that we may know « and understand the time of your coming, and instruct those « who will come after us, those to whom we shall preach the « word of your Gospel and whom we shall put in charge of « your church, so that they too may hear and apply themselves « to understand the time of your coming”» (ApPet 1:1-3).

The setting and question follow closely Matthew 24:3, except that in the Apocalypse the disciples ask about the time of the parousia, not simply so that they themselves should understand it, but also so that their successors should understand it. Clearly the author writes in a post-apostolic period: the generation of the apostles has passed and it is now a subsequent generation

17. Most of the following argument so far as it concerns chapters 1-2 was presented in more detail in R. Bauckham, « The Two Fig Tree Parables in the Apocalypse of Peter », Journal of Biblical Literature 104 (1985), p. 269-287.
which needs to be able to recognize the signs that the parousia is imminent. Moreover, whereas *Matthew* refers to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, as well as to the time of the parousia, in the *Apocalypse of Peter* it is only the time of the parousia that is of interest. Evidently the author lives after C.E. 70, and he is not interested in providing *post eventum* prophecies of events, such as the fall of Jerusalem, which lay between the time of Jesus, the supposed date of the prophecy, and his own time. He is interested only in his readers' immediate situation and the events which he believes to lie in their immediate future.

The rest of the material he derives from *Matthew* 24 readily falls into three categories:

a) *There is the warning about false Messiahs*. This subject occurs twice in the apocalyptic discourse in *Matthew* 24:3-5 (where it is the opening subject of the discourse) and 24:23-26 (where the subject recurs immediately before the description of the parousia itself). The author of the *Apocalypse of Peter* has drawn on both these passages and ignored everything that comes in between them in *Matthew*. He has therefore rightly identified a major theme of the Matthean discourse, and he has also, as we shall see, rightly understood the way this theme of false Messiahs is connected in *Matthew* 24 with the parousia. But as far as *Matthew*’s account of the events that will precede the parousia is concerned, he has selected only this one theme. It must have been the prominence of this theme in *Matthew* 24 which drew him to this chapter and led him to make it the basis of the opening of his *Apocalypse*. The theme of the false Messiahs and the warning against being led astray by these imposters who make deceptive claims is one of his main interests.

But there are two further, very important points about the way he uses this material from *Matthew* 24, which we can see if we look closely at the texts in the *Apocalypse of Peter*. The words of Jesus in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, as in *Matthew* 24, begin with this theme:

«Our Lord answered us, saying to us, “Be careful not to be led into error, not to become doubtful and not to worship other gods. Many will come in my name, saying that they are the Messiah. Do not believe them, and do not approach them”» (ApPet 1:4-5).

But he then returns to the theme in 2:7-8:

«(…) false Messiahs will come, and they will promise, “I am the Messiah, who have come into the world” (…)»
And again towards the end of chapter 2:

"Enoch and Elijah will be sent to make them understand «that he is the impostor who is to come into the world and «who will perform signs and wonders in order to deceive.» «(ApPet 2:12: the reference to the deceptive signs and «wonders there is taken from Matthew 24:24.)

In those passages the false messianic claim and the false Messiah's potential to deceive, of which Christians must beware, derive from Matthew 24. But we should notice, first, that whereas Matthew 24:24 speaks of false Messiahs and false prophets (ψευδόχριστοι καὶ ψευδοπροφηταί), the Apocalypse of Peter speaks only of false Messiahs. The author is not interested in people who claimed to be the eschatological prophet, but only in those who claimed to be Messiah. But, notice also, secondly, that whereas Matthew speaks throughout of false Messiahs, in the plural, the Apocalypse of Peter, while it begins by following Matthew in this respect and warning against many false Messiahs (1:5), goes on in chapter 2 to focus on a single messianic pretender. In the Ethiopic text as it stands the transition is very awkward and abrupt: the end of 2:7 speaks of false Messiahs, in the plural, but 2:8 speaks of «his evil deeds», and although verse 9 is very obscure, from verse 10 onwards it is quite clear that only one false messianic claimant is being spoken of. It may be that the text of v. 7 should be corrected to refer to only a single false Messiah. But even if we accept such an emendation of the text, there is a transition from the several false Messiahs of chapter 1 to the single false Messiah of chapter 2. Moreover in 2:12, the phrase which the author has borrowed from Matthew («signs and wonders in order to deceive»: Matt 24:24) applies in Matthew to the false Messiahs, but in the Apocalypse of Peter has been applied to the single false Messiah.

It seems clear that the author of the Apocalypse of Peter is interested in Matthew's predictions of false Messiahs mainly because they provide a starting point from which he can narrow the focus to the single and last false Messiah, who is his real concern. I shall be arguing that this is because at the time of writing there was a particular, single messianic claimant — by whom the Apocalypse's readers were in danger of being misled. However, we should not too easily jump to this conclusion. The expectation of a single final Antichrist who would deceive people with his false claims and who would persecute the people of God, as the false Messiah in chapter 2 of the Apocalypse of Peter does, was after all a common feature of much early Christian apocalyptic expectation. The coming of Enoch and
Elijah to expose him as a deceiver (2:12) was probably also already a traditional apocalyptic feature. May not the author simply be putting together Matthew 24's predictions of the false Messiahs and other traditional material in which a single Antichrist was expected? No doubt, he is doing this. But we still need to explain why his interest in the events preceding the parousia is so selective, so overwhelmingly focussed on the figure of the false Messiah. That this is because an actual messianic claimant threatened the church of his time and place will become clearer as we proceed.

b) The second of the three categories of material that our author has drawn from Matthew 24 is the prediction of the manner of the parousia:

«As for the coming of the Son of God, it will not be recognized, but like a bolt of lightning which is visible from the east to the west, so shall I come on a cloud of heaven, with great power in my glory, with my cross going before me. I shall come in my glory, shining seven times more brightly than the sun. I shall come in my glory with all my holy angels, when my Father sets a crown on my head, so that I may judge the living and the dead» (ApPet 1:6-7).

Here the author depends on Matthew 24:27,30, and perhaps also on Matthew 16:27, but he has both selected from the Matthean depiction of the parousia and expanded it with other traditional material. The elements here which do not come from Matthew can all be shown to be very probably already traditional in Christian depiction of the parousia. Nothing here is original, but the author has both selected from Matthew and added from other apocalyptic tradition in order to make very emphatically two points about the parousia. One is that Christ will come with divine authority to exercise judgment: «When my Father sets a crown on my head, so that I may judge the living and the dead, stet so that I may repay everyone according to his deeds» (1:7b-8). This is the point at which the author

introduces the central theme of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which will be expounded at length in chapters 3-14. But of more immediate interest to us is the second point about the parousia: that it will be unmistakably the parousia of Jesus Christ. This is how the depiction of the parousia in v. 6 connects with the warning against false Messiahs in v. 5. The coming of the true Messiah will be evident to all people. The disciples should not be deceived by the claims of the false Messiahs, because the coming of the true Messiah will be unmistakable. This point the author has taken from *Matthew*, who also places the saying about the lightning immediately after the misleading claims about the false Messiahs in order to make the point that the parousia, like the lightning which flashes across the sky from east to west, will be evident to all (24:27). *Matthew* contrasts this with the misleading claim that the Messiah is out in the desert or is in the inner rooms (24:26): the *Apocalypse of Peter* drops this point. Evidently the false Messiah who concerns this author is not gathering his followers in the desert (like some of the messianic claimants before 70 C.E.) or hiding in secret in houses. But his appearance can be easily distinguished from the unmistakable character of the parousia of Jesus Christ, as expected in Christian tradition.

As well as the simile of the lightning, the *Apocalypse of Peter* labours the unmistakableness of the parousia by emphasizing the glory of the coming Christ, of course a well-established traditional aspect of the parousia. Three times Jesus says «I shall come in my glory» (1:6-7), and this is reinforced, the first time, with «on a cloud of heaven, with great power»; the second time, with «shining seven times more brightly than the sun»; the third time, with «with all my holy angels». These details make the parousia an unmistakably supernatural, transcendent occurrence. But one further detail makes it unmistakably the parousia of Jesus Christ: «my cross going before me» (1:6). This appearance of the cross at the parousia — perhaps an interpretation of *Matthew*’s «sign of the Son of man» (24:30), certainly a stock feature of early Christian expectation (*EpApp* 16; *ApElijah* 3:2; *SibOr* 6:26-28; Hippolytus, *In Matt.* 24:30; cf. *Did* 16:6) — serves here to make it clear that, by contrast to any other messianic claim, the only appearance of the Messiah which Christians can expect is unmistakably the coming of Jesus, the crucified, in glory. So we can see that the author’s depiction of the manner of the parousia is very closely connected with his interest in the figure of the false Messiah. It is designed to counter the false Messiah’s potential to deceive those of the *Apocalypse*’s readers who were evidently tempted to accept his claim to messianic status.
c) The third and final category of material which the author has taken from Matthew 24 is the parable of the fig tree, which 2:1 borrows from Matthew 24:32:

« As for you, learn from the fig tree its parable. As soon as its shoots have sprouted and its twigs have become tender, at that time will be the end of the world. »

It is in this parable that the author of the Apocalypse of Peter finds the real answer to the disciples' question about the time of the parousia. The end of the world will come when the fig tree sprouts. But what is the meaning of the sprouting of the fig tree? Peter is understandably puzzled and has to ask for an interpretation (v. 2-3).

Peter's request for an interpretation shows that for the author of the Apocalypse of Peter the meaning of the parable of the budding fig tree is not to be found within Matthew 24 itself. He does not accept the indication in Matthew 24:33 that by the sprouting of the fig tree is meant simply « all these things » — all the events which Matthew 24 has depicted as preceding the parousia. The author of the Apocalypse of Peter requires a more specific interpretation. The sprouting of the fig tree must be some specific sign of the end. So he seeks the interpretation elsewhere and finds it in another Gospel parable about a fig tree, which he reproduces in 2:5-6. This is the parable of the barren fig tree, elsewhere found only in Luke's Gospel (13:6-9). I have argued elsewhere that the author has drawn this parable not from Luke, but from some independent tradition of the parable. The important point, however, is that the author is doing what other early Christian interpreters of the parables also sometimes did: he is assuming that the imagery common to the two parables must have a common meaning. Therefore one parable can be used to interpret the other.

The second parable, the barren fig tree, tells how for many years the fig tree failed to produce fruit. The owner proposes that it be rooted out, but the gardener persuades him to allow it one more chance of fruiting. This fruiting of the fig tree is treated by our author as equivalent to the sprouting or budding of the fig tree in the parable of Matthew 24. He correctly perceives that in the parable of the barren fig-tree the fig tree represents Israel, and the contribution which this parable makes to the interpretation of the other is that it establishes that the fig tree is Israel. Jesus’

20. R. BAUCKHAM, The Two Fig Tree Parables op. cit., p. 280-283.
interpretation of the parable begins: «Do you not know that the fig tree is the house of Israel?» (2:4). Then after quoting the parable of the barren fig tree, he repeats: «Did you not understand that the trunk of the fig tree is the house of Israel?» (2:7). So it is the house of Israel which must sprout as the final sign of the end. But we still do not know what the sprouting or fruiting of the fig tree is. To explain this the author returns to the theme of the false Messiah, who (we are now told) will put to death those who refuse to accept his claim to messiahship. The sprouting of the fig tree represents the many martyrs of the house of Israel who will die at the hands of the false Messiah.

So finally we see that the author's third principal interest in these chapters — along with the false Messiah and the unmistakable manner of the coming of the true Messiah — is martyrdom. This is the theme which dominates the second half of chapter 2, where we are repeatedly told of the many martyrs who will die at the hands of the false Messiah. Like the other two themes, this theme of the martyrs of the last days is anchored in Matthew 24, by means of the author's interpretation of the parable of the fig tree. By means of skilful selection of material from Matthew 24 and expansion of this material from other traditional sources, the author has found dominical authority for a very clearly focussed apocalyptic expectation. He depicts a situation in which a false Messiah puts to death those who are not deceived by his claims because they know that the true Messiah, Jesus Christ, will come in unmistakable glory. The deaths of many martyrs of the house of Israel at the hands of the false Messiah will be the last sign that the end of the world and the parousia of Jesus Christ as judge of the world are imminent.

We could reduce the dominant concerns of these first two chapters of the Apocalypse of Peter to two closely connected concerns: a) the question of the true and false Messiahs, and b) martyrdom. The two concerns are closely connected because those who are not deceived by the claims of the false Messiah are to be put to death by him. This means, of course, that those who heed the warning against believing and following false Messiahs with which Jesus' words begin (1:4-5) are going to incur martyrdom. By contrast with Matthew 24, where martyrdom is mentioned (24:9) but is not a major theme and is not connected with the false Messiahs, in the Apocalypse of Peter martyrdom at the hands of the false Messiah completely dominates the expectation of what must happen before the parousia. We have to conclude that the author envisaged his readers having to discern and resist the claims of a false Messiah and facing martyrdom as a result. The question arises: Are the readers already in this situation —
has the false Messiah appeared, is he already persecuting Christians — or is his appearance and persecution still future? This is the familiar problem of identifying the point at which an apocalyptic prediction moves from the present into the future.

The writer's exclusive concern with the false Messiah and the persecution he carries out must indicate that this persecution is already under way. If these were simply features of a traditional apocalyptic scenario which the author reproduces as expectation for the future, the exclusion of all other features of such traditional apocalyptic scenarios would be inexplicable. The false Messiah must be already a threat; the Apocalypse's readers must be already tempted to believe his claim; some of those who, out of loyalty to the Messiah Jesus, refuse to follow him must have already been put to death. This impression given us by the first two chapters is confirmed by the evidence which the rest of the Apocalypse of Peter provides that it was written in a situation of persecution. There are two main pieces of evidence of this kind:

a) In the account of the punishments in hell after the last judgment. As we shall see later (in our section II.7, below), the Apocalypse of Peter, in the long account of the many categories of sinners and the specific punishments each receives in hell (chapters 7-12), is certainly taking over traditional apocalyptic material. We have many other similar accounts of the punishments in hell, which derive from common streams of apocalyptic tradition. The literary relationships among these so-called «tours of hell» are debatable and complex, but there can be no doubt that, here as elsewhere, the Apocalypse of Peter takes over traditional material. The other tours of hell show us the kind of material which was the Apocalypse of Peter's source for 7-12. By this means we can be confident that most of the categories of sinners which the Apocalypse of Peter depicts in hell were traditional. By and large, the author did not decide which sins to mention in his account of hell: he took them over from apocalyptic tradition. But there are three categories of sinners in hell in the Apocalypse of Peter which cannot be paralleled in other tours of hell and which occur in succession as a group of three in 9:1-4. The first group are «those who persecuted and betrayed my righteous ones» — i.e. those who put the martyrs to death. The second group are «those who blasphemed and perverted my righteousness» — probably those who apostatized in order to escape martyrdom. The third group are «those who caused death by their false witness» — presumably those who informed on the martyrs.
The unique inclusion of these three categories of sinners in an account of the punishments in hell must indicate a situation of persecution and martyrdom as the Sitz im Leben of the Apocalypse of Peter.

b) In chapter 16, when the disciples are given a vision of paradise, Peter is told by Jesus that «this is the honour and glory of those who are persecuted for my righteousness» (16:5). This makes it clear that the concern with paradise in the latter part of the Apocalypse of Peter is primarily a concern for the reward that awaits the martyrs in the next life.

If chapter 2 therefore refers to a persecution by a false Messiah which has already begun, we may note two further points about the martyrs. In the first place, they are Jews, as 2:11 insists «It is at that time that the twigs of the fig tree, which alone is the house of Israel, will have become tender. There will be martyrs at his hand»). Secondly, the persecution can only have begun. Presumably v. 12 refers to an event still in the future: «Enoch and Elijah will be sent to make them understand that he is the impostor who is to come into the world...» Unless we suppose that the author identified two of his contemporaries as Enoch and Elijah, of which he gives no hint, we must suppose that the enlightenment as to the falsity of the false Messiah's claim which Enoch and Elijah will bring to many of those who are to be martyred still lies in the future. Probably, a few of the author's fellow Jewish Christians have already been martyred: they are those who, because of their faith in Jesus as Messiah, already recognize the deception of the false Messiah. But the author expects many more Jews — those who are not yet believers in Jesus — to reject the false Messiah when Enoch and Elijah expose him. These will be the majority of the martyrs and their martyrdom lies still in the immediate future. Thus 2:13 explains: «This is why [i.e. because Enoch and Elijah have demonstrated that the false Messiah is the deceiver] those who [then] die at his hand will be martyrs, and will be numbered with the good and righteous martyrs who have pleased the Lord with their lives [that is, with those who have already died as martyrs]». This means that the currently unbelieving Jews who, enlightened by

Enoch and Elijah, will die at the hands of the false Messiah in the future, are going to be numbered with the Jewish Christian martyrs who have already suffered death at his hands.

Who then is the false Messiah who is already persecuting Jewish Christians and who can be expected to turn against other Jews if they too reject his messiahship? The historical situation of the early church and other early Christian literature suggests only two possibilities: a Roman emperor or a Jewish messianic pretender. Against the first possibility, we may note that the author's quite explicit limitation of horizon to Jewish Christians and Jews would be very surprising if a Roman persecution of Christians were in view. But more decisively, when early Christian apocalyptic associates the persecuting Antichrist figure with the Roman imperial power there is always allusion to the Roman imperial cult. The Antichrist is then said to claim divinity and to require worship. The false Messiah of the *Apocalypse of Peter* merely claims to be the Messiah, and all the emphasis is put specifically on the issue of who is the true Messiah (1:5; 2:7-10). This points to an inner-Jewish context: a debate between the Christian claim that Jesus is Messiah and the claims of a Jewish messianic claimant.

If then, the false Messiah of the *Apocalypse of Peter* is a Jewish messianic pretender of the period after 70 C.E. (since the *Apocalypse of Peter* must be dated later than 70), there are only two possible identifications:

In the first place, we cannot neglect the possibility that the false Messiah is the leader of the Jewish revolt in Egypt and Cyrenaica in the years 115-117 in the reign of Trajan. Though we know very little about it, it is clear that this revolt was on a considerable scale. Of its leader we know (from Eusebius) only his name Lucas and the fact that Eusebius calls him «their king» (*Hist. Eccl.* 4.2.4). A major Jewish revolt against Rome at this period must have had a messianic character, and a leader of such a revolt described as king must have been seen as a messianic figure. Our meagre sources tell us nothing of any persecution of Christians during this revolt, and we may note that Eusebius, had he known of such persecution, would certainly have mentioned it. But on the other hand, we know that the rebellious Jews massacred...

Gentiles in large numbers. It is likely enough that Jewish Christians who refused to join the revolt would also have suffered.

One feature of the Apocalypse of Peter could support a suggestion that it originated among Jewish Christians in Egypt during the revolt of 115-117. In 10:5, one category of the sinners in hell are the manufacturers of idols. The idols they made are described as «the idols made by human hands, the images which resemble cats, lions and reptiles, the images of wild animals». This has often been taken to refer specifically to Egyptian religion and therefore to point to an origin for the Apocalypse of Peter in Egypt. Images of gods in the form of animals were of course especially characteristic of ancient Egypt, and of the specific animals mentioned the first, cats, would infallibly suggest Egyptian religion. Other Jewish texts which certainly or probably originated in Egypt have similar references to animal images (Wisd 12:24; 15:18; SibOr 5:278-280; Philo, Decal. 76-80; De vita contempt. 8; Leg. 139; 163), often specifying cats and reptiles (LeTaris 138; SibOr 3:30-31; SibOr Frag 3:22, 27-30).

Since the Apocalypse of Peter most probably reached Ethiopia via Egypt, it is possible that the reference to idols in the form of animals is a later gloss introduced into the text of the Apocalypse of Peter in Egypt. The reference is missing in the parallel passage of the Akhmim text. On the other hand, there are few other points in the Ethiopic version of the Apocalypse of Peter where there is any very good reason to suspect a gloss, so that we should be very cautious about resorting to this explanation. In fact, there is no real difficulty in supposing that this description of idols could have been written by a Palestinian Jew (cf. TMos 2:7; LAB 44:5, for references to animal idols in a Palestinian context). Paul in Romans 1:23 refers to idols as «images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles», and Justin refers to the worship of animals in a general discussion of idolatry, evidently using specifically Egyptian forms of idolatry as an instance of idolatry in general (Apol. 1.24). A Jewish Christian opponent of idolatry might well have considered the worship of animal forms the most degrading form of idolatry (as later Christian writers did) and singled it out for mention for this reason. At this period Egyptian cults were practised outside Egypt, and the Egyptian veneration of cats must have been very well known.

23. E.g. Aristides, Apol. 12.1; Theophilus, Ad Autol. 1.10; Tertullian, Ad Nat. 2.8; Cyril of Jerusalem, Catech. 6.10.
24. For the general reputation of Egypt for animal worship, see K. A. D. Smelik and E. A. Hemelrijk, «“Who knows not what monsters demented Egypt worships?”: Opinions on Egyptian animal worship in
That the Apocalypse of Peter originated in Egypt during the Jewish revolt under Trajan is a possibility which perhaps cannot be entirely excluded. However, there are stronger grounds for identifying the false Messiah of the Apocalypse of Peter with the leader of the Jewish revolt in Palestine in the years 132-135 C.E., the leader whose real name we now know to have been Shim'on bar Kosiva, but who is still generally known by his messianic nickname Bar Kokhba. The arguments for seeing a reference to Bar Kokhba in the Apocalypse of Peter and therefore for the origin of the work in Palestine during the Bar Kokhba revolt, are as follows:

a) First, it is necessary to defend the view that Bar Kokhba was seen by many of his supporters as the Messiah, since this view has been contested by some recent writers. For our purposes we do not need to know whether Bar Kokhba himself made a messianic claim, only that such a claim was made on his behalf by his supporters. In favour of this, there is, first, the rabbinic evidence, most importantly the well-known tradition (y. Ta'an. 68d) that Rabbi Aqiva declared Bar Kokhba to be the King Messiah, and connected his name with the prophecy of the star (kokhav) that will come forth from Jacob (Num 24:17), a favourite messianic text of the period. Whether this view of Bar Kokhba is correctly attributed to Aqiva is unimportant for our purpose. What is significant is that such a view of Bar Kokhba could certainly not have originated after Bar Kokhba’s defeat and death. The tradition must preserve an identification of Bar Kokhba as the Messiah and the star of Antiquity as part of the ancient conception of Egypt», in Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, 2.17/4, ed. W. Haase (Berlin/New York : de Gruyter, 1984), p. 1852-2000.


26. A. Rheinhartz, «Rabbinic Perceptions », op. cit., argues that the claim was made during the war, as an explanation of Bar Kokhba’s success, by some of his supporters, though not by all.

Jacob which was made during the revolt 28. Second, from Christian sources, beginning with Justin, who was writing only twenty years after the revolt, we know that Bar Kosiva must have been quite widely known as Bar Kokhba (« son of the star ») 29. This pun on his real name is explicable only as an identification of him as the messianic star of Jacob (Num 24:17) and thus corroborates the rabbinic tradition attached to the name of Aqiva. Thirdly, rabbinic traditions which explicitly deny that Bar Kokhba was the Messiah and Christian sources which depict him as a false messianic pretender indirectly confirm that during the revolt he was regarded by many as the Messiah. If it is unlikely that Christian writers would represent as a false Messiah a Jewish leader for whom messianic claims had never been made, it is even less likely that rabbinic traditions hostile to Bar Kokhba would have invented a messianic claim for him in order to deny it 30. Fourthly, the fact that in the recently discovered Bar Kokhba documents he is treated as a purely human military and political leader is not, as some have supposed, in contradiction to the claim that he was regarded as Messiah. Messianic expectations of the time certainly included the purely human figure who would restore Jewish national sovereignty by force of arms.

b) Turning to more detailed correlations between what we know of Bar Kokhba and the Apocalypse of Peter, we know from Justin (I Apol. 31.6) that Bar Kokhba ordered that Christians who would not deny Jesus as the Messiah should be punished severely. This is very early evidence of persecution of Jewish Christians by Bar Kokhba and there is no reason at all to doubt it. The Bar Kokhba letters show that the rebel government took strong action against Jews who failed to support the revolt, and it is therefore intrinsically likely that Jewish Christians, who could not acknowledge Bar Kokhba's political authority without accepting his messiahship, would suffer. It is true that there is not much evidence that the revolt extended to Galilee 31, where probably the majority of Jewish Christians who lived west of the Jordan at this time were to be found. But there is no difficulty in supposing that there were also Jewish Christians in Judæa, while our interpretation of the Apocalypse of Peter does not require

29. The treatment of this evidence by MILDENBERG, Coinage, op. cit., p. 79-80, is irresponsible.
there to have been very large numbers of Jewish Christians killed by Bar Kokhba's troops. A small number of martyrs would sufficiently explain the expectation that many more martyrdoms would soon follow.

c) Apocalypse of Peter 2:12 calls the false Messiah «the imposter who is to come into the world and who will perform signs and wonders in order to deceive». This is a traditional expectation of the Antichrist, taken here from Matthew 24:24. The author may have understood the signs and wonders as Bar Kokhba's military success which no doubt persuaded many to regard him as the Messiah. But it is also noteworthy that later Christian tradition about Bar Kokhba attributed to him the deceptive miracles expected of the Antichrist. Eusebius, in a statement that may well be based on Aristo of Pella and may therefore preserve Palestinian Jewish Christian tradition, says that Bar Kokhba claimed to be «a star which had come down from heaven to give light to the oppressed by working miracles» (Hist. Eccl. 4.6.2). Jerome (Ad Rufin. 3.31) says that Bar Kokhba pretended to breathe fire by means of a lighted straw in his mouth. These statements cannot, of course, be taken as evidence that Bar Kokhba really claimed to work miracles, but they do reveal a Christian tradition of identifying Bar Kokhba with the false Messiah who works miracles, a tradition which may well go back to the Apocalypse of Peter, written during the revolt itself.

d) There seem to have been two punning variations on Shim'on bar Kosiva's name. One was the messianic nickname Bar Kokhba («son of the star»). The other was a derogatory nickname, denying his messianic claim. This derogatory version is formed by spelling his name not with a samek but with a zayin: bar Koziva («son of the lie» [kozav]), that is, «liar». This spelling (Koziva) is consistently used in rabbinic literature. It has sometimes recently been regarded as no more than an alternative spelling 32, but the Bar Kokhba letters consistently spell the name either with a samek or, occasionally, with a sin, and so it is likely that the spelling with a zayin originated as a derogatory pun 33. The fact that rabbinic traditions use it even in positive statements about Bar Kokhba, such as that attributed to Aqiva, merely indicates that it had become the only designation of

Bar Kokhba in rabbinic tradition. From the rabbinic evidence we cannot tell whether this derogatory pun on the leader's name originated only after his defeat and the general discrediting of his messianic claim or whether it was already in use during the revolt by those Jews who refused to support him. But there is one statement in the Apocalypse of Peter which would gain particular force if the derogatory pun Bar Koziva was already in use. 2:10 declares: « As for that liar, he is not the Messiah ». The word in the Ethiopic is different from « imposter » in 2:12, and presumably translates the Greek ἡπετής. The idea of the Antichrist as a deceiver was, of course, thoroughly traditional in early Christian apocalyptic traditions, and 1 John 2:22 may well indicate that the Antichrist was sometimes known specifically as « the liar » (δ ἡπετής). But the statement in the Apocalypse of Peter would certainly be peculiarly apposite if it could be understood to allude also to the derogatory pun on the false Messiah's name: « this Bar Koziva is not the Messiah ».

e) For the last indication that the Apocalypse of Peter was written in specific opposition to Bar Kokhba's messianic movement, we must turn to a passage towards the end of the book, in chapters 16-17. The two issues of the identity of the true Messiah and the fate of those who are loyal to him — the issues which dominate the first two chapters of the apocalypse — are the issues to which the apocalypse returns in its closing chapters. In 16:7-17:1 we read:

« I [Peter] said to him [Jesus], "My Lord, do you wish me to « make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one « for Elijah?" 8 He said to me, in wrath, "Satan is fighting you « and has veiled your mind! Worldly affairs overcome you! 9 « But your eyes will be opened and your ears will be opened, « [to perceive] that there is one tent, not made by human hand, « which my heavenly Father has made for me and for my « elect". We saw [it], rejoicing. 17 1 And behold, suddenly a « voice came from heaven, saying, "This is my Son, whom « I love and with whom I am well pleased. Obey him!" »

This is a crucially important passage. Its inspiration is the Matthean account of the transfiguration of Jesus, from which our author has drawn the beginning and the end of this passage: Peter's proposal to build three tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah (16:7) and the voice from heaven declaring Jesus to be God's beloved son (17:1). But the material in between (16:8-9) is the author's addition. In 16:8 Peter is very severely rebuked by Jesus. Although reminiscent of Jesus' rebuke of Peter in
Matthew 16:23, this sharp rebuke of Peter for his proposal to build the three tents is rather surprising. Why is Peter's proposal evidence that his mind is veiled by Satan, who has conquered him with matters of this world? We shall see. But following the rebuke, Peter is promised a revelation: specifically, a two-part revelation consisting of a vision (« your eyes will be opened ») and of an audition (« your ears will be opened »). The vision is of the one tent, not made with human hands, which God has made for Jesus and his elect (16:9). The audition is the voice declaring Jesus to be God's beloved son, whom the disciples must obey (17:1). By this double revelation — of the tent not made with hands and of Jesus as God's son — the veil Satan has cast over Peter's mind is removed and he is shown the truth.

The importance of the audition (the words of the heavenly voice) is clearly that it makes clear the identity of the true Messiah. Whereas in chapter 1 we were told only that the parousia of Jesus Christ will make his identity as the Messiah unequivocally clear, here at the climax of the whole book Jesus' messiahship is already declared by the divine voice. Clearly we are back in the same context of issues as chapters 1 and 2 presuppose.

Less obvious is the significance of the vision: the one tent, not made with human hands, contrasted with the three tents Peter proposes to make. The tent not made with human hands (the Greek must have been σκηνή ἄχειροποιητή) reminds us of Mark 14:58, where Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of the temple contrasts the present temple, made with hands, and the eschatological temple, not made with hands. It also resembles Hebrews 9:11, which contrasts the earthly tent (the tabernacle), made with hands, and the heavenly sanctuary: « the greater and perfect tent, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation ». Our text is not dependent on either of these passages but moves in the same world of ideas. The tent not made with human hands which the Father has made for Jesus and his elect is the heavenly temple. It is God's heavenly dwelling-place in which he will dwell with his people in the eschatological age, when God's dwelling — God's σκηνή — will be with his people (Rev 21:3). In Jewish and Jewish Christian Greek σκηνή was used as equivalent to mishkan because of the correspondence of the consonants of σκηνή with the Hebrew root shakan. So it really meant, not so much « tent », as « dwelling-place »: the tabernacle or the temple as the divine dwellingplace. (In Tobit 13:11 σκηνή is used for the temple which is to be rebuilt in the eschatological age.) So the connexion is easily made between the three tents or dwellings which Peter proposes to build for Jesus, Moses and Elijah,
and the heavenly temple which is to be the real eschatological dwelling-place of Jesus and his elect with God. Peter's error is to propose to build earthly tents himself, instead of the heavenly temple, not made with human hands, which God has made.

But why is Peter so severely rebuked for this error, and why is it corrected, not simply by the vision of the heavenly temple, but also by the voice which makes clear the identity of the false Messiah? Peter's proposal is taken to show that Satan has blinded his mind both to the identity of the true Messiah and to the nature of the eschatological temple. The point must be that the proposal to build earthly tents, made with human hands, associates Peter with the false Messiah. The whole passage makes excellent sense and connects with the concerns of the opening chapters if we assume that the messianic pretender whom the Apocalypse of Peter opposes was intending to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. The author understands Peter's proposal to build the three tents as, so to speak, endorsing this project of the false Messiah. By contrast, the temple in which God will dwell with the true Messiah Jesus and his people is not an earthly temple, constructed by human hands, but the heavenly temple, made by God himself. Thus the distinguishing of the true Messiah from the false is closely linked with understanding the kind of temple that each promises to his people. The climactic revelation of the Apocalypse of Peter, by revealing both the true Temple and the true Messiah, counters the satanically inspired temptation to follow the false Messiah in his proposal to build an earthly temple.

This interpretation of the passage is further confirmed and reinforced when we notice the location of the scene. For this we must go back to 15:1. The first fourteen chapters of the Apocalypse of Peter were located, like Matthew's eschatological discourse, on the Mount of Olives. But in 15:1, there is a change of location: Jesus says to Peter: «Let us go to the holy mountain». The last three chapters of the apocalypse are thus located on the holy mountain. Which mountain is meant? It is true that 2 Peter (1:18) locates the transfiguration on the holy mountain, and the author of the Apocalypse of Peter probably knew 2 Peter. But this does not mean that he would not have intended a specific mountain. He would probably have understood, in 2 Peter's reference to the transfiguration, the deliberate allusions to Psalm 2, where God says: «I have set my king on Zion, my holy mountain».

only mountain which the Old Testament ever calls «the holy
mountain» is mount Zion, the temple mount. So in *Apocalypse
of Peter* 15:1, Jesus is proposing that he and the disciples cross
the Kidron valley from the Mount of Olives to the Temple
mount. Thus the visions that follow are located where, for
example, in the Syriac *Apocalypse of Baruch* (13:1), Baruch
receives revelations from God about the eschatological future
— revelations which answer Baruch’s anguish and perplexity
about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (cf. also
3 *Baruch*: introduction). Baruch received his revelations amid
the ruins of the Temple (cf. 2 *Bar* 8-9). The author of the
*Apocalypse of Peter*, of course, knew that at the fictional time at
which his own work is set the second Temple was still standing,
but he passes over it in silence. He thus allows the implication
that it is actually on the site of the temple that Peter proposes to
erect the three tents. In this climax of his work, our author is
actually offering his own answer to the issue that preoccupied
the Jewish apocalyptists of his time: in the divine purpose what
is to replace the second temple? Like some of them — for his
answer is distinctively Christian only in making a connexion with
the messiahship of Jesus — he turned from all thought of a
human attempt to rebuild the earthly temple in favour of a
transcendent temple provided by God.

This argument about the meaning of *Apocalypse of Peter* 16:7-
17:1 really requires that the rebuilding of the temple in
Jerusalem was a central policy of the messianic movement the
*Apocalypse* opposes. From the coins of the Bar Kokhba revolt
we know that this was indeed the case with Bar Kokhba’s cam-
paign. There is no need for us to decide the debated question of
whether the rebels succeeded in capturing Jerusalem. In any
case, the intention to liberate Jerusalem was undoubtedly the
central proclaimed intention of the revolt. But this carried with
it the intention to rebuild the temple. From the beginning of
the revolt, a representation of the temple featured on all the
tetradrachma coins of the regime. Various objects associated
with the worship of the temple featured on other coins. The
temple and its worship seem to have been one of, perhaps the
central symbol of the revolt. Anyone asking the purpose of the
revolt might well have been told: to liberate Jerusalem, to

35. Cf. B. ISAAC and A. OPPENHEIMER, «The Revolt of Bar Kokhba
*op. cit.*, p. 54-55.
rebuild the temple, to restore the temple worship. It was this central religious as well as political purpose which united most Palestinian Jews in support of Bar Kokhba and presumably encouraged them to see him as the Messiah anointed by God to fulfil this purpose.

Understood against this background, the Apocalypse of Peter very interestingly reveals to us that the Jewish Christians of Palestine — or, at least, those who took the same view as our author — not only could not acknowledge Bar Kokhba as Messiah, but also that they had no sympathy for his central aim of rebuilding the temple. For them an earthly temple had no further place in the divine purpose. To any who were tempted to join their fellow-Jews in this aim of rebuilding the temple, the Apocalypse of Peter says that Satan has veiled their minds. Its apocalyptic revelation of the true Messiah and the true Temple is designed to open their eyes and uncover their ears, as it did Peter’s.

II. JUDGMENT

The dominant theme in the Apocalypse of Peter is the eschatological judgment. The concern with this theme of judgment relates to the situation which the Apocalypse of Peter addresses, as we considered it in the last chapter. It is a situation in which a false Messiah is putting to death those who refuse to support him out of their loyalty to the true Messiah. The persecutors and apostates flourish, while those who follow the way of righteousness suffer persecution and martyrdom. It is the classic apocalyptic situation, which we can trace right back to the Book of Daniel. It is the classic apocalyptic problem of theodicy. It is precisely the context in which the classic early Jewish expectation of the resurrection and judgment of the dead, the achievement of justice in the end by means of eschatological rewards and punishments, had taken shape. Thus the author of the Apocalypse of Peter was heir to a long tradition which had addressed precisely such a situation as his and had developed a scenario of eschatological judgment which he was able to represent by means of a series of highly traditional themes. Nothing in the Apocalypse of Peter’s account of eschatological

38. L. MILDENBERG, Coinage, op. cit., p. 31-48.
judgment is specifically Christian except the identification of the
divine judge as Jesus Christ in his parousia. The interest of the
account lies in its exceptionally detailed and complete compilation
of traditional apocalyptic themes on this subject.

In this chapter we shall study the various themes connected
with eschatological judgment in the first fourteen chapters of the
Apocalypse of Peter. For the most part, we shall consider them in
the order in which they occur in the text.

1. « Each according to his deed ».

This is a highly significant phrase which occurs five times in
the Apocalypse of Peter, each occurrence of it strategically placed.
The first occurrence is in the initial description of the parousia in
1:7-8. Jesus the true Messiah will come in glory with his angels
and his Father will place a crown on his head, giving him
authority to exercise divine judgment on the living and the dead,
so that he may « repay everyone according to his deeds » (v. 8).
The phrase encapsulates the theme of eschatological judgment
which will dominate chapters 6-13.

Then there are two further occurrences of the phrase, « each
according to his deeds » in chapter 6 (v. 3 and 6). Chapter 6 is the
detailed account of the last judgment itself, in which the wicked
and the righteous are distinguished and the wicked assigned to
their punishment. In 6:3 the point of the phrase, « each according
to his deeds », is that each will be confronted, in the judgment,
with his or her own deeds that he or she did during his or her
lifetime, and will be judged accordingly. In 6:6 the point is that
appropriate punishment for the wicked will follow: in other
words, the punishment of each will fit his or her particular

The use of the phrase in 6:6 — with reference to the eternal
punishment of « each according to his deeds » — is really
programmatic. It states the theme for chapters 7-12 in which the
punishment appropriate to each sin is described. In all, twenty-
one specific sins and the punishments allotted to each are listed
in those chapters. The point of this description of hell is mainly
to make precisely this point: that each particular kind of sin will
receive its appropriate punishment. Thus although the phrase,
« each according to his deeds », is not actually used within
those chapters (7-12), it is in fact the theme of them, already
stated in 6:6. (The way in which the punishments are designed
to fit the crime in each case is a topic we shall consider in our
section II.7 below.)
Finally, the phrase is again used twice in the chapter which follows the description of hell: chapter 13. In 13:3 it again states the principle by which the punishments which have been described are allotted. It indicates the justice of the punishments in hell. The point is then reinforced in v. 6, where the damned themselves, suffering their punishments, finally acknowledge the justice of their punishments: «The judgment of God is righteous, because we have been paid back, each according to his deeds».

Thus the positioning of the phrase in each of its five occurrences is very significant. It occurs first in the programmatic description of the parousia as Jesus Christ’s coming to exercise divine judgment. Then it occurs twice in each of the two chapters (6 and 13) which frame the long description of the punishments in hell. It states the principle of strict justice by which the punishments in hell are allotted. Repeated statement of the principle that each should be punished strictly in accordance with his or her own deeds makes it clear that the eschatological judgment is concerned with nothing but the wholly impartial judgment of individuals on their merits.

As a standard statement of the principle of divine justice, this phrase was utterly traditional in the Jewish and Christian tradition. It occurs most often in the longer form which the Apocalypse of Peter uses in 1:8 and 13:6: «to pay back each according to his deeds». (In Greek the wording is most often ἀποδίδοναι ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ, but there are variations.) The expression goes right back into the Old Testament tradition (Ps 62:12 [LXX 61:13]; Prov 24:12; Job 34:11; Jer 17:10) and continues in early Judaism down to the time of the Apocalypse of Peter (Sir 16:14; LAB 3:10). In post-biblical Jewish writings it can be used of God’s eschatological justice at the last judgment, as in Pseudo-Philo, LAB 3:10, where it occurs in a catena of traditional apocalyptic phrases describing the eschatological events of resurrection, judgment and new creation. This standard current Jewish way of referring to God’s eschatological judgment is reflected also in early Christian writers (Rom 2:6; 1 Pet 1:17; Rev 20:13; 2 Clem 11:6), but most often in early Christian literature it is Jesus Christ who will render to each according to his deeds, for early Christianity commonly transferred to Jesus Christ, as the one who will execute the judgement, all the traditional language about God’s eschatological judgment (e.g. Rev 2:23).

It is important to notice that the precise contexts in which the Apocalypse of Peter uses the phrase were in some cases at least already traditional. In the first place, the phrase was a standard, almost credal, formula in descriptions of the parousia
(Matt 16:27; Rev 22:12; 1 Clem 34:3; 2 Clem 17:4; Did 16:8; Hegesippus, ap. Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. 2.23.9; 3.20.4; Hippolytus, Dan. 4.10.1-2; QuEzra B14), so much so that it later occurs in a number of actual creeds. The author of the Apocalypse of Peter certainly knew one of these texts: Matthew 16:27, which may well have been in his mind, especially in view of its proximity to the Matthean transfiguration narrative. But he certainly also knew the phrase, «to render to each according to his deeds», as part of common traditional formulations about the parousia, along with other phrases which he uses in 1:6-8.

Secondly, the phrase is also found with reference to the last judgment itself and Christ’s judicial activity there (Barn 4:12; EpApp 26, 29; De Universo 3), as in Apocalypse of Peter chapter 6. Thirdly, the phrase is used in visions of the punishments in hell, with reference to the various punishments allotted to various sins. Thus it is found in chapters 56 and 57 of the Acts of Thomas, which certainly is not dependent on the Apocalypse of Peter (as has sometimes been alleged), but on the same tradition as some of the Apocalypse of Peter’s description of the punishments in hell. Furthermore, in the Hebrew Apocalypse of Elijah, Elijah says: «I saw there [in Gehenna] spirits undergoing judgment in torment, each one according to his deed» 39. This is most probably a relic of the ancient Apocalypse of Elijah, and should be connected with the Latin Elijah fragment (preserved in the apocryphal Epistle of Titus 40) which actually describes the various punishments for various sins, again in a way that shows common tradition with the Apocalypse of Peter and the Acts of Thomas. Similarly, in the fragment De universo, which used to be ascribed to Hippolytus 41, the angels in Hades distribute the various punishments according to each one’s deeds 42. Thus the author of the Apocalypse of Peter almost certainly already knew the phrase, «each according to his deeds», already used in

41. According to C. E. HILL, «Hades of Hippolytus or Tartarus of Tertullian? The Authorship of the Fragment De Universo », Vigilae Christianae 43 (1989), p. 105-126, it should be attributed to Tertullian.
42. K. HOLL, Fragmenta vornicänische Kirchenväter aus den sacra Parallela (TU 5/2; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1899), p. 138, lines 7-9.
connection with a description of various kinds of punishments for various sins, such as he reproduces in chapter 7-12.

The already traditional use of the phrase in these three contexts is what has enabled the author of the Apocalypse of Peter to connect the various parts of his portrayal of the judgment by means of this phrase, « each according to his deeds ». It is the catchphrase which he found connected the parousia, the judicial activity of the day of judgment and a description of the various punishments in hell. Actually, the Apocalypse of Peter is the only ancient Christian work in which the parousia of Jesus Christ is connected with an account of the different punishments allotted to different sins in hell. But the connection was, so to speak, waiting to be made in the traditional association of the phrase « each according to his deeds » with both themes.

2. The cosmic conflagration.

The chapter on the resurrection (chapter 4), which we must pass over quickly, is a compilation of apocalyptic traditions about the eschatological resurrection of the dead 43. But this material is integrated into the theme of judgment by the strong emphasis through the chapter on the fact that the resurrection takes place on the day of judgment (the phrase « day of judgment » occurs four times in the chapter, as well as the equivalent phrases « day of God » and « day of condemnation »). The author is interested in resurrection as the prelude to the judgment of the dead.

The end of chapter 4 forges a link with the following chapter: « On the day of judgment the earth will give back everything that is in it [i.e. in resurrection], for it too [the earth] will have to be judged, together with the heaven » (4:13). The judgment of the heaven and the earth is evidently the cosmic conflagration — the burning of the whole creation — which takes place in chapter 5. But from chapter 5 it does not seem that the author attributes an independent significance to the judgment of the heaven and the earth as such. The cosmic conflagration seems to

be envisaged as the means of bringing human beings to judgment. Chapter 5 opens: «What will happen on the day of judgment to those who have perverted the faith of God and to those who have sinned is (...)»

The description of the conflagration in verses 2-6 of chapter 5 is rather obscure in its details. But the picture seems to be of flowing cataracts of fire, apparently flowing down from the sky, which burn, consume and melt everything: the firmament, the stars, the oceans and the earth. This is the flood of fire which some Jewish expectation envisaged as the second destruction of creation, a parallel to the universal Flood of water in Genesis (LAE 49:3; Josephus, Ant. 1.70) 44. Descriptions of the eschatological conflagration which are quite closely parallel to that in the Apocalypse of Peter occur in Jewish texts: the Qumran Thanksgiving Hymns (IQH 3:19-36), the Sibylline Oracles (SibOr 3:54-87; 4:173-181), and the Pseudo-Sophoclean verses (ap. Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 5.14.121.4; 5.14.122.1; Ps.-Justin, De Mon. 3). Such descriptions may owe something to Iranian eschatology — more likely than to the Stoic idea of the conflagration — but there can be no doubt that the author of the Apocalypse of Peter is immediately indebted for his description to Jewish apocalyptic tradition. In such tradition the cosmic conflagration was related to certain OT texts about judgment by fire (such as Mal 3:19: «the day [of the Lord] is coming, burning like an oven ») and especially to Isaiah 34:4, which describes the destruction of the sky and the stars on the day of the Lord. The Hebrew text of this verse appears to have no reference to fire, but the Septuagint has: «all the powers of the heavens shall melt » (and cf. 2 Clem 16:3). Apocalypse of Peter 5:4 «the stars will melt in a flame of fire »; and cf. v. 6) is certainly an allusion to that interpretation of Isaiah 34:4.

Following the description of the physical destruction of the world by fire, in 5:7-8 we are told the effect of the conflagration on people:

«People that [live] towards the east [will flee to the west; people that live] towards the west will flee to the east; people that [live towards the south] will flee to the north; [and people that live towards the north will flee] to the south. But everywhere the wrath of the frightful fire will find them (...)» (ApPet 5:7-8).

44. On the eschatological conflagration in Jewish and Christian literature, see R. BAUCKHAM, Jude, 2 Peter, op. cit., d. 300-301.
This is a vivid description of the terror of sinners, fleeing in all directions to escape the flood of fire. In whichever direction they flee the fire pursues them and finds them. This passage is an interesting example of the way apocalyptic tradition works. For the image has not been invented by the author of the Apocalypse of Peter. It was a traditional apocalyptic topos, as we can see from a parallel in the Book of Thomas from Nag Hammadi, which is unlikely to be dependent on the Apocalypse of Peter. It describes in the following terms the fate of the soul imprisoned after death in Tartarus:

« If he flees westward, he finds the fire.  
« If he turns southward, he finds it there as well.  
« If he turns northward, the threat of seething fire meets him again.  
« Nor does he find the way to the east so as to flee there and be saved, for he did not find it in the day he was in the body, so that he may find it in the day of judgment» (BkThom 143:2-8).

It is quite clear that this picture originally applied, as it does in the Apocalypse of Peter, to the fire of judgment that engulfs the world on the day of judgment. The Book of Thomas has transferred it to hell, in the other world, appropriately in the sense that hell is also characterized as fire, but inappropriately in that the points of the compass are hardly relevant to Tartarus. But the form of the tradition in the Book of Thomas is also interesting in that it does not treat all four points of the compass equally, as the Apocalypse of Peter does. The east is evidently a direction in which the fire of judgment will not be found, it is the direction of salvation from the fire, which the sinner fails to find. Perhaps the idea is that the east, the land of Israel, is the place where God's people are protected from the fire that consumes the wicked. If the author of the Apocalypse of Peter knew the tradition in this form, he found it an inappropriate image, because, as we shall see, he seems to envisage the fire as an ordeal of judgment through which all must pass, though the righteous will pass through it unharmed.

Verse 7 is therefore an example of the kind of traditional apocalyptic image which was probably transmitted orally. Many similar examples can easily be found. It was from a stock of such traditions that apocalyptic writers composed their prophetic accounts of the last days. This was the accepted way of writing and readers would not be surprised to find such familiar images constantly reappearing: they would expect it. Of course, the more creative apocalyptists doubtless added new images of their
own to those they drew from the common stock of apocalyptic traditions. But even so unoriginal writer as the author of the Apocalypse of Peter could give vividness and liveliness to his work by reusing traditional apocalyptic images such as this one.

He uses this particular image in order to portray the fire that consumes the world as serving, so to speak, to round up sinners and drive them to the judgment of wrath in the river of fire:

«But everywhere the wrath of the frightful fire will find them, and the inextinguishable flame, pursuing them, will bring them to the judgment of wrath in the river of inextinguishable fire, which flows while fire is burning in it. When its scething waves are separated, there will be much gnashing of teeth for humanity» (ApPet 5:8-9).

The river of fire, as will become clear in chapter 6, is the means of judgment. It is a kind of ordeal through which all must pass. It is not clear whether this river of fire actually is the same flood of fire which has flowed down from the sky and burned and melted the whole creation. In any case, the author has brought together two rather different traditions about the fire of judgment: the fire which judges by burning the heavens and the earth, and the fire which tests all people as they pass through it. (We shall consider the latter in our section II.5 below.)

3. Jesus Christ the Judge.

Before describing the judgment itself, the Apocalypse of Peter must describe the judge. This is the apocalypse’s second description of the parousia:

«All of them will see me coming on a shining, eternal cloud, and the angels of God sitting with me on the throne of my glory at the right hand of my heavenly Father. He will place a crown on my head. Then, when the nations see it, their tribes will weep, each one by itself» (ApPet 6:1-2).

Like the first description of the parousia (in 1:6-8), this one is composed of already traditional formulae. The allusions to Daniel 7:13; Ps 110:1; and Zechariah 12:10-14; 14:5 are those which Christians had already brought together in various combinations to portray the coming of Jesus Christ as the eschatological judge. (The image of Christ’s coronation by the Father, not found elsewhere in early Christian literature, may derive from Psalm 21:3. For the crown itself, worn by Christ as judge, see Rev 14:14.)
Some of the imagery is common to both of the *Apocalypse of Peter*'s two descriptions of the parousia, but there is also a major difference. Whereas the first description (1:6-8) is designed primarily to represent the parousia as the unmistakable appearance of Jesus Christ in glory, and only secondarily to emphasize his role as judge, this second description (6:1-2) is exclusively concerned with depicting Christ's status as judge, exercising his Father's divine authority to judge the world. All the images are selected for that purpose. So again we have a good illustration of the way very little of the content of the *Apocalypse of Peter* is original, but, on the other hand, how the traditional images are carefully selected and combined to fulfill the author's purpose. He composes from a stock of tradition, but his composition is nonetheless deliberate and careful.

4. Deeds as Witnesses.

After the judge, the witnesses at the trial are introduced: «Each one's deeds will stand before him, each according to his deeds» (6:3). In this, at first sight rather curious image, the deeds of each individual, what he has done in his lifetime, are personified. The deeds of each stand there before him or her. The reference in fact seems to be only to the wicked and their evil deeds, because the next verse distinguishes, as a separate category, «the elect, those who have done good».

The significance of this image of the evil deeds of the wicked standing before them at the judgment will be clearer if we compare some occurrences of the same image in other literature, for here again we are dealing with a traditional image. One parallel is *Wisdom* 4:20. At the eschatological judgment, the wicked «will come with dread when their sins are reckoned up, and their lawless deeds will convict them to their face» (ἐξελεύαντας, equivalent to «before him» in the *Apocalypse of Peter*).

Even more illuminating is a parallel in so-called 6 *Ezra* 16:65. The context is the impossibility of sinners' hiding their sins from God at his eschatological judgment:

«Let no sinner say he has not sinned (...) Behold, the Lord «knows all the works of men, their imaginations and their «thoughts and their hearts (...) Woe to those who sin and «want to hide their sins! Because the Lord will strictly examine «all their works, and will make a public spectacle of all of you. «And when your sins come out before men, you will be put to
shame; and your own iniquities will stand as your accusers in that day. What will you do? Or how will you hide your sins before God and his angels?» (6 Ezra 16:53-54, 63-66).

The significance of the image is clearly that the evil deeds are personified as witnesses against the sinner, accusing him. We should remember that in Jewish judicial practice the witnesses were the accusers. It was they who accused the person on trial of the crimes which they had witnessed. So the idea in these apocalyptic passages is that whereas human justice is imperfect — because people can be convicted only of crimes which have been witnessed and because witnesses may not always be reliable — in the eschatological judgment of God sinners will not be able to escape condemnation for every sin, because the sins themselves will be the witnesses accusing them. Even sins witnessed by no other human being, sins done in secret, will come to light and will be undeniable. If the evidence presented against the sinner is his sins themselves appearing to accuse him, then the evidence against him will be irrefutable.

The image is thus a way of presenting the idea — which we have seen to be the dominant idea — of eschatological judgment according to the deeds of each person. It has the same function in the depiction of the last judgment as another, parallel image: the opening of the books in which all the deeds of every person are recorded. This may be a more familiar image, because it occurs in biblical depictions of the last judgment, especially Revelation 20:12: «The dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books». But the alternative image used in the Apocalypse of Peter is a peculiarly powerful one. In the eschatological judgment the sinner will be confronted by his own sins. His condemnation will not be an external — and therefore always disputable — judgment passed on him by the judge. His own evil will condemn him. The justice of his condemnation will be indisputable.

5. The Ordeal of Fire.

The motif of the sins as witnesses, taken literally, would hardly cohere very well with the image with which it is combined in Apocalypse of Peter 6:2-4: the river of fire through which all must pass. But of course both are images and need not be literally compatible.

The river of fire is the ordeal which tests people’s guilt. The righteous pass through unharmed, the wicked are burned. (As it
stands the text might seem to suggest that the righteous do not pass through the river at all, but v. 4 is obscure in the Ethiopic and probably corrupt. From parallels elsewhere to this kind of judgment scene, the meaning must be that the righteous are unharmed by the flames which devour the wicked. Like the accusing witnesses, this feature also derives from ancient judicial practice: the notion of a judicial ordeal which distinguishes the innocent from the wicked. The judicial ordeal was, of course, actually used in cases which could not be decided by the evidence of witnesses, as in the one example in the Pentateuch: Numbers 5:11-31. This provides for the case of a wife suspected by her husband of adultery, although there are no witnesses to give evidence against her. So the woman is subjected to an ordeal (drinking «the water of bitterness») in order to prove her innocence. This example makes clear why the image of the ordeal in the river of fire is strictly incompatible with the image of the deeds of the sinners as witnesses accusing them: in terms of judicial practice no ordeal should be necessary when the evidence of witnesses is conclusive.

An ordeal by plunging in a river was actually an ancient judicial practice: it occurs in the code of Hammurabi, for example. The idea of an eschatological ordeal by a river of fire is an ancient Zoroastrian idea. Unlike some of the ideas which Jewish apocalyptic is sometimes said to have borrowed from Zoroastrian tradition, which in fact cannot be securely traced back to Zoroastrian sources old enough to have influenced Jewish apocalyptic, this idea of the eschatological river of fire which distinguishes the righteous from the wicked is a genuinely old Iranian one, which is found already in the Gathas. The Apocalypse of Peter seems to be the earliest Jewish or Christian text in which it occurs, but it presumably was already to be found in Jewish apocalyptic tradition.


Although chapter 6:6 could very well lead straight into the description of the various different punishments in hell which begins in chapter 7, in fact there is a further passage relating to the last judgment itself:

«Uriel, the angel of God, will bring the spirits of the sinners who perished in the Flood, and of all those who have dwelt in every idol, every molten image, every fetish, and every statue, and those who have dwelt in every high place,
« in the stones and in the road, and have been called gods. « They will be burned with them in the eternal fire. When all of « them and the places in which they dwelt have perished, they « will be punished for ever » (ApPet 6:7-9).

This passage must be related to the traditions found in the Enoch literature and in Jubilees about the origin of the evil spirits. According to 1 Enoch and Jubilees, evil is to be traced back to the fallen angels, the Watchers, the sons of God of Genesis 6, who before the Flood mated with women and corrupted the earth. Their offspring by their human wives were the giants, the Nephilim. The Watchers themselves were punished at that time by being chained in the underworld, awaiting the last judgment but no longer perpetrating evil in the world. But their children the giants became demons: when the giants died, their spirits continued to live in the world as evil spirits, the demons who are henceforth responsible for the evil in the world.

In Apocalypse of Peter 6:7, « the spirits of the sinners who perished in the Flood » cannot be the human sinners who died in the Flood. For one thing, to introduce this particular category of humans after the universal judgment of the dead has already been apparently concluded would be odd. For another, since the dead have been presented as resurrected in bodily form, one would have to ask why it is only the spirits of these sinners who are brought to judgment by Uriel. These sinners who died in the Flood must be the giants, the sons of the fallen angels, and their spirits are therefore the demons. Admittedly, in the Enoch traditions the giants did not actually die in the Flood. They slaughtered each other prior to the Flood. So the Apocalypse of Peter must reflect a slightly variant version of the tradition.

But that these spirits are the demons is confirmed by the following verses which associate them with those who have lived in every idol and have been called gods. In the Enoch literature there is only a brief reference associating the spirits of the giants with idolatry (1 Enoch 19:1), but in early Christian writers who took over the same tradition about the origin of the demons — Justin (2 Apol. 5) and Athenagoras (Apol. 24-26) — there is considerable development of this theme. These writers make it quite clear that it is the spirits of the dead giants, the demons, who have inspired idolatrous religion and who are actually worshipped in pagan religion under the names of the pagan gods.

That the Apocalypse of Peter in this passage is referring to the demons who inspire the idolatry of pagan religion is confirmed by a later passage in the book. One of the categories of sinners punished in hell is that of people who manufacture idols (10:5-6).
Then the very next category of sinners (10:7) is that of people who have forsaken the commandment of God and have followed the will of demons. These must be pagan religious worshippers: people who worship idols and follow the will of the demons who inspire idolatrous religion.

So our passage in chapter 6 describes the final judgment of the demons who have been responsible for all idolatrous religion. It is a version of a traditional feature of the expectation of eschatological judgment: that not only wicked people will be judged, but also the powers of supernatural evil.

7. The Punishments in Hell.

The centrepiece of the whole depiction of judgment in the Apocalypse of Peter is chapters 7-12, where we are given a description of twenty-one different forms of punishment allotted to twenty-one different categories of sinner. (Presumably the number twenty-one [3 x 7] is the sort of number that appeals to apocalyptists. It may indicate completeness, suggesting that the 21 punishments are, not all the punishments in hell, but representative of all the punishments in hell. But the number seems to have no further significance: the punishments do not fall into three groups of seven or seven groups of three.)

a) Relationship to other « tours of hell ».

This account of the punishments in hell is clearly very closely related to a whole series of other Jewish and Christian apocalyptic texts which describe the various punishments for various sinners in hell. These include later Christian apocalypses, such as the Apocalypse of Paul and the Apocalypse of the Virgin, and medieval Hebrew visions of hell. The same sins and the same punishments often recur, with variations, in these texts. We are clearly dealing with an apocalyptic tradition which continued for many centuries and in which the latest texts frequently preserve very old traditional material. Most of these various texts and their relationships have been studied by Martha Himmelfarb in the book she devoted to them: Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature (Philadelphia, 1983). I reached rather similar conclusions to hers, at first independently 45, and I

have tried to develop some aspects of her work in more detail. Here I shall make a number of points about Himmelfarb's work and with specific reference to the *Apocalypse of Peter*.

First, Himmelfarb called these texts "tours of hell" because in almost all of them a visionary (such as Paul or Elijah) is given, as it were, a guided tour of the punishments in hell, usually by an angel or some other figure from the otherworld. She pointed out a particular feature of the literary form of these texts. On seeing a particular group of sinners undergoing punishment, the visionary usually asks, «Who are these?», and receives from his guide an answer beginning, «These are...» (e.g. «these are those who have committed adultery» or «these are people who used to gossip in church»). The statements beginning «These are...» — which explain what sort of sinners are being punished — Himmelfarb calls the «demonstrative explanations». They characterize almost all the texts which describe the various punishments in hell. But there is another feature of these texts to which Himmelfarb does not draw any particular attention: it is that almost all of them are describing the punishments suffered by the wicked now, immediately after death, before the day of judgement at the end of history. This is why someone like Paul or Rabbi Joshua ben Levi can be taken on a tour of the punishments — because they are actually taking place already. So the texts are an expression of the belief in the active punishment of the wicked immediately after death, before the last judgement. This belief only developed and gained adherence in both Judaism and Christianity over the course of the first and second centuries C.E. The literary genre of the tours of hell within Jewish and Christian apocalyptic most probably originated in the first century C.E., along with the belief in punishments for the wicked immediately after death.

The account of the punishments in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, however, is quite exceptional among the tours of hell, in that it is not really a *tour* of hell at all. That is, Peter is not shown around the punishments in hell that are already taking place when the revelation is made to him. Rather the account is a prophecy by Christ to Peter of what will happen to the wicked after the last judgment. For this reason, the question-and-answer literary form of the tours of hell is absent. Peter does not see the damned and ask «who are these?» The demonstrative explanations, however, are usually present. Without being asked to explain, Christ, having described each punishment, then identifies the

sinned in a sentence beginning «These are they who...» or «These people...» It seems clear that the tradition which the author of the Apocalypse of Peter used was a genuine tour of hell, in which some visionary saw the punishments, asked questions and received explanations. But the author wished to use this traditional material to describe, not the intermediate state, but the eternal punishments which follow the last judgment. So he has transformed a description by a visionary of his experiences into a prophecy put on the lips of Christ. He has eliminated the questions and retained the demonstrative explanations 47.

One reason for this is no doubt the author's imminent expectation. We do not know what he thought of the intermediate state, whether he retained, as some other contemporary apocalypses still did, the old belief that the wicked after death are not yet actively punished, but are merely detained in the underworld awaiting punishment at the last judgment; or whether he did hold the newer belief in the active punishment of the wicked immediately after death. In either case, the intermediate state was of no great concern to him, because he clearly expected the end of history and the last judgment to occur within the very near future.

Secondly, Martha Himmelfarb has done probably almost as much as can be done to sort out the literary relationships between the texts which she calls the tours of hell, including the Apocalypse of Peter. We cannot be sure of the literary relationships because there were certainly other texts, especially in the early period, which have not survived, and also because there were probably oral traditions as well as literary relationships involved. What is clear is that the Apocalypse of Peter was not the first such description of the punishments in hell, nor are many of the later tours of hell to be regarded as indebted to the Apocalypse of Peter. The view, which was propounded by M. R. James and once rather commonly held, that the Apocalypse of Peter was the source of this whole tradition of descriptions of the punishments in hell has proved to be untenable. The Apocalypse of Peter is simply one product of a tradition which antedated it and which continued after it independently of it. We have at least one tour of hell which is almost certainly older that the Apocalypse of Peter and is also Jewish rather than Christian: the Elijah fragment preserved in the apocryphal Epistle of Titus,

47. The Akhmim text of the Apocalypse of Peter, which is a secondary, redacted version, restores the form of a vision (cf. A21, A25, A26), but that this is secondary can be seen from the fact that Peter asks no questions and the «demonstrative explanations» are not ascribed to Christ, his guide, but are simply part of the narration.
which is almost certainly a fragment of the original Apocalypse of Elijah of the first century C.E. So, once again, we must see the Apocalypse of Peter as taking over and adapting traditional material from the existing traditions or literature of Jewish apocalyptic.

Thirdly, Martha Himmelfarb claims to have disproved the influential older view of Albrecht Dieterich as to the source of the Apocalypse of Peter's account of hell. Dieterich (who knew only the Akhmim Greek text, not yet the Ethiopic version of the Apocalypse of Peter) argued that the Apocalypse of Peter borrowed directly from an Orphic katabasis: one of the accounts of a descent to the underworld, describing the rewards and the punishments of the dead, which were popular in the Greco-Roman world, allegedly in a tradition of popular Orphic-Pythagorean religion. In opposition to this, Himmelfarb has convincingly shown that the Jewish and Christian apocalyptic tradition of tours of hell developed within the Jewish apocalyptic tradition. Probably her best evidence for this is the literary form of question by the seer followed by demonstrative explanation from the supernatural guide. This literary form was already well-established in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, where it occurs in many cases with reference to symbolic visions or to features of the other world other than the punishments in hell. The tour of hell most probably developed as a special category of the cosmic tour apocalypses.

But if Himmelfarb has shown that the tour of hell as an apocalyptic genre developed within the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, she has probably played down too much the extent to which this development was indebted to Greek ideas. The idea of describing a variety of punishments going on now in the underworld may well have come from the Greco-Roman katabasis literature. Certainly, specific punishments were borrowed by Jewish and Christian apocalyptists from the Greco-Roman tradition, as also occasionally from Egyptian tradition. We need to remember both that Jewish apocalyptic was a literature which freely borrowed images and ideas from other cultural traditions, and also that especially in this area of eschatology — the expectation of rewards and punishments after death — the various cultures and religious traditions of the ancient Mediterranean world had very similar concepts, so that it was easy for particular images and ideas to move from the apocalyptic of one religion to that of another.

So, with reference to the *Apocalypse of Peter*, it is important to be clear on two points and on the difference between them: 1) that the immediate sources of the *Apocalypse of Peter's* description of the punishments in hell were certainly in Jewish apocalyptic; but also 2) that these Jewish apocalyptic traditions may very well include images and ideas which ultimately derive from the Greek *katabasis* literature.

**b) The concept of justice.**

So with this introduction to the background and literary context of this section of the *Apocalypse of Peter* (chapters 7-12) we can now turn to look more specifically at the ideas of divine judgment that this account of the twenty-one infernal punishments expresses. The most important thing that needs to be appreciated about this account is that it is designed to vindicate God's justice. To modern readers it is grotesque and cruel in the extreme. But in order to understand its very different impact on ancient readers and hearers we must recognize that the idea of justice which it presupposes has certain features which we no longer easily appreciate.

First, its concept of justice is, of course, purely retributive. It is putting wrongs to right by inflicting on the offender suffering which corresponds to his offence. The idea of purificatory or reformatory punishments, which appears in some strands of Greek thought about the afterlife and occasionally makes an appearance in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic, has no place here at all. The punishments described are justified as pure retribution.

Secondly, it is probably not easy for us to understand why the punishments should be eternal in duration, since, even assuming a purely retributive notion of punishment, the eternal duration of the punishments seems to us to make them grossly disproportionate to the seriousness of the crimes. However, the *Apocalypse of Peter* insists that the punishments are eternal. In the Ethiopic version of the account of the various punishments, it is explicitly stated eleven times that they are eternal, and this point is also very emphatically made made in each of the chapters which frame the account of the punishments (chapters 6 and 13). (However, there is a problem about these references to the eternity of the punishment in the Ethiopic version. It is an interesting and consistent difference between the Ethiopic and the Akhmim Greek fragment that the latter, in the eight places where it parallels statements about the eternity of the punishments in the Ethiopic version, has none of these statements. Moreover, the Akhmim fragment is supported in this respect
[though not in others] by the Bodleian fragment of 10:6-7. Comparison of the latter with the Ethiopic version suggests that the Ethiopic has so translated the Greek in 10:6 as to turn a reference to unceasing punishment into a reference to eternal punishment, while in 10:7 it has added a reference to eternal punishment which was not in the Greek. However, we should not too quickly conclude that none of the references to the eternity of punishment in the Ethiopic are original. The editor of the Akhmim fragment probably had his own reason for not depicting the punishments as eternal, since he understood them [differently from the original apocalypse] as the punishments of the wicked in the intermediate state, taking place contemporaneously with the disciples' vision of them, not the eternal punishments which follow the last judgment. It therefore seems probable that in the Ethiopic version references to eternal punishment have been increased, but not that there were none in the original text of the apocalypse.)

If we are to understand the eternity of the punishments, I think we should have to suppose that for apocalyptic writers, eternity is not so much a kind of continuation of this life, but rather a kind of establishment of the real truth of this life. Eschatological judgment is when the real truth of this life is revealed and receives what is finally due to it. This is final justice. Of course, the idea no doubt has also a kind of parenetic function. Everything is really decided already in this life; repentance and good deeds cannot be put off to the next life; and so the need to live well in this life is absolute.

Thirdly, the impetus to a description of a whole series of different punishments for different sins, such as we find here and in other apocalyptic texts, is the notion that each sin ought to have a specific kind of punishment. Although we have not entirely lost this idea, modern people think more often and more naturally in terms of the relative severity of punishments. The punishment should fit the crime in the sense that it should be more or less severe according to the relative severity of the offence. But our text operates with a different idea of the sense in which the punishment should fit the crime. It is that each crime should have a specific kind of punishment appropriate to it.

This idea is found sporadically in ancient legal systems, which sometimes prescribe quite specific punishments exclusively for a specific kind of crime 50. For example in the old Roman law

parricides were punished with the sack: that is, they were put into a sack along with four animals: a dog, a cock, a snake and a monkey. The four animals were probably supposed to represent the vices which had led to the crime. Thus the idea was not just that this particularly heinous crime should be punished with exceptional cruelty, but also that it should incur a specific kind of punishment symbolically appropriate to it. In general, of course, ancient legal systems — including Jewish law — did not have a different punishment for each crime. But doubtless the thinking behind accounts of hell such as that in the *Apocalypse of Peter* was that the ideal justice which earthly legal systems cannot achieve will be realised in God’s eschatological judgment. He will be able to allot a punishment precisely appropriate to each kind of crime. The idea is not necessarily peculiarly Jewish. For example, at the end of one of Lucian’s satirical dialogues about the other world (the *Cataplus*), Rhadamanthus the judge in Hades and a Cynic philosopher who has come blameless out the judgment together consider what kind of punishment would be most appropriate for the tyrant Megapenthes. They reject some of the usual punishments of Hades in favour a novel idea, devised by the Cynic especially for Megapenthes’ case: unlike the rest of the dead, he will not be allowed to drink of the waters of Lethe and so will never be able to forget the luxury and power he enjoyed on earth.

In the *Apocalypse of Peter* the idea of a different punishment for each sin is seen as the outworking of the principle of the judgment of each person according to his works. However, it does raise a difficulty. Surely most sinners are guilty of more than one of the twenty-one sins catalogued in the *Apocalypse of Peter* and should therefore incur more than one of the twenty-one punishments? There seems to be no provision for suffering more than one punishment either simultaneously or successively. Perhaps this is an indication that we should not take the description of hell too literally. It is perhaps more concerned to drive home imaginatively the principle of eschatological justice than to offer literal description of hell. Despite the vivid descriptions of actual people suffering each punishment, we should perhaps think of the account as more in the nature of an eschatological law code, setting out what is in strict justice due to each sin.

Fourthly, the general idea that each sin ought to have its own punishment becomes more specific in the idea of «measure for measure» punishments. Martha Himmelfarb gives to a specific category of the punishments in hell the description «measure for measure» punishments, because the principle is described in rabbinic literature as «measure for measure» (e.g. b. *Sanh.* 90a)
— or more fully: «By the measure a man measures out, so it is measured out to him» (e.g. Tg. Neof. Gen 38:25; m. Sot. 1:7). (In the Gospel tradition the saying is used rather differently: Matt 7:2; Mark 4:24; Luke 6:38.) The basic idea that the suffering one inflicts is what one should suffer oneself as retribution was common in the ancient world: Aristotle quotes the Pythagoreans as attributing to Rhadamanthus, the judge of the dead in Hades, the maxim, «If one suffers what one did oneself, it is true justice» (Nichomachean Ethics 5.5.3). In Jewish legal tradition the principle was enshrined in the famous lex talionis of the Torah: «an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth» (Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20). If one knocks out someone else's tooth, one should lose a tooth oneself.

For the vast majority of crimes the principle in that simple form makes little if any sense. But the conviction that the lex talionis is how justice ought to operate leads to attempts to conform to it somehow. Ancient legal practice sometimes exhibits the notion that somehow the kind of punishment should correspond to the crime. An obvious case is that of burning to death as the punishment for arsonists. A more indirect kind of correspondence can be seen in a story which is told of the emperor Alexander Severus who condemned his friend Vircunius Tirinus to die by choking in smoke. Tirinus had been in the habit of making false promises which he did not fulfil, and the Latin idiom for such behaviour was «to sell smoke» (fumum vendere). The emperor condemned him with the words: «he who has sold smoke is punished by smoke» (fumo punitur qui vendidit fumum) (Hist. Aug. Alex. Sev. 35.5-36.3). Even though this is by no means lex talionis in the strict and literal sense, there was felt to be a kind of obvious justice when the punishment corresponded in some such way to the crime.

In Jewish tradition what is most important is the conviction that the lex talionis must be the principle of divine justice. This seems to have been applied originally more with reference to divine judgments within history, and then later applied also to eschatological punishment. Occasionally, the application is obvious: what the criminal has done to others is done to him.


Sometimes, the correspondence is the kind of loose appropriateness we have just considered. In Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* 44:10 we read:

«And the race of men will know that they will not make me [God] jealous by their inventions that they make, but to every man there shall be such a punishment that in whatever sin he shall have sinned, in this he will be judged. If they have lied before me, I will command the heaven and it will deny them rain. And if anyone wished to covet the wife of his neighbour, I will command death and it will deny them the fruit of their womb. And if they will make a false declaration in my name, I will not hear their prayers. And when the soul is separated from the body, then they will say, “Let us not mourn over these things that we suffer; because whatever we ourselves have devised, these we will receive”.

There the principle is applied first to judgments in this life and then extended to the next. The measure-for-measure character of the punishments given as examples is quite vague and not too easy to discern, but it is quite clear that this is intended — and, furthermore, it is quite clear that this measure-for-measure character gives the punishments a kind of obvious justice which the damned themselves in hell will have to acknowledge. To receive something corresponding to what you yourself have done is to find, as it were, your own sin boomeranging back at you.

A modern newspaper story may help to make this point. Apparently, a local medical centre was troubled by young vandals putting bricks through the windows, and so they had toughened glass put in the windows. Soon afterwards a woman came into the centre to complain about what had happened to her son. He had suffered a cut on the head when he threw a brick at a window and it bounced back and hit him on the head. Probably most people's instant reaction is to feel that that is just—ice of the sweetest kind: the sin itself rebounding on the sinner. That is the kind of effect which measure-for-measure punishments had on the ancient mind however artificial they may sometimes seem to us.

In their attempt to understand divine justice in terms of the *lex talionis*, Jewish writers tried to refine the principle in various ways. One form of the principle, which is stated as a principle of divine punishment both in *Jubilees* 4:32 and in *Wisdom* 11:16, is that the instrument of sin should be the *instrument* of punishment. For example, Cain killed Abel with a stone, and so he himself was killed by the stones of his house when his house fell on him (*Jub* 4:31). The Egyptians worshipped animals, and so,
among the plagues of Egypt, they were punished by plagues of animals (Wisd 11:15; 12:27; 15:18-16:1). Many examples could be given (cf. Jub 48:14; LAB 44:9; Wisd 11:6; 18:4-5; Rev 16:6; b. Gitt. 57a; Gen. Rab. 1:18): but I do not know of this form of the principle being applied to judgments after death.

Another way of making the punishment correspond to the crime is to say that the part of the body which sinned is the part which should be punished. Biblical examples could again be found: e.g. Samson sinned by following the desire of his eyes, and so the Philistines put his eyes out (LAB 43:5; m. Sot. 1:8); Absalom gloried in his hair, and so was hanged by his hair (m. Sot. 1:8). The principle can be stated in three slightly different ways, and we should note that all three forms are applied to punishments in Gehenna:

— «The limb which began the transgression, from it will begin the punishment» (Sifre Num. 18). So, for example, say the rabbis, according to this principle, the divine punishment of the adulterous woman in Numbers 5 begins in her sexual parts (Sifre Num. 18; cf. m. Sot. 1:7). But the Babylonian Talmud provides an eschatological example: «A man shall not let his ears hear idle chatter, for they will be burnt first of all his limbs» (b. Ket. 5b).

— «The limbs that committed the sin are punished in Gehenna more than the other limbs» (Darkhei Teshuvah). This statement occurs in one of the medieval Hebrew visions of the punishments in hell which belong to the same genre and include many of the same punishments as the account in the Apocalypse of Peter. After providing descriptions of punishments in which people are punished by the sinful limb, the account says that these punishments are «to show that the Holy One, blessed be he, is a righteous judge. The limbs that committed the sin are punished in Gehenna more than the other limbs». Notice that, once again, this correspondence of punishment to sin is said to demonstrate the justice of the punishments.

— The third statement comes from the Christian Epistle of Titus, which quotes a vision of the punishments in Gehenna attributed to Elijah. The quotation probably comes from the ancient Apocalypse of Elijah, which was older than the Apocalypse of

Peter. In fact, this quotation is most likely the oldest extant Jewish account of the punishments in hell, the oldest example of the genre of the tours of hell. The statement of the principle is not actually given in the quotation, but is part of the Christian writer's introduction to the quotation. But it seems very likely he was drawing on his source when he says: «You know that different judgments must be passed on sinners. In the member with which each man has sinned, in the same also shall he be tormented ». This is the simplest form of the principle.

c) Types of punishment in the Apocalypse of Peter.

If we now turn to the series of infernal punishments in the Apocalypse of Peter, we find that there are certainly four and probably five punishments which are designed according to the principle that it is the part of the body which sinned that should be punished. Three of them are in the category of «hanging punishments» which frequently occur in the tours of hell. In many of the tours of hell there are a group of these hanging punishments, usually consisting of people hung up by the part of the body which sinned. So in the Apocalypse of Peter, there are, first, those who blasphemed the way of righteousness, suspended by their tongues (7:2). Then there are women suspended by their necks and hair (7:5): these are adulteresses, who adorned their hair in order to seduce men into adultery with them. Finally in 7:7, there are the men who committed adultery with them. They are suspended by their thighs, according to the Ethiopic version: certainly a euphemism for the sexual organs. (Other tours of hell represent people guilty of sexual sin as hanging by their sexual organs.)

The origin of the idea of these hanging punishments is somewhat debatable. Hanging was used in the ancient world both as a form of non-lethal torture and also as a means of lingering and very painful death, as in crucifixion. Hanging women by their hair seems to have been actually used as a form of torture in the Roman world. The notion of hanging may have appealed to those who imagined punishments after death because it was a form of punishment which could easily be imagined as eternal: it could be prolonged as a form of unending pain without


destroying its victims. But who originated the idea of hanging in hell? Martha Himmelfarb tends rather to discount the idea that Jewish apocalyptic borrowed it from Greek ideas of the underworld, but I think myself that the evidence for a Greek origin is stronger than she allows. We should remember that the popular descriptions of the underworld which certainly existed and from which Jewish apocalyptists would most likely have borrowed have not survived. We can only gather their contents from sources indebted to them — the philosophers, the poets, the parodists. Given this limitation of the sources, the evidence that hanging in Hades was a feature of traditional Greek descriptions of punishments in Hades seems to me quite good. As early as Plato's *Gorgias* (525C), we are told that the worst sinners are hanging in Hades. A reference to a lost account of Pythagoras' descent to the underworld says that he saw the soul of Homer hanging from a tree as punishment for his sacrilegious stories about the gods (Diogenes Laertes, *Lives* 8.21). Virgil's *Aeneid* speaks of people hanging in Hades (6.740-741). Most interesting of all is Lucian's account of a hanging punishment in his parody of popular descriptions of Hades in his *True History* (2.26). He sees the adulterer Cinyras hanging by his genital organ. This is precisely the same punishment for the same sin as we find in the *Apocalypse of Peter* and in some of the other tours of hell. It is of course possible that Lucian knew Jewish apocalyptic tours of hell or Greek sources influenced by Jewish apocalyptic tours of hell. In the intercultural world of eschatological imagery there is no reason why borrowings should all have been in one direction. But on the other hand, in view of the much earlier evidence for hanging in the Greek Hades, it seems more likely that the more specific idea of hanging by the part of the body that had sinned had also developed within the Greek tradition and was borrowed from it by Jewish apocalyptists. It is worth noting that this kind of measure for measure punishment is also evidenced by another passage of Lucian, not relating to punishment after death: he has Heracles threaten a slave who had disguised himself as a philosopher that he will punish him by hanging him by his beard (the beard with which he pretended to be a philosopher) (*Fugitivi* 31).

The fact that the hanging punishments are measure-for-measure punishments does not prove that they were of Jewish origin. As we have already noticed, the measure-for-measure principle was not confined to Judaism. However, the fact that the hanging punishments are measure-for-measure punishments does explain why Jewish apocalyptists intent on depicting hell as perfect justice should have borrowed them and given them a greater prominence
in Jewish accounts of hell than they probably had in Greek ones. Certainly, since they occur in Jewish and Christian tours of hell which are not dependent on the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Apocalypse of Peter* did not borrow them direct from a pagan source but from Jewish apocalyptic tradition. Their prominence in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, as the first, third and fourth punishments in the series of twenty-one, is no doubt due to the fact that they embodied the measure-for-measure principle so clearly and vividly.

As well as the three hanging punishments, there are two other punishments in the *Apocalypse of Peter* which embody the principle that the part of the body which sinned should suffer. The first occurs in 9:4, where we are told of those who bore false witness — whose lies have led to the deaths of the martyrs — that their lips are cut off and fire is put into their mouths and intestines. So the lips and the mouth which uttered the lies are punished, and presumably the intestines too because the deceit comes from within the liar.

The other example is not so obvious. In 11:6-7 the punishment of girls who did not keep their virginity before marriage is described. They are dressed in black clothes and their flesh is torn in pieces or dissolved. The idea of the flesh dissolving may be borrowed from the punishment of the adulterous wife in *Numbers* 5:27 ("her thigh shall fall away"). In that case, the "flesh" of the young women is a euphemism for their sexual parts, and it is that part of their body which sinned that is punished. The black clothes indicate shame, as we can see from the Mishnah's discussion of the case of the suspected adulteress in *Numbers* 5: her husband shames her by exchanging her white garments for black (*m. Sot.* 1:6-7).

We have so far identified five measure-for-measure punishments in the *Apocalypse of Peter*: those in which the guilty limb is punished. Other measure-for-measure punishments, in which the punishment is merely in some way appropriate to the sin, are not always so easy to identify. I think we can probably identify at least six:

1.— In 8:8-9 is described the punishment of mothers who killed their infants at birth, presumably by the common ancient practice of exposure: "Their mothers' milk flows from their breasts, but it curdles and smells. Flesh-eating creatures come out of it, return and punish them eternally." Clement of Alexandria, who quoted and commented on this punishment (*Eclog.* 49), rightly saw it as a measure-for-measure punishment. The milk which the mothers denied to their children becomes the instrument of their torture.
2.— This account of the punishment of infanticides is preceded by an account of the punishment of those guilty of abortion. Here part of the punishment (8:1) is that they stand up to their necks in a pit of excrement — or, perhaps, as Buchholz's translation suggests: menstrual discharge. Probably the meaning is that they treated their fetuses as mere excrement.

3.— In 9:5-7, we have the punishment of those who trusted in their riches and neglected charity to the poor. Part of their punishment is that they are clothed in filthy rags. This seems to be the only case in the Apocalypse of Peter of the lex talionis principle in its most basic and straightforward form: these people suffer what they made others suffer.

4.— In 11:8-9, slaves who disobeyed their masters chew their tongues eternally. This may be a measure-for-measure punishment, if the idea is that they disobeyed verbally: they answered back.

5.— The next group of sinners are hypocrites: «men and women who are blind and deaf, dressed in white. Then they push one another and fall on the inextinguishable coals of fire. These are those who gave alms, saying, “We are righteous”, [but] did not rightly seek God » (12:1-2). Presumably these people are wilfully ignorant — blind to their own motives — and so their punishment is to be blind and deaf.

6.— Finally, the murderers (in 7:9) are put in a fire full of poisonous reptiles. Perhaps these are intended to represent the murderers' evil desires that led them to murder. In that case, this would be a sort of measure-for-measure punishment.

These are the only punishments — eleven in all, out of the full catalogue of twenty-one — in which I have been able to discover a measure-for-measure element, at least. Other people's ingenuity may be able to identify a few other measure-for-measure punishments in the Apocalypse of Peter. But it is clear that by no means all the punishments are measure-for-measure. Perhaps the authors of the traditions and the author of the Apocalypse of Peter itself were simply unable to devise measure-for-measure punishments for every sin they wished to include. But if the measure-for-measure principle does not explain all the punishments, how can we explain the origin of the ideas for the other specific punishments? Three other considerations will account for most of the punishments in the Apocalypse of Peter.

The first is the reproduction in hell of punishments used in human justice on earth. We have already noticed that hanging is a case of this. Others are burning (10:7), equivalent to the practice of burning people to death; and scourging with whips and flogging with chains (9:2; 10:6). Scourging was widely practised
as a punishment, usually as non-lethal, but sometimes as deliberately flogging to death (e.g. Suetonius, *Gaius* 27.7). From earthly use it had long ago entered the Greek Hades, where it was a thoroughly standard feature of the punishment of the dead (e.g. Virgil, *Æn.* 6.556-557; Lucian, *Men.* 14; *Vera hist.* 2.29) and so must have migrated to the Jewish hell from the Greek. The wheel, on which sorcerers are stretched in 12:5-6, was an exotic form of human punishment, but famous as a feature of the Greek Hades. Ixion, punished by being fixed to a wheel, was one of the famous individual sinners featured in descriptions of the Greek Hades, along with Sisyphus, Tityos, Tantalus and others. The punishments of these famous mythological individuals had long come to be seen as representative punishments, which other sinners could also expect to suffer (cf. Virgil, *Æn.* 6.616-617). Ixion's is the only one which appears in the *Apocalypse of Peter*.

Before leaving the category of infernal punishments modelled on earthly punishments, we should notice two interesting variations on the punishment of precipitation: that is, killing someone by throwing them off a high cliff, usually into the sea (e.g. Suetonius, *Tib.* 62.3). First, male and female homosexuals are punished thus:

«Other men and women hurl themselves down from a high precipice. They come back again and run, compelled by the demons. They put them on the brink of the precipice, and they hurl themselves down. In doing this continually they are punished for ever.» (*ApPet* 10:2-3)

(Probably the words «these are the idolaters» in v. 2 are a mistaken intrusion into this text, since v. 4 identifies these sinners as homosexuals.)

Then also those who fail to honour their parents suffer a punishment which, despite a rather corrupt text, is probably similar to that of the homosexuals:

«And there is another very high place, [...] and a precipice, in which the fire burns, and it burns from the edge. The men and women who fall [into it] roll down to where there is terror. And while the [...] is flowing, they go up and down, and in this way roll repeatedly. In this way they are punished for ever.» (*ApPet* 11:1-2)

In both cases, people fall to their death from a high precipice, but are then obliged to repeat the exercise continually for eternity. This is a way of turning an earthly punishment which ends with someone's death into a means of eternal torment. This device is one which recurs in the apocalyptic accounts of hell in a
variety of ways. Another example (which is found both in the Testament of Isaac [5:6-16] and the medieval Hebrew vision of Joshua ben Levi 56) is an eternalized version of the punishment of being thrown to the lions: the damned are eaten by the lions, but then reconstituted so that they can be eaten again, and so on eternally.

As well as punishments which reflect earthly punishments, there are also, secondly, a few punishments which reflect what happens to corpses on earth. The flesh-eating birds who attack the damned in 11:4 are presumably modelled on the vultures and such-like that feed on corpses. (These people are said to be hung up while flesh-eating birds attack them: the image of hanging here perhaps derives from the hanging up of corpses, rather than of living people.) The numerous worms of 7:9 are also a feature of what happens to corpses, although Jewish tradition had also delighted to recount stories of notorious sinners being consumed by worms while still alive (2 Macc 9:9; LAB 44:9; 63:4; Acts 12:23; b. Sot. 35a).

Thirdly, there are the traditional features of the Jewish Gehenna, notably darkness and fire, darkness original to Sheol, fire to Gehenna. Darkness is mentioned in just one of the punishments (in 9:1; cf. also 6:5), but fire is all-pervasive. No less than fourteen of the twenty-one punishments in the Ethiopic version include some form of fire (7:4, 7, 9; 8:4; 9:1, 3, 4, 5; 10:5, 6, 7; 11:1, 8; 12:1; 12:4-7; cf. also 6:5). The Akhmim text actually has fire in two punishments in which it does not appear in the Ethiopic (A22, A24), but the more interesting contrast between the Ethiopic text and the Akhmim Greek fragment is that three times the Akhmim text refers to the mire in which the damned are sunk (A23, A24, A31). The Ethiopic has none of these references to mud. Immersion in mud was an important ancient feature of the Greek Hades, whereas fire, though present in the torches of the Furies (e.g. Pseudo-Plato,

Axiochus 372) and the fiery river Pyriphlegethon (e.g. Lucian, Cat. 28), was probably rather less prominent. So it is worth noticing that the Apocalypse of Peter is thoroughly Jewish in the pervasiveness of fiery punishments in its hell, while the Akhmim fragment’s additional references to mud probably reflect a further approximation to Greek pictures of the underworld by the author who adapted this text. Fire, of course, was not only the traditional content of Gehenna, but also more broadly a deeply traditional Jewish image of divine judgment.

One Old Testament text played an important part in the development of the doctrine of Hell: the last verse of Isaiah: «They shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched...» (Isa 66:24). We can be sure of the influence of this text on descriptions of hell wherever the fire is inextinguishable or undying, and wherever the worm is singular (as in the Hebrew of Isaiah) and also undying or unsleeping. The inextinguishable fire appears in Apocalypse of Peter 12:1 (coals of fire which never go out) and the unsleeping worm appears in 9:2 (where those who are flogged by a spirit of wrath also have their entrails eaten by an unsleeping worm).

So perhaps these remarks may help us to begin to understand the kind of imagination which produced the apocalyptic accounts of the manifold punishments in hell. They are not just products of a diseased imagination run riot. They are based on certain principles and use recognizable forms of imagery. Certainly they are evidence of an age when justice was generally thought to require considerable cruelty. It is the cruelty of contemporary human justice which is here reflected in hell and refined in such a way as to make it, not less cruel, but, to authors and readers of the time, recognizably more just. The overriding concern is that the wicked should face the truth of their own evil and suffer it.

8. Angels of judgment.

The account of the eschatological judgment in the Apocalypse of Peter features four named angels, as well as unnamed angels of punishment. We look first at the named angels: Uriel, Ezrael, Tartarouchos and Temelouchos.

Uriel appears three times in the Ethiopic version:

1.— At 4:9, where (according to the most probable interpretation) it is Uriel, described as «the great Uriel», who supplies the soul and spirit to the bodies that have been resurrected. It is
then explained that «God has set him over the resurrection of the dead on the day of judgment»;
2.—at 6:7, it is «Uriel, the angel of God», who «will bring the spirits of the sinners who perished in the Flood» — who I have argued are the demons — to the judgment;
3.—at 12:5 he sets up the wheel of fire in the river of fire in which sinners are punished.

Uriel appears frequently in early Jewish and early Christian literature, often listed as the third in a list of the four archangels: Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael (e.g. ApMos 40:2; 3 Bar [Slav] 4:7; cf GkApEzra 6:1-2; cf 1 En 9:1 [Gk], where he comes second; SibOr 2:215, where he comes last; and 1 En 20:1, where he comes first in a list of seven; PrJos also implies he is one of seven archangels). Although the expression «God has set him over the resurrection of the dead» is in accordance with the general way in which particular angels are frequently said, in the literature of this period, to be «over» some aspect of the world and God's governance of it, this particular sphere of authority for Uriel is not attested elsewhere. However, the functions and spheres of authority of the archangels seem to vary constantly from one text to another. Uriel's role in 6:7, of bringing the demons to judgment, corresponds roughly to the statement in the Greek of 1 Enoch 20:1 that he is «over Tartarus». Finally, the mention of Uriel at 12:5 comes as rather a surprise, since it is Ezrael who has previously been mentioned throughout the account of the punishments in hell (7:10; 9:1; 10:5; 11:4; 12:3) and has in fact only just appeared at 12:3. The Ethiopic's reference to Uriel in 12:5 may therefore be a mistake for Ezrael. On the other hand, since one interpretation of Uriel's name could be «flame of God» (from 'ur, «flame»), rather than 'or, «light»), he may have been thought the most appropriate archangel to set up the wheel of fire in the river of fire.

Ezrael, who is mentioned five times in chapters 7-12, described like Uriel as «the angel of God» (12:3), but also more specifically as «the angel of his wrath» (9:1), is otherwise unknown by this name. But he is probably, as Buchholz suggests, the archangel Sariel, whose name appears to be corrupted to

'Ιστρηνηλ in one Greek manuscript of 1 Enoch 10:1, and to 'Asre'elyer in one Ethiopic manuscript of the same verse. Sariel occasionally appears as one of the four archangels in place of Uriel (IQM 9:14-15; 4QEnb 1:3:7 = 1 Enoch 9:1; and in Manichean sources which reflect the Enochic Book of Giants), but he also appears along with Uriel in the list of seven archangels in 1 Enoch 20. In Targum Neofiti (Gen 32:25) he is the angel who wrestles with Jacob, although this angel is Uriel in the Prayer of Jacob. In the Ladder of Jacob, as the angel «in charge of dreams» (3:2), he interprets Jacob's dream at Bethel. The similarity of his name to Jacob's new name Israel (noted in LadJac 4:3) probably accounts for his association with Jacob stories. In 1 Enoch 20:6, Sariel is said in the Ethiopic version to be «in charge of the spirits of human beings who cause the spirits to sin», while the Greek has «over the spirits which sin in the spirit». Clearly, something is wrong with both versions and it is impossible to reconstruct the original with certainty. It may have represented Sariel as in charge of the spirits of human sinners, in which case his role here would accord with the role the Apocalypse of Peter gives him, of bringing the damned to their punishments. But more probably 1 Enoch 20:6 originally put Sariel in charge of the demonic spirits which lead human beings astray.

In the Apocalypse of Peter Ezrael seems to be mainly concerned with moving people around in Gehenna. In 9:1 he brings a particular group of sinners, the persecutors of the righteous, to their place of punishment. In 7:10 he brings the victims of murder to view the punishment of their murderers. In 11:4, according to the Ethiopic version, he seems to bring children to view the punishment of other children who have disobeyed their parents. Perhaps the text originally meant that he brought the children who were to be punished to their punishment. If the point is to show the punishment of guilty children to other children, then it cannot be as a warning, since the scene is set after the last judgment, but presumably to increase the satisfaction of the righteous who see what would have happened to them had they disobeyed their parents. Finally, in 12:3 Ezrael brings another group of sinners, the hypocrites, out of the flame which constitutes part of their punishment: again the text is rather obscure. It seems this

is not the end of their punishment, but only of one phase of their punishment. From these four references, we might think Ezrael has the exclusive function of bringing people from one place to another in hell, but in 10:5 he has a role in the punishments themselves: he makes the place of fire in which the makers of idols and their idols burn.

The other two angels are Tatirokos, who in 13:5 rebukes the damned when they cry for mercy, telling them it is now too late to repent, and Temlakos, to whom, in 8:10, the victims of infanticide are committed, after they have seen the punishment of their parents. These are the angels called in Greek Τατιροκχος and Τεμελοδχος (or Τημελοδχος), who occur in a considerable number of apocalyptic texts about hell, Tartarouchos more often than Temelouchos. They have been thoroughly studied in a definitive study by J.-M. Rosenstiehl60.

Tartarouchos is the angel in charge of Tartarus, which is what his name means (compare God as οὐρανούχος in SibOr 8:430). The word is sometimes used as an adjective which can describe more than one angel: the angels who preside over the punishments in hell. In the Apocalypse of Peter it seems to be the proper name of a single angel.

Temelouchos is more problematic. But since in chapter 34 of the Apocalypse of Paul he wields a three-pronged fork, surely modelled on the trident of the Greek god Poseidon, Rosenstiehl convincingly argues that his name must derive from an epithet which was occasionally used of Poseidon: θεμελοδχος («in charge of the foundation»). He also conjectures, plausibly, that originally Tartarouchos and Themeliouchos (Temelouchos) corresponded respectively to Pluto, the god of the underworld, and Poseidon, the god of the ocean. They were used in Jewish apocalyptic to designate respectively the angelic ruler of the subterranean underworld — Hades or Tartarus — and the angelic ruler of the submarine abyss. As the underworld and the abyss coalesced in the concept of hell, they became two of the angels of hell, and Temelouchos, whose name was no longer understood, became rather redundant, appeared less often and was sometimes replaced by Tartarouchos.

In the Apocalypse of Peter and also the Apocalypse of Paul (40) — the latter probably dependent not on the Apocalypse of

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Peter itself, but on a common source — Temelouchos has a special role, not as an angel responsible for the punishments of the wicked in hell, but as the angel to whose care the children who are victims of infanticide are delivered. When Clement of Alexandria (Eclog. 48) and Methodius (Symp. 2.6) allude to this passage of the Apocalypse of Peter, they spell the word with a long «ε»: τημελοδόχος, which associates it with the verb τημελέω, «to care for, to look after». Methodius in fact uses it as an adjective applied to more than one angel who look after aborted infants. This seems to be a case of a word whose real derivation had been forgotten, being given a new derivation which was highly appropriate to the role Temelouchos plays in chapter 8 of the Apocalypse of Peter. Rosenstiehl thinks it was Clement, who, in the interests of giving the word this meaning, changed Τημελοδόχος into Τημελοδόχος. But since Methodius, who also uses this form, seems dependent on the Apocalypse of Peter independently of Clement, it is more likely that the spelling Τημελοδόχος is original to the Greek text of the Apocalypse of Peter. This would help to explain the abruptness of the text which simply says that the children will be given to the angel Temelouchos, with no indication of the purpose for which they are given to him. If his name itself implied his role as one who looks after these infants, explanation was not needed. So it may be that already in the Apocalypse of Peter any other role for the angel Temelouchos has been forgotten: his name is understood to give him this special role of taking care of those who died in infancy.

In addition to the four named angels, there are also four references to unnamed angels of judgment:

a.— in 6:6, «the angels of God» prepare for the wicked «a place where they shall be punished, each according to their sins»: this means that they prepare hell with its variety of punishments for each specific sin;

b.— in 7:4, «angels of punishment» (A23 has ἄγγελοι βασανισται, but cf. also A21: οἱ κολάζοντες ἄγγελοι) ignite the fire in which a particular group of the damned are punished. This term is also used in the Parables of Enoch (1 Enoch 53:3; 56:1; 62:11; 63:1) for the angels who punish the wicked in hell (cf. also De universo 1; GkApMary 23);

c.— in 9:2 a group of the damned are scourged by a «spirit of wrath». Here «spirit», as commonly in early Jewish literature, means an angel, and the wrath is God’s: the angel’s function is be the agent of God’s wrath punishing the sinner;

d.— finally, and more problematically, in 10:2 the Ethiopic refers to «demons». The damned here are being punished by throwing
themselves headlong from a precipice, and then forced by «demons» to return and repeat the exercise, and so on eternally. The reference to «demons» is problematic because only in much later Christian literature do the demons become the agents of punishment in hell. In Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic literature, the agents of punishment in hell are righteous agents, who obey God’s will in carrying out his judgment on sinners. They may be described as «merciless» (e.g. 2 Enoch 10:3; cf. TAbr 12:10) and of horrifying appearance (ApZeph 4:2-4), but this is not because they are evil, but because they carry out divine justice in all its unqualified rigour. So we must suspect the originality of the reference to «demons» in the Ethiopic of 10:2. Fortunately, this is a rare case where the Akhmim text probably preserves the original wording which has been lost in the Ethiopic translation: it refers to the agents of punishment here as «those set over [them]» (τῶν ἐπικειμένων). This is a standard way of referring to angels put in charge of something by God (cf. 4:9: «God as set [Uriel] over the resurrection of the dead»; and especially Tsaac 5:28, which describes Temelouchos [Sah.: Abdemerouchos; Boh.: Abtelmolouchos] as «in charge of the punishments»; cf. also GkApMary 15). In 10:2 the reference is to the angels in charge of this particular punishment.

Thus the general picture that emerges is that two named angels — Ezrael and Tartarouchos — are in overall charge of hell and its inhabitants, while numerous subordinate angels of punishment take charge of the specific punishments of specific groups of the damned. However, this picture is not at all systematically presented: it emerges from incidental and sporadic references to the various angels of judgment. The roles of angels in hell were no doubt an assumed feature of the traditions taken over by the Apocalypse of Peter. The use of divergent traditions may account for the ambiguity as to whether it is Ezrael or Tartarouchos (whose name ought to mean that he is in overall charge of hell) who is the angel in charge of hell.

The function of the references to the angels, within the general theme of judgment, is that, as angels of God, they make it clear that what the wicked suffer in hell is God’s judgment.

9. Those who did not believe they would be punished after death.

This is a theme which appears twice in chapter 7. About one category of sinners being punished in hell, as it happens the adulterers, this is said: «They say to each other, “We did not realise
that we would have to come into eternal punishment”» (7:8). The same theme — or a similar theme — is repeated with reference to the next category of sinners, the murderers: «They say to each other, “The judgment of God is just and righteous, for we heard that we would come to this eternal place of punishment, but we did not believe it”» (7:11).

The adulterers say they did not know they would be punished after death. The murderers say they heard but did not believe they would be punished after death. I suspect the meaning is really much the same. The adulterers no doubt had the opportunity to know that adultery will be punished in hell, but they would not listen and therefore did not know. The murderers were told their crimes would incur punishment in hell, but they did not believe it. I think the attachment of this theme to these particular categories of sinners is probably arbitrary. They are taken as representative of any sinners in hell. This is confirmed in chapter 13, where all the sinners in hell voice the same idea: «Have mercy on us, because now we know the judgment of God, of which he told us before, but we did not believe [it]» (13:4).

The idea that the wicked do not believe that there will be retribution after death, with the implication that if they did they would not sin, is again a traditional topos. In 4 Ezra 7:126, Ezra, who is there identifying himself as one of the damned, says: «While we lived and committed iniquity we did not consider that we should suffer after our death». 2 Clement 10:4 says of those who prefer the iniquitous pleasures of the present to the promises of the future: «For they do not know how great torment the pleasures of the present entail, and what is the joy of the promised future» 61. We could also recall the long passage in chapter 2 of the Book of Wisdom about the attitude of the wicked who think this life is all there is and therefore indulge in wickedness: we are not specifically told that they disbelieved in punishment after death, but we are told that they did not expect the righteous to be rewarded after death (2:22) and the correlative fate of the wicked is certainly implied. Where the Apocalypse of Peter differs from these parallels is in putting this view in the mouths of the wicked when they are actually suffering in hell the punishment they did not expect during their lifetimes. The motif, of course, serves to give a strong parrenetic thrust to the portrayal of retribution in hell: it warns those who may be

61. Cf. also 2 Clement 17:5; Theophilus, Ad Autol. 14; Kerygma Petrou, fragments 3, 4.
sceptical about the afterlife of the foolish risk they are running and it makes clear the moral function of teaching about post-mortem punishments: to deter people from sin.

This repeated motif in the *Apocalypse of Peter* — which it may well have taken over from traditional apocalyptic portrayals of hell — raises the interesting question of the extent of popular scepticism about judgment after death. It would be a mistake to focus this question exclusively on the Palestinian Jewish context in which the *Apocalypse of Peter* originated, since in this respect as in many others that context was not isolated from the whole Mediterranean world. Belief in retribution after death was a common feature of Jewish and pagan religions. Images of reward and punishment after death were among those religious ideas which passed quite easily from one religious context to another. The notion that a belief in retribution after death was morally necessary in order to deter people from evil was widespread. Scepticism about such retribution no doubt also crossed specific religious and cultural boundaries.

Franz Cumont (in his book on the *After Life in Roman Paganism*) argues that belief in retribution after death had been very seriously weakened by the period of the late republic and early empire, not only among intellectuals but also among the populace at large. It seems to me that he has at least somewhat exaggerated the case. He is able to quote Roman writers who claim that no one is any longer childish enough to believe the traditional pictures of Hades and Tartarus. «That there are Manes», says Juvenal (for example), «a subterranean kingdom, a ferryman armed with a pole, and black frogs in the gulfs of the Styx, that so many thousands of people can cross the dark water in a single boat» — these are fables only small children believe (*Sat. 2.149-152*). But the waning credibility of the traditional pictures of the underworld does not necessarily imply that people had ceased to believe in post-mortem retribution as such. Platonists, for example, while partly demythologizing the images, were strongly insisting on the reality of reward and

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punishment after death, as Plutarch does, by way of refuting the Epicureans (especially in De sera) 64.

However, to mention the Epicureans is to remember the availability of eschatological scepticism through the popularization of Epicurean views 65. The Epicureans denied any kind of survival after death, and saw this as a liberating truth, delivering people from the fear of retribution in the next life. Their scornful attacks on the stories of punishment in Hades were wellknown. Of course, serious Epicurean philosophers did not regard this teaching as a licence for immorality, but those who upheld the common view of the need for supernatural deterrence treated the Epicureans as providing such licence and so did a kind of vulgar Epicureanism of the « eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die » character. The most interesting evidence for the spread of the Epicurean denial of post-mortem retribution among ordinary people comes from epitaphs: not only many which declare death to be the end of existence, but also those which go out of their way to say that their authors die without fear because they are not taken in by the fables about the next life: « I do not let myself be taken in by the Tityi and the Tantalus whom some represent in Hades »66 (Tityus and Tantalus of course were subjected to specific well-known punishments in Hades and by this time often treated as representative cases of retribution after death), or « There is no boat of Hades, no ferryman Charon, no Æacus as doorkeeper, no dog Cerberus. All we, whom death sends down to the earth, become bones and ashes and no more »67.

Of course, not all scepticism about the afterlife need be Epicurean in origin. But the widely known Epicurean position — or at least a caricature of it — provided an available category both for those inclined to be sceptical to identify with and for those wishing to counter such scepticism to oppose. Jewish scepticism about judgment after death never speaks to us with its own voice in the extant literature 68: its expression is always attributed to it by its opponents, who sometimes at least cast it

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65. F. Cumont, After Life, op. cit., p. 7-12.
66. Cf. ibid., p. 9.
67. Cf. ibid., p. 10.
in Epicurean terms. The sinners whose attitudes are described in
detail in the early chapters of *Wisdom* are certainly cast in the
popular image of Epicureanism: they regard death as the end of
existence and see this belief as leaving them free to live as
wickedly as they choose.

More immediately relevant to the *Apocalypse of Peter*, if we
are right to locate it in Palestine, is a tradition that occurs in the
Palestinian Targums 69. Such traditions are, of course, very
difficult to date, but this one has been quite plausibly argued to
go back to our period 70. It occurs at *Genesis* 4:8 and describes a
dispute between Cain and Abel following the acceptance of
Abel’s sacrifice and the rejection of Cain’s. Cain takes this as evi-
dence that the world is not governed justly, i.e. good deeds are
not rewarded as they should be. But the denial of providential
justice is then extended to a denial of eschatological justice in
another world. Cain says:

There is no judgment, there is no Judge,
« there is no other world,
« there is no gift of good reward for the just
« and no punishment for the wicked ».

Abel’s reply affirms that there is each of these things. There
has been discussion of whether Cain is here represented as a
Sadducee or as an Epicurean 71. A decision is perhaps not really
necessary, for opponents of the Sadducees would very likely
have associated the Sadducees’ denial of reward and punishment
after death with the Epicurean position. The tradition is not just
polemic against Sadducees by attributing their views to Cain. By
representing Cain the archetypal sinner as denying eschatologi-
cal judgment, it condemns all eschatological scepticism as anti-
nomian. Similarly, when the term ‘*appiōrōs* became a rabbinic
term for those who live dissolutely and deny reward and punish-
ment after death 72, the usage need not imply that the people so

69. On this tradition, see J. H. NEYREY, *The Form and Background of
the Polemic in 2 Peter* (unpublished diss., Yale University, 1977), p. 221-
230 (references to extensive further literature: p. 221-222 n. 18);
70. G. VERMES, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (SJLA 8; Leiden: Brill,
1975), p. 116; S. ISENBERG, «An Anti-Sadducee Polemic in the
Palestinian Targum Tradition », *Harvard Theological Review* 63 (1970),
p. 433-444.
in the First Century after Christ* (London: SCM Press/Philadelphia:
categorized were professed followers of Epicurus, though some may have been. It simply means that Epicurus was popularly conceived as representing the association between eschatological scepticism and licence for immorality.

So the motif we are considering in the Apocalypse of Peter belongs to a tradition of considering retribution after death as a necessary deterrent to scare people into avoiding evil. It asserts this tradition in the face of current scepticism about eschatological judgment, which is not very likely at this date to have been Sadducean in inspiration but may in part at least have been influenced by vulgar Epicureanism. It hardly needs a philosophical influence for those intent on disregarding current standards of morality to ignore and scoff at religious doctrines of judgment after death. But awareness that there was a popular philosophical position that could justify such attitudes may well have helped. It is likely that scepticism about judgment after death made fewer inroads into Palestinian Jewish culture than into some others, but the evidence shows that Jewish Palestine was certainly not immune from wider currents of Mediterranean culture, in this as in other respects.

10. No more time for repentance.

The motif we have just considered is linked, on its last occurrence, with a plea for mercy by the damned: «Have mercy on us, because now we know the judgment of God, of which he told us before, but we did not believe [it] » (13:4). But the plea for mercy is rejected: «The angel Tartarouchos comes and admonishes them with a severe punishment, saying to them, “Now you repent, when there is no time left for repentance, and no life is left” » (13:5).

Although I do not know another instance where the unavailability of repentance after the judgment is dramatized in this way, the idea that the opportunity for repentance is available only in this life is a common one. In connexion with the theme of final judgment it is found especially in the Jewish apocalypses contemporary with the Apocalypse of Peter: 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra. 2 Baruch 85:12 is a verse which piles up phrases to express the finality of the last judgment: not only does the list begin, «there will not be an opportunity to repent anymore», it also repeats the point later in the list: «nor opportunity of repentance». 4 Ezra 7:82 says of the spirits of the wicked in the intermediate state after death, when their final fate at the last judgment is already sealed, that one of the causes of their grief
The idea that after the judgment it is too late to repent is closely connected in the literature with the conviction that at the last judgment there can no longer be mercy, only strict justice, and that there can be no intercession of one person for another 73. This complex of ideas is rooted in the sense that the last judgment is the moment when the truth of each person's life is finally exposed and given what is due to it in justice. This moment of eschatological truth must seal a person's destiny with finality.

As we shall see, the Apocalypse of Peter in chapter 14 introduces a major qualification of this absolute finality of the judgment. But this does not alter the fact that the tradition used in 13:4-5 was designed to express it.

11. The damned acknowledge God's justice.

Following Tartarouchos's merciless rebuttal of their plea for mercy, the damned acknowledge the justice of the punishments they suffer: « And they all say, "The judgment of God is righteous, because we have been paid back, each according to his deeds" » (13:6). Actually this theme was already anticipated in 7:11, where those suffering punishment for murder say to one another: « The justice of God is just and righteous ».

This is a traditional theme. For example, in one of the medieval Hebrew visions of hell which certainly preserve ancient traditions, the wicked, receiving punishment, « acknowledge the justice of their punishment and say: "Thou hast rightly sentenced us and rightly judged us. With thee is righteousness and with us shame, as it is with us today" » 74. Or in 1 Enoch 63:8-9, the kings who have been the oppressors of the righteous, having, like the damned in the Apocalypse of Peter, begged for mercy and been denied it, then acknowledge the justice of God's condemnation of them.

The function of this theme, of course, is to provide the final confirmation of the justice of the punishments in hell.

12. Mercy for the damned.

The most remarkable aspect of the Apocalypse of Peter’s treatment of the destiny of the wicked comes only after all the themes we have so far considered. After their plea for mercy has been rejected, apparently definitively, by Tartarouchos and the justice and finality of their punishment confirmed (13:4-6), the prospect of their salvation from hell is introduced at the beginning of chapter 14. Since the meaning is obscured in the Ethiopic, we are very fortunate that at this point we have access to the original Greek in the Rainer fragment:

« Then I will grant to my called and elect ones whomsoever they request from me, out of the punishment. And I will give them [i.e. those for whom the elect pray] a fine (καλόν) baptism in salvation from the Acherousian Lake (which is, they say, in the Elysian field), a portion of righteousness with my holy ones » (ApPet 14:1, translating the text as corrected by M. R. James and confirmed by SibOr 2:330-338).

Thus, those of the damned for whom the righteous intercede are delivered from hell and admitted to paradise. It is Christ who effects this release of the damned from hell, because he is the eschatological judge who has condemned them to hell.

This theme of the mercy of the righteous for the damned is not an afterthought. In fact the whole account of the judgment is framed by two references to this theme: first in chapter 3, secondly in chapter 14. In chapter 3 it is Peter himself who pleads for mercy for the damned, when he sees their suffering in the vision of judgment given him by Christ. His plea is then rejected by Christ. But when the righteous intercede for the wicked after the last judgment, in chapter 14, Christ grants their prayers. We shall see that this contrast makes sense precisely because the lengthy account of judgment intervenes between the two occurrences of the theme of mercy.

Chapter 3 employs a theme which recurs in many of the apocalypses which deal with hell: that the righteous when confronted with the suffering of the wicked in hell will be moved to compassion 75. The point is strongly expressed: the disciples « saw how

sinners were weeping in great affliction and sadness, to the point that all who saw it with their eyes — the righteous, the angels and even he himself [Christ] — wept» (3:3). Peter's expression of compassion — «It would have been better for them had they not been created» (3:4) — was traditional in such a context in the apocalypses (cf. especially 2 Enoch 41:2; 4 Ezra 7:62-64, 116-117; cf. 4:12), but he is able to call it «your [Christ's] word about these sinners» (3:4), because it occurs in the Gospel saying about Judas (Matt 26:24). In spite of this attempt to ascribe this expression of compassion to Jesus Christ himself, Peter is then rather severely rebuked by Christ, who criticizes the expression as opposition to God (3:5). The point is that Peter seems to be implying that if God were truly compassionate he would not have created those who will be damned. But Peter cannot be more compassionate towards God's creation than the Creator himself is (3:6). This response to a plea for mercy to the damned is also found elsewhere (4 Ezra 5:33; 8:47; ApPaul 33; 40). It is possible that the Apocalypse of Peter is here dependent on 4 Ezra, but also possible that both works draw on common tradition. But most important is the way Christ concludes the dialogue: «When you saw the lamentation that there will be for sinners in the last days, you heart was saddened because of it. But as for those who have sinned against the Most High, I will show you their deeds» (3:7).

Peter's compassion is rejected at this stage because it is cheap. It takes no account of the demands of justice. The chapters which follow (4-13), with their account of the judgment itself and the punishment of each sinner specifically for his or her particular sin, are designed to demonstrate to Peter that hell is required by God's justice. Only when this has been made abundantly clear, by means of a whole series of traditional themes, can mercy be allowed a voice which does not detract from justice. There can be no suggestion that the wicked do not deserve hell or that they themselves can secure their release from it by repentance. The claims of justice must therefore be vindicated and admitted even by the damned themselves before those claims can be waived at the impulse of compassion. This is why chapter 13 insists on the irrevocable finality of the judgment immediately before chapter 14 revokes it.

But we have still to understand why it is in response to the prayers of the righteous that the damned are released from hell. After all, according to the vision of 3:3, Christ himself weeps to see the suffering of the damned, so that we should expect his release of the damned to spring from his own compassion and not be simply a concession to the righteous. The key to this issue
is to appreciate that the justice of hell is a justice owed to the righteous, because they have been the victims of the wicked. This can be seen in those descriptions of punishments where it is said that the victims of the crimes in question are brought to see the punishment of those who have injured them: the victims of murder see the murderers being punished (7:10), aborted children not only see but are actually instruments of their mothers’ punishment (8:3-4), and victims of infanticide condemn their parents (8:5-7). More generally, in 13:2 the righteous view the just punishment of the wicked. We should also remember the overriding context of persecution, so that especially in the author’s mind is the justice due to the martyrs against those who have persecuted and betrayed them (cf. 9:2-4). But if the punishment of the wicked is in this sense owed to their victims, it can be remitted only if the victims themselves request mercy for their oppressors. No one else has the right to forgive oppressors, but those whom they have oppressed do have this right. So if it is for his people’s sake that Christ must judge their enemies, for his people’s sake he can save those for whom they desire mercy.

It may be surprising to discover that this idea must have entered Jewish apocalyptic from the Greek Hades. In the Greek underworld, the Acherusian lake, into which the river Acheron, one of the four rivers of Hades, flows, is not in the Elysian fields (paradise), where the Apocalypse of Peter apparently locates it, but is a place of purificatory punishment in Hades. According to Plato (Phaedo 114), a certain class of sinners, who have committed crimes but are curable, must spend a year in Tartarus and are then brought to the Acherusian lake. But they cannot leave the lake until they persuade those they have killed or injured to let them out. If they fail to obtain the forgiveness of their victims, they must return to Tartarus and suffer further, until at last their victims permit their release from punishment. The major difference between this concept and that in the Apocalypse of Peter is Plato’s notion of purificatory punishment after death. For the Apocalypse of Peter punishment is purely retributive: the wicked cannot escape hell because the punishment has purged them of their sin, but the punishment can be remitted through the sheer mercy of their victims. (This also distinguishes the Apocalypse of Peter from Origenist universalism, which interpreted hell according to the Platonic idea of purificatory punishment.) But Plato’s picture does share with the Apocalypse of Peter the idea that the victims of injustice should have a say in the punishment or release of the perpetrators of injustice, and it must be the ultimate source of the tradition the Apocalypse of Peter takes up.
It may be the fact that the Acherusian lake has been dissociated from any idea of purificatory punishment, and assimilated instead to the Jewish and Christian idea of purificatory bathing in water (it is also a means of purification after death, though not for those condemned to hell, in ApMos 37:3; ApPaul 22-23), that accounts for its location, in the Apocalypse of Peter, in the «Elysian field». Just as the latter no doubt functions as a Greek name for the Jewish paradise, so the Acherusian lake is perhaps identified with the water of life, a traditional feature of the Jewish paradise 76.

Finally, although the text provides no explicit basis for this, it is tempting to think that the idea of the salvation of the damned by the intercession of the righteous appealed to the author of the Apocalypse of Peter because of its congruence with the Christian tradition of praying for enemies and persecutors (Matt 5:44). If the martyrs, instead of predicting their persecutors’ punishment in hell (4 Macc 10:11; 12:12; cf. 1 Enoch 47:1-4), prayed for their forgiveness (Acts 7:60), surely (it could have been thought) they will do so all the more when their erstwhile persecutors beg their forgiveness and intercession on the day of judgment. In fact, precisely this argument is reported by Augustine as the view of some of those «merciful» Christians who were probably influenced by the Apocalypse of Peter (De civ. Dei 21.18)

III. THE DESTINY OF THE ELECT

In the central section on the eschatological judgment (chapters 3-14), the focus is on the fate of the wicked and the destiny of the elect is only briefly mentioned (3:2; 6:4; 13:1; 14:2-3). A full treatment of the latter is reserved for the third main section of the apocalypse: the series of revelations which are given to Peter and the disciples on mount Zion in chapters 15-17. But, in order fully to understand chapters 15-17, we need first to return to the question of the historical context in which the Apocalypse of Peter was written and to explore an aspect of this context which we have not yet considered.

76. One wonders whether this baptism of the dead after the Last Judgment has any connexion with the ritual «baptism on behalf of the dead» to which 1 Corinthians 15:29 refers.
1. **The Birchat ha-Minìm**.

The major aspect of the historical context of the *Apocalypse of Peter* which we have so far considered is Bar Kokhba revolt. But another significant factor which must have considerably affected the relationship between Palestinian Jewish Christians and their fellow-Jews already before the Bar Kokhba revolt was the so-called birchat ha-mìnìm (« the benediction of the mìnìm », i.e. the benediction [of God] for cursing the mìnìm [heretics or sectarians]). This is the twelfth benediction of the daily 'Amidah or Eighteen Benedictions. In the version known from the Cairo Genizah manuscripts it reads:

« For the apostates (mēśummadìm) let there be no hope, « and uproot the kingdom of arrogance (malkût zadôn), « speedily and in our days. « May the Nazarenes (nōšērim) and the sectarians (mìnìm) « perish as in a moment. « Let them be blotted out of the book of life, « and not be written together with the righteous [Ps 69:28]. « You are praised, O Lord, who subdues the arrogant « (zedìm) ».

As we shall see, it cannot be taken for granted that this text of the birchat ha-mìnìm goes back to our period.

The birchat ha-mìnìm and its significance for the split between Judaism and Christianity has been a subject of quite extensive recent discussion 77, the details of which we cannot enter here.

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For our purposes the following points will indicate its significance for the context of the Apocalypse of Peter:

1. According to two different traditions in the Babylonian Talmud (b. Ber. 28b-29a) and the Palestinian Talmud (y. Ber. 4:3 [8a]), the birkat ha-minim was added to the ‘Amidah by the rabbis at Yavneh in the late first century C.E. Only the bavli tradition connects this with a rabbinic editing of the ‘Amidah as a whole («Shim'on ha-Paqoli arranged the Eighteen Benedictions in order»). The use of the birkat ha-minim in the second century is confirmed by Justin’s references to Jews cursing Christians in synagogue (Dial. 16; 96).

2. In this period the wording of the ‘Amidah was not fixed. What the rabbis must have prescribed was that there should be a cursing of minim in one of the benedictions, not an obligatory form of words for cursing minim. Thus none of the varied formulations of the birkat ha-minim which we have in later liturgical texts can be taken as the authoritative text of our period. Some may represent forms of wording which go back to our period, but they have to be treated with great caution as evidence for the precise content of the birkat ha-minim in our period.

3. The institution and promotion of the birkat ha-minim by the rabbis should be seen as an attempt to establish rabbinic Judaism as orthodox Judaism in the synagogues. The aim was to exclude all forms of non-rabbinic Judaism from the synagogues. This aim was not accomplished quickly. The mere institution of the birkat ha-minim at Yavneh would certainly not in itself have secured its widespread use. Its introduction into synagogue worship must have been part of the slow process — continuing throughout the second century — by which rabbinic Judaism made itself normative Judaism in Palestine.78

4. The minim envisaged in the benediction are all forms of non-rabbinic Judaism, which the rabbis wished to label sectarian and to exclude from the synagogue. The term does not refer exclusively to Jewish Christians, but includes them. (Whether it also refers to Gentile Christians, as Justin seems to assume, is more debatable, but need not concern us here.) However, it is probable that in many parts of Palestine Christians would be the principal target of the birkat ha-minim. Jewish Christianity was rabbinic Judaism’s major rival in its attempt to win Palestinian Jews to its own interpretation of Judaism. Thus it is quite

possible that in particular places the usefulness of the *birkat ha-minim* as an instrument for excluding Jewish Christians from the synagogue was sharpened by specific reference to Nazarenes (*nōsērīm*) in the words of the benediction. Some extant texts of the *birkat ha-minim* include the word *nōsērīm*, and the evidence of Jerome and Epiphanius suggests that by the fourth century explicit reference to the *nōsērīm* was common.

5. — In texts of the twelfth benediction, the cursing of the *mīnīm* is remarkably closely linked with prayer for the downfall of «the kingdom of arrogance» 79, i.e. the Gentile oppressors of God's people, the Roman empire. Although rabbinic tradition consistently refers to this benediction as that of the *mīnīm*, it has been fairly pointed out that in the extant texts it is aimed just as much against «the kingdom of arrogance» as it is against Jewish apostates and sectarians. The explanation for this feature is debated. It has been suggested that the rabbis at Yavneh added the curse on the *mīnīm* to an already existing prayer against the Gentile enemies of Israel, or that the *birkat ha-minim* was originally a distinct benediction, later combined with another on the «the kingdom of arrogance». Most likely, the twelfth benediction is conceived as a prayer for the judgment of all the enemies of Israel, including both Jewish sectarians and Gentile oppressors. The aim of excluding the *mīnīm* from the religious community would have been aided by associating them with the Roman oppressors.

6. — We should note the nationalistic and eschatological thrust of the whole ‘Amidah. God is the «God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob», who will soon restore Jewish national sovereignty, Jerusalem and the Temple. It is in this context that the *mīnīm* are to perish along with the Gentile oppressors, and are to be excluded from the eschatological people of God who will inherit the promises. Appropriately, the Genizah text quotes Psalm 69:28: «Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written together with the righteous». It is in agreement with the implications of this that rabbinic tradition places the *mīnīm* in Gehenna (t. Sanh. 13:5; Exod. Rab. 19:4).

7. — The effect of the *birkat ha-minim* on Jewish Christians in Palestine in the early second century will no doubt have varied. In many synagogues it will not yet have been in use. But where it was used its effect will have been serious. Where *mīnīm* were understood as those who did not accept rabbinic halakhah or

79. With this term for Rome, cf. 4 Ezra 11:43.
where nəšrîm were perhaps even specifically named in the benediction, then the birkatt ha-mînim will have effectively excluded Jewish Christians from the religious community defined by the synagogue.

Thus, as well as the Apocalypse of Peter's specific context in the Bar Kokhba revolt, in which Christians were suffering for their refusal to accept Bar Kokhba as Messiah and to participate in the revolt, we have to reckon also with the broader context of the rabbinic attempt to exclude Jewish Christians from the religious community of Israel. The former context no doubt exacerbated the latter and brought to a head the developing crisis of Jewish Christian identity in Palestine. Christians who were already in many places being excluded and ostracized by the success of the rabbinic attempt to establish rabbinic orthodoxy now found themselves further threatened by the wave of triumphant nationalism that supported Bar Kokhba's movement for the liberation of Jerusalem. In this context, the association of mînim with the gentile oppressor in the birkatt ha-mînim would gain greater force: Jewish Christians who failed to support Bar Kokhba could be seen as renegades who were taking the side of «the kingdom of arrogance» against God's people Israel. The crisis for Jewish Christians was therefore not simply the actuality and the threat of martyrdom. It was also their fellow-Jews' exclusion of them from the religious community of the people of God who would inherit the eschatological promises of God.

Thus, while, as we have seen, Bar Kokhba and his intention of rebuilding the Temple raised for the author of the Apocalypse of Peter and his readers the question of the true Messiah and the question of the true Temple, the birkatt ha-mînim raised the further, closely connected question of the true people of God. Are Christians excluded from the number of God's chosen ones to whom his promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob belong? Have their names been blotted out of the book of life in which the members of the eschatological people of God are recorded in heaven?

As a preliminary indication that the birkatt ha-mînim lies consciously in the background to the Apocalypse of Peter, we may note that the very first category of sinners in hell are those who «have blasphemed the way of righteousness» (7:2). «The way of righteousness» is here a designation for Christianity, considered as a way of life (as in 2 Pet 2:21; Barn 5:4). Those who have blasphemed it could be precisely those who pronounce the birkatt ha-mînim. We may note that a term for Christianity which characterizes it as an ethical way of life would be especially
appropriate if what is in mind is the rabbinic accusation of minût against those who did not accept rabbinic halakhah.

But it is for the Apocalypse of Peter's account of the post-mortem destiny of the righteous that the birkat ha-minîm will provide the most enlightening context.

2. The Visions on Mount Zion (15:1-17:1).

The brief reference to the final destiny of the elect in 14:2-3 already adumbrates the main concerns of the visions which follow in chapters 15-16: "I will go away, I and my elect ones rejoicing with the patriarchs, into my eternal kingdom. And with them I shall carry out the promises I have promised them, I and my Father who is in heaven" (14:2-3: Rainer fragment). The two points especially to notice here are that Jesus Christ's elect will inherit God's promises and that they will do so in company with the patriarchs. Thus, Jewish Christians are not disinherited from the eschatological destiny of Israel, as the birkat ha-minîm pronounced them to be. The God of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is the Father of Jesus Christ, and so Jewish Christians are assured of the glorious destiny promised by God to the patriarchs and their descendants. This theme, announced in 14:2-3, is developed at greater length and validated by visionary revelations in chapters 15-16.

A major transition in the apocalypse is marked by 15:1, where the disciples accompany Jesus to mount Zion, praying. Their prayer is the appropriate preliminary to a visionary revelation, which takes the form, first, of two men of dazzling splendour and indescribable beauty (15:2-7), whom Jesus then identifies as Moses and Elijah (16:1). The idea of an appearance of Moses and Elijah derives, of course, from the transfiguration narrative, but is here put to a use quite different from its function in the Synoptic transfiguration tradition. The account in the Apocalypse of Peter is not of a transfiguration. Jesus is not transfigured: his appearance is not mentioned and the account has, in fact, at this point no christological interest at all. (A christological concern appears only at 17:1.) But whereas the Synoptic transfiguration tradition has no interest in what Moses and Elijah looked like, for the Apocalypse of Peter this is the content of the revelation. Moses and Elijah appear in their glorious heavenly forms. The descriptions are composed of features traditional in descriptions of the appearance of heavenly beings: most can be paralleled in other such descriptions (cf., e.g., I Enoch 14:20; 71:10; 106:2; 2 Enoch 1:5; 19:1; 4 Ezra 7:97;
What is notable, is the relatively lengthy description, designed to convey a strong impression of the glory and beauty of the two figures. The point that they enjoy the glory of heaven is very emphatically made.

The reason for this emphasis is not clear until Peter and the disciples have been given a second revelation. Not content with this vision of the glory of Moses and Elijah, Peter asks, «Where are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the other righteous fathers?» (16:1). In response to this request, the disciples are granted a revelation of paradise (16:2-3). From 16:4 it is clear that they saw the patriarchs in paradise, but the account of the revelation exclusively describes the place, not the people in it. (The editor who revised the text in the form we have it in the Akhmim version noticed this lack and supplied it: AI7-19.) The inhabitants of paradise are not described because it is taken for granted that the patriarchs will have the same glorious heavenly appearance as Moses and Elijah. The elaborate description of the glory of the elect after death need not be repeated. Instead, a brief description of paradise itself is now given: a large garden, full of fragrant and very fruitful trees. Again, these features are wholly traditional (cf., e.g., 1 Enoch 24:3-5; 32:3-4; 2 Enoch 8:1-8; ApAbr 21:6; Rev 22:2; 3 Enoch 23:18), but the account is perhaps rather surprisingly brief. The author is evidently content briefly to evoke the well-known features of paradise, in order to make his real point: that it is in paradise that the patriarchs rest (16:4) in their heavenly glory.

The purpose of both revelations — that of the glorious appearance of Moses and Elijah and that of paradise — now becomes apparent in Jesus’ words at 16:4-5: «You have seen the crowd of the fathers. Such is their rest!» I rejoiced and believed [it]. [He said,] “This is the honour and glory of those who are persecuted for my righteousness”. The phrase «honour and glory» may be a reminiscence of 2 Peter’s transfiguration account (2 Pet 1:17), while «those who are persecuted for my righteousness» certainly alludes to the Matthean beatitude, «Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven» (Matt 5:10). This is clear from Peter’s subsequent comment: «I understood what is written in the scripture of our Lord Jesus Christ» (16:6). In other words, the heavenly reward for Jesus’ persecuted followers, which the Gospel of Matthew specifies only as «the kingdom of heaven», is now more fully revealed to Peter: it is to be glorified like Moses and Elijah and to rest in paradise with the patriarchs.
As well as the obvious motive of providing encouragement for readers who may be faced with martyrdom for their discipleship of Jesus, the emphasis on the patriarchs is notable. Moses and Elijah, as representatives of the glorified elect, were given by the transfiguration tradition. But the author has chosen to emphasize that it is also with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and «the other righteous fathers» that those who are persecuted for Jesus Christ’s sake will share heavenly glory. Moreover, as in 14:2-3, participation in the destiny of the patriarchs is here identified with the promise that Jesus Christ has made to his elect, i.e. with the beatitude of Matthew 5:10. This emphasis makes excellent sense against the background of the rabbinic attempt, by means of the birkat ha-minim, to exclude Jewish Christians from the religious community of Israel and its eschatological promises.

Thus, 15:2-16:6 answers the question: do Jewish Christians belong to the true people of God? As we have already seen in our section I, the subsequent section, 16:7-17:1, goes on, by means of two further revelations — a vision of the heavenly temple and a declaration of Jesus’ messiahship, to answer the related questions of the identity of the true temple and the true Messiah.

3. The Ascension (17:2-6).

The series of four revelations in 15:2-17:1 is completed by a fifth: Jesus’ ascension into heaven. This completes the series and unites the answers to the three issues that the other four revelations have given. It does so because it reveals the true Messiah leading his people into the heavenly temple.

17:2-6 reads:

«And a very large, very white cloud, came over our heads «and took away our Lord, Moses and Elijah. I trembled and «was terrified. We looked up [and saw] that the heaven open- «ed, and we saw people in the flesh. They came to meet our «Lord, Moses and Elijah, and they went into the second heav- «en. And the words of scripture were fulfilled: “This genera- «tion seeks him; it seeks the face of the God of Jacob”. «[Ps 23:6 LXX] There was great fear and great terror in heav- «en, and the angels flocked together, so that the words of «scripture might be fulfilled, which says: “Open the doors, «O princes!” [Ps 23:7, 9 LXX] Then that heaven which had «been opened was closed.»

The cloud, of course, has been borrowed from the transfiguration narrative, and like the other elements borrowed from the
transfiguration narrative in chapters 15-17 it has been given a quite different function from that in the Synoptic tradition. But, unlike the ascension narrative in Acts 1, the disciples do not just see the cloud bear Jesus (with Moses and Elijah) up into the sky. They see the heavens opened; that is, they are allowed to see into the lowest of the heavens above the firmament. The rest of the account is given in two stages, each as a fulfilment of words from Psalm 23(24). Evidently this psalm is the author’s principal means of interpreting the ascension. There is other second-century evidence of the application of this psalm to the ascension (Justin, I Apol. 51; Dial. 36; 85; Irenaeus, Dem. 84; Adv. Haer. 4.33.13), although the Apocalypse of Peter is the earliest text in which the psalm is so used and the only one in which verse 6 is interpreted with reference to the ascension. Justin and Irenaeus refer only to verses 7-10.

In the first of the two stages of the account (17:3), Jesus, Moses and Elijah are joined, in the first heaven, by «people in the flesh», and proceed, accompanied by them, into the second heaven. These «people in the flesh» are then identified as the people to whom Psalm 23:6 (LXX) refers. The importance of this reference lies in the fact that in the psalm the reference is to the people who are able to enter God’s presence in the temple (v. 3). The author of the Apocalypse of Peter has taken this to be the heavenly sanctuary, in which God dwells in the highest heaven. The «people in the flesh» therefore join Jesus on his ascent through the heavens, in order to accompany him into the heavenly sanctuary.

Precisely what interpretation the author gave to the psalm’s words, «seeks him, and seeks the face of the God of Jacob» (cf. LXX: ζητοῦντων αὐτῶν, ζητοῦντων τὸ προσώπον τοῦ θεοῦ Ἰακώβ), it is impossible to be sure. He may have taken «him» to be Jesus, so that their seeking him is shown by their meeting Jesus in the first heaven, while their seeking the God of Jacob refers to their ascent with Jesus through the heavens to God’s presence in the heavenly temple. Probably it is a happy coincidence that the psalm’s reference to the «God of Jacob» continues the apocalypse’s emphasis on the patriarchs.

In the second stage of the account, Jesus’ ascent, with his retinue, through the heavens is greeted with fear and astonishment, and the angels gather together in order to fulfil the words of the psalm (repeated in verses 7 and 9 of Ps 23 LXX): «Lift up the gates, you princes» (LXX: Ἀρατε πύλαις ὦ ἄρχοντες ἡμῶν). Either the angels gather in order to cry out this command to the doorkeepers, who are the ἄρχοντες of the psalm, or else the angels are themselves the ἄρχοντες who hurry to open the
gates. In any case, the gates are those of the heavenly sanctuary, opened in order to let «the king of glory» enter (Ps 23:7-9).

He enters, of course, along with the «people in the flesh». Whereas Justin and Irenaeus, who quote only v. 7-10 of the psalm, speak only of the angelic doorkeepers of heaven admitting Jesus the king of glory into heaven, the author of the Apocalypse of Peter, by referring also to verse 6 of the psalm, finds in it a depiction of Jesus’ taking with him those who are permitted to ascend to God’s heavenly sanctuary. In this way his portrayal of the ascension is able to bring together all three themes of the earlier revelations on mount Zion: the true people of God who will be glorified with the patriarchs (15:2-16:6), the true temple in heaven which the Father has made for Jesus and his elect (16:7-9), and the true Messiah Jesus (17:1). In his ascension, the Messiah takes his people with him into the heavenly temple.

But who are the «people in the flesh» who meet Jesus in the first heaven? They must be righteous people of the past whom Jesus in his descent to Hades and his resurrection delivered from death. Other second-century texts attest the view that many of the righteous dead left Hades with Christ at his resurrection (OdesSol 42:11) and ascended to heaven with him at his ascension (Asclsa 9:17; cf. Origen, Comm. in Rom. 5:10). According to a saying which occurs quite widely in patristic literature, he descended alone but ascended with a great multitude (Acts of Thaddeus, ap. Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. 1.13.20; Melito, New frag. 2.17; Cyril of Jerusalem, Catech. Lect. 14.18; Ps.-Ignatius, Trall. 9; Armenian Acts of Callistratus 9). Moreover, there is good evidence that originally the conception was of an actual resurrection of dead people with Christ. Language normally reserved for bodily resurrection is used (Ignatius, Magn. 9.2; Melito, Peri Pascha 101; New frag. 2.12, 15; Origen, Comm. in Rom. 5:10; Irenaeus, frag. 26, which connects this resurrection of the saints with Matt 27:52). So the Apocalypse of Peter’s reference to «people in the flesh» is entirely in line with this tradition. Presumably they are envisaged as having risen from the dead with Christ at his resurrection, and then, during the period of his resurrection appearances to the disciples, waiting in the first heaven until they can ascend with him through the heavens.

These «people in the flesh» would then be pre-Christian Jews, but they would function in the Apocalypse of Peter as representative of the whole of the Messiah’s people whom he takes into heaven. If it is Jesus who leads these righteous people of the past into heaven, then Jesus’ own followers in the present can be assured of the same destiny. But a problem arises as to the relation between these «people in the flesh» and the
patriarchs whom Peter and the disciples have just seen in paradise (16:1-4). We might have expected the latter to have been among the righteous dead that Jesus delivered from Hades and took with him at his ascension. We can dismiss at once the possibility that the paradise of 16:2-3 is only their temporary abode, prior to their ascension with Jesus to the heavenly sanctuary. Such a temporary paradise, no longer (since the ascension) inhabited, would certainly not be portrayed as the destiny of the Christian martyrs (16:4-5). It is possible that 16:1-4 should be understood as a proleptic vision of the paradise which the patriarchs and the Christian elect will enter together after the last judgment (cf. 14:2-3). Alternatively, we should have to suppose that before Jesus' resurrection and ascension the patriarchs were already in paradise, but other righteous Israelites were in Sheol. Only the latter rise and ascend with Jesus. This rather anomalous view is found in the Ascension of Isaiah, which makes a distinction between, on the one hand, «the holy Abel and all the righteous» (9:8; cf. 9:9, 28), who in Isaiah's time have already received their «robes» (their heavenly bodies) and are in the seventh heaven, and, on the other hand, «many of the righteous» (9:17), whom Christ plunders from the angel of death (9:16) at his descent into Hades and who only receive their robes when they ascend with him to the seventh heaven (9:17-18).

(We should note that in any case the Apocalypse of Peter seems to have no very consistent view about resurrection. Chapter 4 portrays all the dead, righteous and wicked, raised at the end of history prior to the last judgment. But it is only after the last judgment, in 13:1, that the righteous «put on the garments of the life above». Eschatological imagery is not always used consistently, especially in a work compiled from a variety of traditions, as the Apocalypse of Peter is.)


The Apocalypse of Peter concludes with the statement that the disciples «descended from the mountain, giving praise to God, who has written the names of the righteous in the book of life in the heavens» (17:7). This is a highly significant statement, confirming that the major concern of the visions on mount Zion

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80. In De universo 1, Abraham's bosom is a temporary abode for «the fathers and the righteous» until the Last Judgment.
was with assuring Jewish Christians of their eschatological destiny. The «book of life» is the heavenly register of the members of the people of God. To have one's name written in it was to be assured of a share in the eschatological future of God's people, whereas to have one's name blotted out of it was to be deprived of that share.

The image derived from the Old Testament (especially Ps 69:28, the only OT text to use the actual term «book of life»; cf. also Exod 32:33, and, for the eschatological reference, Dan 12:1) and was commonly used. It was commonly said that the names of the elect were in the book of life (JosAs 15:4; Phil 4:3; Rev 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27) or written in heaven (JosAs 15:4; Luke 10:20; Heb 12:23; cf. 1 Enoch 104:1), and that the names of the wicked (wicked or apostate members of the people of God) were blotted out of the book of life (Jub 30:22; 1 Enoch 108:3; Rev 3:5; cf. JosAs 15:4). Thus the terminology of Apocalypse of Peter 17:7 is not surprising. But it should be noticed that, in referring to «the righteous», this text is verbally closer than any other to Psalm 69:28 («Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written together with the righteous»), suggesting that this text may be consciously in mind and that the possibility of being blotted out of the book of life is being deliberately countered. (Also very close to the Apocalypse of Peter is JosAs 15:4, which likewise rejects that possibility: «your name was written in the book of the living in heaven... and it will not be erased».)

Such a deliberate allusion to Psalm 69:28 may be significant when we remember that the version of the birkat ha-minim in the Cairo Geniza manuscripts quotes this verse against the minim. We cannot be sure that this usage goes back to the early second century, but if it does the conclusion of the Apocalypse of Peter could be read as a deliberate reassurance to its readers that God will not enact that curse against Jewish Christians.

IV. PETER

Our author’s choice of Peter as his apostolic pseudonym is not in the least surprising. Peter in the apocalypse takes the role of leader or spokesman among Jesus’ disciples, as he does in the Synoptic traditions generally and especially in the Gospel of Matthew, which seems to be the only written Gospel our author used. No doubt, our author shared the Palestinian Jewish
Christian reverence for James the Lord's brother, but the latter's role was never understood as in competition with the preeminence of Peter among the twelve. The two were preeminent in different ways: James as the leader of the mother church in Jerusalem, Peter as leader of the twelve in their apostolic mission to preach the Gospel throughout the world.

Also influential in the author's choice of Peter may have been Peter's special role in the transfiguration narrative, which the apocalypse reflects in 16:7 (Peter's proposal to construct tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah). But the principal passage in which traditions specifically about Peter himself feature is one we have not yet considered: 14:4-6. These verses are really an appendix to the second major part of the apocalypse (chapters 3-14). With the words, «I have told you, Peter, and I have informed you» (14:3b), the revelation of the judgment which began with chapter 3 is at last concluded. But Jesus now addresses, in 14:4-6, some words of personal relevance to Peter himself. They concern his eventual martyrdom and his commission to preach the Gospel throughout the world. The inclusion of this material may be largely due to the appropriateness of these themes in a post-resurrection setting, in which the commissioning of the apostles to preach the Gospel is standard (Matt 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:8; EpApp 19; 30; EpPetPhil [CG VIII,2] 137:23-25; cf. Testament of our Lord 1:14) and in which the Johannine tradition also knew a specific commissioning of Peter and a prophecy of his martyrdom (John 21:15-19).

For the text of this passage the Rainer fragment provides the Greek of verse 4 and five words only of verse 5, but since the Ethiopic of verse 4 is clearly very corrupt the Rainer fragment is extremely valuable here. It reads in translation:

«Go now to the city that rules over the west, and drink the «cup that I have promised you, at the hands of the son of the «one who is in Hades, so that his disappearance (διάφανεια) «may receive a beginning. s And you, chosen (correcting «δικαιός to δικαιοτής) of the promise...»

The Ethiopic from verse 5 onwards has:

«As for you, you have been chosen for the promise I have «made to you. So send out my proclamation throughout the «world in peace, s since it is full of joy. The source of my words «is hope of life, and suddenly the world will be snatched away.»

Unfortunately, verse 6 is probably corrupt beyond recovery. But the whole passage is of considerable interest for two
reasons: its evidence and understanding of the martyrdom of Peter, and its view of Peter as the apostle to the Gentiles. It is also the only passage in the Apocalypse of Peter which looks beyond the sphere of Jewish Christianity in Palestine, and so gives us a rare glimpse of the attitude to the wider Christian mission held by second-century Palestinian Jewish Christians.

As far as Peter's martyrdom is concerned, our passage needs to be placed alongside a roughly contemporary passage in the Ascension of Isaiah, which refers to Nero as responsible for Peter's death: «a lawless king, a matricide, who himself, this king, will persecute the plant which the twelve apostles of the Beloved have planted, and one of the twelve will be delivered into his hands» (AscIsa 4:2-3). Here the reference to Nero and the Neronian persecution of the church is unequivocal, because of the term «matricide», which was frequently used to identify the figure of Nero without naming him (e.g. SibOr 4:121; 5:363; 8:71; cf. Philostratus, Vit. Apoll. 4.32). This makes it likely that Peter's martyrdom is located in Rome, but the point is not made explicitly. By contrast, in the Apocalypse of Peter the identity of Peter's murderer would not be clear unless we had other evidence to connect Peter's martyrdom with Nero, but the location of the martyrdom at Rome is unequivocal. The «city which rules over the west» is certainly Rome. The expression might actually reflect the time of writing during the Bar Kokhba war, when Rome's rule in the east (Palestine) was contested, but more probably it reflects a Palestinian sense of place, according to which the Roman empire lay to the west and the Parthian empire to the east.

These two texts, in the Ascension of Isaiah and the Apocalypse of Peter, in fact provide together the earliest unequivocal evidence of Peter's martyrdom at Rome during the reign of Nero. 1 Clement 5:4 cannot really bear the weight which has usually been placed upon it as evidence for this event, and so the Ascension of Isaiah and the Apocalypse of Peter are actually much more important historical evidence for the date and place of Peter's death than has usually been realised. (Oscar Cullmann's highly influential discussion of the evidence draws

81. Ignatius, Rom. 2.2; cf. 1 Clem 5:6-7.
unwarranted conclusions from *1 Clement* 5:4, plays down the significance of *Ascension of Isaiah* 4:2-3, and takes no account at all of the *Apocalypse of Peter.* Moreover, both texts, as we shall see in the case of the *Apocalypse of Peter,* probably preserve early tradition, in that they reflect an apocalyptic understanding of the significance of Peter's martyrdom which must have originated in the years immediately after the event.

Nero was the first Roman emperor to persecute the church, and, although the persecution was confined to Rome, it must have seemed of major significance for the whole church, especially if Peter, regarded as the leader of the apostles, was martyred during it or soon afterwards. Nero's attack on the church could easily have been seen as the Antichrist's final onslaught on the people of God. The civil wars which threatened the very survival of the empire at the time of Nero's death and later could have seemed the final internecine strife in which, according to some apocalyptic expectations, the enemies of God's people were to slaughter each other immediately before the end (e.g. *Zech* 14:13; *1 Enoch* 56:7; 100:1-4). A Christian apocalyptic tradition which identified Nero as the Antichrist would have been able to maintain this identification by accepting the widespread rumour that Nero had not really died and would return from hiding in the east. Some early Christian writings (*Rev* 17:7-14; *Asclsa* 4:2-14) therefore expect the Antichrist in the form of the returning Nero.

That such an identification of Nero as the Antichrist belonged to the tradition which the *Apocalypse of Peter* uses is suggested by the description of Nero as «the son of the one who is in Hades» (14:4). Admittedly, the expression is a little odd. If it means that Nero is the son of the devil, this would be a quite appropriate description of the Antichrist (cf. *John* 8:44) and there is some later Christian evidence for the idea that Antichrist will be the son of the devil 84. But in Jewish and Christian literature of this period, the devil is not usually located in Hades, the place of the dead. Only from the fourth century onwards does the concept of Satan as the ruler of the dead become common 85. Perhaps a mistranslation of the Semitic idiom, «the son of perdition» (which describes the Antichrist in *2 Thess* 2:3; cf. *John* 17:12), lies behind our passage. Alternatively, we would have to regard it as a rare early instance

of the location of the devil in Hades (along with TDan 5:11; perhaps Asc Isa 1:3).

Also rather puzzling are the following words: «so that his destruction (or disappearance) may receive a beginning». The Ethiopic translator apparently took «his destruction» (Ὄτοι ἄφανεια: literally «his disappearance») in an active sense: «his work of destruction». But ἄφανεια can scarcely bear this meaning. It must refer to God's destruction (in judgment) of the one who has put Peter to death. The antecedent of Ὄτοι could be either τοῦ υἱοῦ (i.e. Nero) or τοῦ ἑν Ἀιδίου (i.e. the devil): Peter's death brings about the beginning either of Nero's destruction or of the devil's. Probably the former is meant. The Jewish martyrlogical idea that the death of the martyr brings down divine judgment on his persecutor and thus brings about his destruction is probably in mind.

The choice of the word ἄφανεια, though it can mean simply destruction, may be more significant: it may allude to the widespread belief that Nero had not really died at all, but fled secretly to the east, where he was awaiting in hiding the moment when he would return to conquer the Roman Empire. This expectation was taken up into Jewish apocalyptic in the Jewish Sibylline Oracles, where the returning Nero was identified with the eschatological adversary, and was also echoed in early Christian apocalyptic in the Ascension of Isaiah and in the Book of Revelation. Allusions, in this connexion, to Nero's disappearance (at his supposed death) or invisibility during his flight to the east or sojourn in the east, are quite common (Sib Or 4:120; 5:33; 5:152; John of Antioch, fragment 104; Commodian, Carmen de duobus populis 831; Lactantius, De mort. pers. 2.7). It seems to have been a stock theme of the legend of Nero's return, and so it is quite probable that ἄφανεια in Apocalypse of Peter 14:4 alludes to it. In that case, the statement that Nero's disappearance will receive a beginning (ἀρχήν), may mean that Nero's supposed death, as judgment for his putting Peter to death, was only the beginning of his disappearance, because his final disappearance (destruction) will happen only when he returns as the final

Antichrist and is judged by Christ at his parousia. (It is possible that the word \( \dot{\alpha}p\chi\dot{H}v \) is also a play on the idea of Peter as the \( \dot{\alpha}p\chi\dot{H} \) of the church, as in, e.g., the Nag Hammadi \( Ap\text{Pet} \) 71:19.)

A later passage which spells out the ideas to which \( Ap\text{colypse of Peter} \) 14:4 briefly alludes is Lactantius, \( De mortibus persecutorum \) 2.5-8:

"It was when Nero was already emperor that Peter arrived in Rome; after performing various miracles — which he did through the excellence of God Himself, since the power had been granted to him by God — he converted many to righteousness and established a faithful and steadfast temple to God. This was reported to Nero; and when he noticed that not only at Rome but everywhere great numbers of people were daily abandoning the worship of idols and condemning the practice of the past by coming over to the new religion, Nero, abominable and criminal tyrant that he was, leapt into action to overturn the heavenly temple and to abolish righteousness, and, first persecutor of the servants of God, he nailed Peter to the cross and slew Paul. For this he did not go unpunished; God took note of the way in which His people were troubled. Cast down from the pinnacle of power and hurled from the heights, the tyrant, powerless, suddenly disappeared; not even a place of burial was to be seen on the earth for so evil a beast. Hence some crazed men believe that he has been borne away and kept alive (for the Sibyl declares that "the matricide, though an exile, will come back from the ends of the earth" [\( Sib\text{Or} \) 5:363]), so that, since he was the first persecutor, he may also be the last and herald the arrival of Antichrist…"

The first sentence of this passage corresponds to the narrative in the second-century \( Acts \text{ of Peter} \), but the later part about Nero’s punishment, disappearance and expected return does not correspond to anything in the extant text of the \( Acts \text{ of Peter} \). Though Lactantius was writing in the early fourth century, he frequently made use of early sources, especially of an apocalyptic character. It is notable that the passage seems to be really about Peter: the mention of Paul’s martyrdom under Nero is an afterthought, quite possibly Lactantius’ own addition to his source. It is credible that Lactantius is echoing an old tradition about Peter’s death in Rome and the subsequent fate of Nero. Certainly he makes the same connexion between the two as is made in \( Ap\text{colypse of Peter} \) 14:4.

The idea of the return of Nero as the eschatological adversary was probably not part of the eschatological expectation of the
author of the *Apocalypse of Peter* himself. As we have seen, he himself identified Bar Kokhba as the Antichrist, and his apocalyptic scenario in chapters 1-2 scarcely leaves room for another, Roman Antichrist. But, as we have frequently noted, most of his work is compiled from already existing traditional material. There is no difficulty in supposing that, for his prophecy of Peter's martyrdom, he took up a Christian apocalyptic tradition, similar to that in the *Ascension of Isaiah* 87, which had connected Peter's martyrdom under Nero with the expectation of Nero's eschatological return.

*Apocalypse of Peter* 14:5 indicates that Peter's martyrdom will come at the end of a ministry of preaching the Gospel throughout the world and probably suggests that he has been chosen by Christ as the apostle to the Gentiles. The reference to the promise Christ has made to Peter is most likely an allusion to Matthew 16:18 and interprets this promise of Jesus to build his church on Peter as fulfilled by Peter's worldwide preaching of the Gospel. If we compare the passage in the *Apocalypse of Peter* with the eulogy of Paul's ministry and martyrdom in 1 Clement 5:5-7 («(...) After he (...) had preached in the East and in the West, he won the genuine glory for his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world and having reached the farthest limits of the West (...) »), *Apocalypse of Peter* 14:4-5 looks rather like a Petrine alternative to Clement's view of Paul. However, we should be cautious about concluding that it is a deliberately polemical rejection of Pauline Christianity by Jewish Christians who transferred the image of the apostle to the Gentiles from Paul to Peter. Some Palestinian Jewish Christians rejected Paul and his mission and in their literature (notably the so-called *Kerygmata Petrou* source of the *Pseudo-Clementines*) polemicized against him, but others approved of the Pauline mission from a distance (as can be seen from Jerome's quotations from a Jewish-Christian targum to Isaiah) 88. The *Apocalypse of Peter* ignores Paul and evidently knows nothing of the Pauline literature: this should probably be interpreted as the attitude of a group which was remote from contact with Pauline Christianity, but need not imply explicit hostility to Paul.


In any case, the idea of Peter as apostle to the Gentiles certainly has roots of its own, independent of polemical rivalry with Pauline Christianity's image of Paul. At least from the late first century, Jewish Christianity developed the idea of the twelve apostles as commissioned to preach the Gospel to the Gentile world as well as to Israel (Matt 28:19-20; cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8), and this idea became common in the early second century in literature which ignores Paul (Asc Isa 3:17-18; Mark 16:15-18; Kerygma Petrou, ap. Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 6.5.43; 6.6.48; Acts of John 112) as well as in works which take account of Paul's Gentile mission (Ep App 30; cf. 31-33). This tradition must have some basis in actual Jewish Christian mission to Gentiles, independent of the Pauline mission. Since Peter was widely regarded as having a position of special eminence among the twelve and since he was known to have gone to Rome, the capital of the empire, the idea of Peter as preeminently the apostle to the Gentiles arises naturally out of the idea of the twelve as apostles to the Gentiles. Again there is almost certainly some basis in fact. The traditions in Acts represent Peter as actually the pioneer of the Gentile mission (10:1-11:18). According to the agreement of Galatians 2:7-9, Peter's mission outside Palestine — in Antioch and Rome — would have been primarily to diaspora Jews. But just as Paul also preached the Gospel to Jews, so Peter can hardly have regarded himself as forbidden to preach to Gentiles. In Antioch he seems to have associated himself with the Antiochene church's enthusiastic outreach to and inclusion of Gentiles (Gal 2:12). 1 Peter shows him associated in Rome with men who had been connected both with the Jerusalem church and with Paul's Gentile mission (1 Pet 5:12-13). As a letter sent from the church of Rome to churches (Pauline and non-Pauline) of Asia Minor, but sent in the name of Peter, as the most eminent among the Roman church leadership, 1 Peter shows that Peter during his last years (or perhaps only months) in Rome was not associated merely with a narrow Jewish Christian group, but with the Roman church as such, a church which probably at that stage combined close links with Jerusalem and strong commitment to the Gentile mission.

Thus the Apocalypse of Peter's portrayal of Peter as the apostle to the Gentiles, who spread the Gospel throughout the world before ending his ministry at Rome, is an idealization and exaggeration with some basis in fact. Moreover, it shows us that

probably the mainstream of Palestinian Jewish Christians in the early second century, while themselves preoccupied with mission to their compatriots and increasingly isolated from developments in the wider church, nevertheless retained a positive view of the Gentile mission and the wider church whose foundation they attributed primarily to Peter.

Finally, we may ask whether this passage about Peter has any particular relevance to the overall message of the Apocalypse of Peter in its historical context. In a document concerned to encourage those faced with the possibility of martyrdom, clearly reference to Peter's own martyrdom is appropriate. In the sequence of material in the apocalypse, Peter, now knowing that he himself is going to face martyrdom, has a personal interest in the revelation in chapters 15-17 of the «honour and glory of those who are persecuted for my righteousness» (16:5). However, there may also be a special significance in the fact that Peter, unlike the Jewish Christian martyrs of the Bar Kokhba period, was put to death by the imperial power of Rome. We noted in connexion with the birkat ha-mīnīm that Jewish Christians who did not support Bar Kokhba would probably have been regarded as collaborators with the Roman oppressors. Such an accusation is implicitly countered by recalling that the leader of the apostles himself died in Rome as a victim of Roman power.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

1. Texts and Translations.

*Ethiopic version.*

The Ethiopic version of the Apocalypse of Peter was probably made from the Arabic (though no Arabic version is now known to be extant), which in turn would have been translated from the original Greek. The Ethiopic version is now known in two manuscripts: D'Abbadie 51 (Paris) and Hammerschmidt Lake Tana 35 (photographed in 1969 by E. Hammerschmidt). These two manuscripts are closely related. R. W. Cowley, who was the first to discuss the Lake Tana manuscript's text of the Apocalypse of Peter in print («The Ethiopic Work Which is Believed to Contain the Material of the Ancient Greek Apocalypse of Peter », Journal of Theological Studies 36 [1985], p. 151-153) thought D'Abbadie 51 was a copy of Lake Tana 35,
but D. D. Buchholz (see below) thought that either D'Abbadie 51 was an ancestor (but not the immediate ancestor) of Lake Tana 35, or both shared a common ancestor. This last position is supported (in an unpublished communication) by P. Marrassini, who is preparing a new edition of the Ethiopic text for the Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum. Unfortunately, the text in both manuscripts is frequently corrupt.

In both manuscripts the ancient Apocalypse of Peter does not appear as a distinct work but forms the first part of a larger work, called « The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead », which is followed by another, closely related work called « The mystery of the judgment of sinners ». Both works have been inspired by the Apocalypse of Peter and were most probably composed in Arabic before being translated into Ethiopic. However, once the section corresponding to the ancient Apocalypse of Peter has been identified, it is readily distinguishable from the secondary continuation of it.

The text of these two Ethiopic works was first published, with French translation, by S. Grébaut from MS D'Abbadie 51. Under the title, « Littérature éthiopienne : Pseudo-Clementine », he first published « The mystery of the judgment of sinners » (Revue de l'Orient chrétien 12 [1907], p. 139-151, p. 285-297, 380-392; 13 [1908], p. 166-180, 314-320), and then « The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead » (Revue de l'Orient chrétien 15 [1910], p. 198-214, 307-323, 425-439). Grébaut himself did not recognize that the latter contained the ancient Apocalypse of Peter (p. 198-214, 307-323), but this was immediately pointed out by M. R. James (« A New Text of the Apocalypse of Peter », Journal of Theological Studies 12 [1911], p. 36-54, 157, 362-367). Grébaut's remains the only edition of the whole Ethiopic text of « The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead » and « The mystery of the judgment of sinners » (P. Marrassini is now preparing a new edition for the Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum), the only complete translation of both of these works in any modern language (though Erbetta provides an Italian translation of « The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead »: see below), and the only French translation of the Ethiopic version of the Apocalypse of Peter. Unfortunately the translation is full of mistakes. (A new French translation of the Ethiopic version of the Apocalypse of Peter by P. Marrassini will appear in the Pléiade edition Écrits Apocryphes chrétiens, vol. 1.)

For the Apocalypse of Peter itself, a new critical edition of the Ethiopic text, based, for the first time, on both manuscripts, has been published in D. D. Buchholz, Your Eyes Will be Opened: A
Study of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter (SBLDS 97; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1988). This book is Buchholz's 1984 Claremont Graduate School Ph.D. dissertation (published unaltered). It is the fullest monograph study of the Apocalypse of Peter to date, including a study of introductory questions and a brief commentary on the text. But it is most important for the edition of the Ethiopic text, two new English translations of the Ethiopic (one literal, one free), and the demonstration of the reliability of the Ethiopic version as witness to the original Apocalypse of Peter. (Buchholz also divided the chapters into verses for the first time. His verse divisions should be adopted as standard.)

The new German edition of the New Testament Apocrypha includes a translation of the Ethiopic (along with the Greek fragments and patristic quotations): W. SCHNEEMELCHER, Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung, vol 2 (5th edition; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1989), p. 562-578. Unfortunately, the translation is that of H. DUENSING, which was made from Grébaut's edition of the text, was first published in 1913 (« Ein Stücke der urchristlichen Petrus-Apokalypse enthaltender Traktat der Athiopischen Pseudoklementinischen Literatur », Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 14 [1913], p. 65-78), appeared in earlier editions of Hennecke-Schneemelcher, and is here reproduced with hardly any changes. The editors (C. DETLEF and G. MÜLLER) make no reference to the Lake Tana manuscript, and appear to know no literature on the Apocalypse of Peter published after 1952.


Patristic quotations.

In the absence of a complete Greek text of the Apocalypse of Peter, the patristic quotations from the work are important, both for verifying the content of the original apocalypse and also for giving us some access to the original Greek. There are five or six quotations in Greek:

1) Clement of Alexandria, Eclog. 41a and 48 [the only words actually quoted from the Apocalypse of Peter are the same in both these texts and correspond to Apocalypse of Peter 8:10];
2) Clement of Alexandria, Eclog. 41b [corresponding to Apocalypse of Peter 8:4];
3) Clement of Alexandria, Eclog. 49 [corresponding to Apocalypse of Peter 8:8-9];
4) Methodius, Symp. 2.6 [corresponding to Apocalypse of Peter 8:6, 10];
5) Macarius Magnes, Apocrit. 4.6 [corresponding to Apocalypse of Peter 4:13].
6) Macarius Magnes, Apocrit. 4.7 [this has been taken to be a quotation from the Apocalypse of Peter, but, although it corresponds roughly to Apocalypse of Peter 5:4, it is in fact a quotation of Isaiah 34:4 and should probably be understood as no more than that].


There are also two patristic quotations in Latin.
— The first, which explicitly mentions the Apocalypse of Peter, is from an anonymous sermon on the parable of the ten virgins, perhaps from the fourth century. The Latin text is given in M. R. JAMES, «A New Text of the Apocalypse of Peter», Journal of Theological Studies 12 [1911], p. 383; BUCHHOLZ, Your Eyes Will Be Opened, p. 38-39 (with English translation). In fact, it is not so much a quotation as a reference to the river of fire as depicted in Apocalypse of Peter 6:2.
— The second, which should certainly be identified as a quotation from the Apocalypse of Peter, although the source is not named, is in a sermon of uncertain date (perhaps c. 300): Pseudo-Cyprian, Adv. Aleatores 8. It corresponds to Apocalypse of Peter 12:5. The Latin text is given in M. R. JAMES, «A New Text of the Apocalypse of Peter», Journal of Theological Studies 12 [1911], p. 50, p. 383; ERBETTA, Gli Apocrifi (see above), p. 223; BUCHHOLZ, Your Eyes Will Be Opened, p. 62-63 (with English translation).

Bodleian fragment.

This small fragment of an Egyptian manuscript (in the Bodleian Library, Oxford) contains the Greek text, in fragmentary condition, of Apocalypse of Peter 10:6-7. The Greek text is
given in M. R. James, «A New Text of the Apocalypse of Peter», Journal of Theological Studies 12 (1911), p. 367-369; Buchholz, Your Eyes Will Be Opened (see above), p. 146 (but he gives only James' reconstruction, with English translation).

**Rainer fragment.**

This fragment (in the Rainer collection in Vienna) of a third- or fourth-century manuscript contains the Greek text of Apocalypse of Peter 14:1-5a. It was first published (with a French translation) by C. Wesseley, «Les plus anciens monuments du christianisme écrits sur papyrus (II)», Patrologia Orientalis 18/3 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1924), p. 482-483, but Wessely thought it must be a fragment of the Acts of Peter. It was first identified as part of the Apocalypse of Peter by K. Prümm, «De genuino Apocalypsis Petri textu: Examen testium iam notorum et novi fragmenti Raineriani», Biblica 10 (1929), p. 62-80 (including the text with Latin translation: p. 77-78). The Greek text, with emendations which have been widely accepted, and English translation are given in M. R. James, «The Rainer Fragment of the Apocalypse of Peter», Journal of Theological Studies 32 (1931), p. 270-274; and Buchholz, Your Eyes Will Be Opened (see above), p. 228. James argued that the Bodleian and Rainer fragments are of the same manuscript (Journal of Theological Studies 32 [1931], p. 278).

**Akhmim fragment.**

In 1887 the French Archeological Mission discovered, in a cemetery near Akhmim (Panopolis) in Upper Egypt, a small vellum book, probably of the eighth or ninth century, which is now in the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities in Cairo. The manuscript contains the now well-known fragment of the Gospel of Peter in Greek and some fragments of 1 Enoch in Greek, as well as a Greek text which, when it was discovered, was identified as part of the Apocalypse of Peter. It became the main basis for study of the Apocalypse of Peter until the identification of the Ethiopic version in 1911. But in the light of the Ethiopic version, the Bodleian and Rainer fragments it became clear, and is now accepted by all who have worked in detail on the Apocalypse of Peter, that the Akhmim text is not of the Apocalypse of Peter in its original form, but a heavily redacted version in which the text has been abbreviated and otherwise considerably modified in both major and minor ways. It cannot, like the Ethiopic version, the Bodleian and Rainer fragments,
and the patristic quotations, be used as evidence of the original, second-century *Apocalypse of Peter* as such.


*Slavonic version.*

The possibility of a Slavonic version of the *Apocalypse of Peter* is raised and a reference to a Moscow manuscript which may contain it is given by A. DE SANTOS OTERO, *Die handschriftlichen Überlieferung der altslavischen Apokryphen*, vol. 1 (PTS 20; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1978), p. 212-213, but the existence of such a version has not yet been verified.

2. Secondary Literature.

A detailed history of research on the *Apocalypse of Peter* up to c. 1982 and an exhaustive bibliography up to 1987 will be found in R. BAUCKHAM, «The Apocalypse of Peter: An Account
Recent publications of special importance are:


In a series of articles dealing in whole or in part with the *Apocalypse of Peter* I have treated some of the topics discussed here in more detail and more technically. These articles, together with the present work, are also preparatory work for the edition (with introduction and commentary) of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, by R. BAUCKHAM and P. MARRASSINI, to appear in the *Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum*. The articles are:


