

Introduction

SOCIO-RHETORICAL INTERPRETATION

In this book I will apply the interpretive analytic known as socio-rhetorical interpretation (SRI) to 2 Peter. The form of SRI that I will use has been developed by Vernon K. Robbins and those associated with him. SRI is a multi-dimensional approach to texts. The first significant stage of this approach was set out by Robbins in two books: *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* and *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*. At this stage SRI involved observation and interpretation of five aspects of texts: inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture.

- Inner texture refers to the internal structure of a text, such things as opening-middle-closing, repetitions in the text, progressions, narration, argument, and sensory-aesthetic elements.
- Intertexture is the relationship of the text to things outside itself, the way it incorporates other texts, as well as cultural, social, and historical realities.
- The social and cultural texture of a text consists of its stance toward the culture out of which it arises, its inclusion of cultural values such as honor-shame and purity codes, and its place in its culture.
- Ideological texture “concerns particular alliances and conflicts the language in a text and the language in an interpretation evoke and nurture . . . the way the text itself and interpreters of the text position themselves in relation to other individuals and groups.”¹
- Sacred texture refers to the religious or theological content of a text.

1. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 4.

2 Acknowledging the Divine Benefactor

The great value of SRI in this form is the way it unifies various approaches to the New Testament that are often pursued separately. Each of the items that Robbins calls textures of the text is often pursued on its own. And when any of them is pursued individually, there is at least some tendency to see it as an alternative to other ways of interpreting the text. However, SRI provides a framework within which each of these things has a proper place in developing a complete interpretation of the text.

More recently Robbins has developed SRI in a somewhat different direction that is set forth most completely in the first volume of *The Invention of Christian Discourse*. Beginning with an essay titled “The Dialectical Nature of Early Christian Discourse,” Robbins has proposed that there were six basic kinds of early Christian discourse, which he calls “rhetorolects”: wisdom, miracle, prophetic, precreation, priestly, and apocalyptic. Each of these is a “distinctive configuration of themes, topics, reasonings, and argumentations”² and each blends with the others in early Christian texts.³

These six rhetorolects are a Christian counterpart of the classical division of rhetoric into judicial, deliberative, and epideictic. These three kinds of rhetoric are associated respectively with the courtrooms, political assemblies, and civil ceremonies of Greek and Roman city-states. Partly because these were not the most important social situations for early Christians, they developed forms of rhetoric associated with other social situations, namely, the intersubjective bodies, households, villages, synagogues, cities, temples, kingdoms, and empires in which they lived and which they imagined.

In order to understand fully a classical speech in written form, one must take into account the setting in which it was intended to be delivered. For example, one must realize that a judicial speech was delivered by an advocate in a courtroom. In the same way, one must situate the six rhetorolects in the context for which each was composed. Robbins has proposed the following description of these contexts.

- Wisdom discourse is spoken in the context of the universe understood as a household over which God presides as a father. Through the medium of God’s wisdom, people who are God’s children produce righteous action and speech.
- Miracle discourse arises in a context in which God is understood as the healer, through a bodily agent, of the malfunctioning bodies of

2. Robbins, “Dialectical Nature,” 356.

3. Definitions of the rhetorolects are given in the glossary of Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, xxi–xxx. More detailed discussion of rhetorolects in general can be found on 104–20, 489–517 of the same work. Cf. also Robbins, “Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination.”

individuals and thus as restoring communities to relationships of well-being.

- Prophetic discourse presumes the context of the universe understood as a kingdom of which God is king. Prophets are individuals to whom God's will has been communicated who call people to act righteously through prophetic action and speech.
- Pre-creation discourse presumes the context of the universe seen as an empire of which God is the emperor with an eternal household consisting of his son and others. People can enter into relationship with the emperor through the members of his household.
- Priestly discourse arises in the context of the universe understood as a temple city. Actions in the temple benefit God in a way that activates divine benefits for humans.
- Apocalyptic discourse presumes the context of the universe understood as an empire of which God is the emperor at the head of an army. The divine army will destroy all the evil in the universe and create a state in which the good experience perfect well-being in the presence of God.

These contexts and their elaborations form what Robbins calls the rhetography of the discourse. The argumentation of the discourse forms its rhetology. As Robbins observes, New Testament interpreters have given relatively little attention to its rhetography. Robbins himself has developed the exploration of rhetography by making use of critical spatiality theory and cognitive theory about conceptual blending.⁴ The precise meaning of rhetography is still being clarified.

Some instances of the six rhetorolects are primarily pictorial, i.e., rhetography; this is particularly true of narratives. However, such instances also have an argumentative or persuasive dimension, i.e., rhetology. Other instances of these types of discourse are primarily argumentative. However, such instances also have a pictorial dimension. A still unsettled question is the relationship between the six discourses and the five textures discussed by SRI. In this book I will presume that the five textures mainly contribute either to the rhetography or to the rhetology of the discourses. However, some aspects of these textures may need to be considered separately.

4. This description of the six rhetorolects and of rhetography and rhetology is based on two essays by Robbins: "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation" and "Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text," see also the introduction to Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*. For critical spatiality theory Robbins refers to Gunn and McNutt, "Imagining" *Biblical Worlds* among other works. For conceptual blending theory he refers to Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*.

4 Acknowledging the Divine Benefactor

DISCOURSES IN 2 PETER

The following outline shows the distribution of discourses in 2 Peter and includes a translation of the text.

I. Introducing Prophetic, Apocalyptic, Precreation, Priestly, and Wisdom (1:1–15)

Step 1: Prophetic blended with >	Apocalyptic	Precreation	Priestly blended with Wisdom
Simeon Peter, slave and apostle of Jesus, writes to those who have received faith like his and wishes them well.	Jesus is Christ and savior	Jesus is God	Peter prays that those he addresses will have abundant grace and peace through knowledge of God and Jesus

1:1 Simeon Peter, slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received faith equal in honor to ours by the justice of our God and savior Jesus Christ.

2 May favor and peace be multiplied for you by full knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

Step 2: Prophetic blended with >	Precreation	Priestly	Wisdom	Apocalyptic
<p>Since Jesus' power has given everything needed for life etc., the addressees should supply by their faith, virtue, etc. in order to make a proper return for this gift and continue to receive it until the end</p>	<p>Jesus' power is divine power</p>	<p>The addressees have received what is needed for piety, escape from the corruption in the world, should supply piety etc. and have been cleansed from sin</p>	<p>Jesus' power has provided everything through knowledge; failing to grow in virtue is unfruitfulness; entry into the kingdom will be richly provided</p>	<p>The addressees escape from the world, participate in divine nature, and will enter into the eternal kingdom of the Lord and savior Jesus Christ</p>

3 Since his divine power has given us all things for life and piety through full knowledge of the one who has called us by his glory and virtue, 4 through which [glory and virtue] he has given us the precious and very great promises in order that through these you might become sharers of divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world by desire,

5 therefore, having brought in all eagerness beside, by your faith supply virtue, and by virtue, knowledge, 6 and by knowledge, self-control, and by self-control, endurance, and by endurance, piety, 7 and by piety, brotherly love, and by brotherly love, love.

8 For possessing and exceeding in these things renders you neither idle nor fruitless for full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 For the one in whom these things are not present is blind, nearsighted, having experienced forgetfulness of the cleansing of his past sins.

10 Therefore, brothers, be more eager to make secure your call and election; for doing these things you will never stumble.

11 For in this way entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ will be richly supplied to you.

6 Acknowledging the Divine Benefactor

Step 3: Prophetic blended with >	Miracle	Apocalyptic
Because of the benefits of following the exhortation in 1:3–11, Peter reminds the addressees of these things and arranges for them to be remembered after his death	Jesus has shown Peter that his death is imminent	Jesus is Christ

12 Therefore, I will always remind you about these things, although you know them and are established in the present truth. 13 But I consider it just, while I am in this tent, to arouse you by remembrance, 14 knowing that putting off my tent is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ revealed to me, 15 and I will be eager for you also to be able always to make remembrance of these things after my departure.

II. Blending Apocalyptic with Miracle, Precreation, Priestly, Prophetic, and Wisdom (1:16—3:13)

Step 1: Apocalyptic blended with >	Miracle blended with Precreation	Priestly
Peter and others have made known to the addressees the power and parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ	They have made it known on the basis of witnessing his majesty and hearing a voice from heaven by which the Majestic Glory declared that Jesus is his beloved son	The mountain is holy

16 For it was not having followed cleverly devised myths that we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but having been eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For having received honor and glory from God the father when a voice such as this was borne to him by the magnificent glory: “My son, my beloved, is this one, in whom I am well pleased.” 18 And this voice we heard borne from heaven, being with him on the holy mountain.

Step 2: Prophetic blended with >	Apocalyptic blended with Miracle	Priestly
The prophetic word shows that what Peter and others have made known to the addressees is true	The addressees await the dawn of day and rising of the morning star; false teachers will be destroyed, as can be seen from God's past destruction of wicked and salvation of righteous; the past actions include the flood and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah	Spirit is holy; Jesus is the Master who purchased his followers, probably by means of his death and resurrection; false teachers are impure

19 And we have the more secure prophetic word, which you do well to heed like a lamp shining in a dark place until day dawns and the light-bearer rises, in your hearts 20 first knowing this, that all prophecy of Scripture is not of one's own explanation. 21 For prophecy was never borne by the will of a human being, but being borne by the Holy Spirit human beings spoke from God. 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, as among you there will also be false teachers, who will secretly introduce heresies of destruction, even denying the master who purchased them, bringing on themselves imminent destruction. 2 And many will follow their licentiousnesses, because of whom the way of truth will be slandered. 3 And in their greed they will buy you with counterfeit words, whose judgment long ago is not idle and their destruction does not sleep. 4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned but, having cast them into Tartarus, delivered them to chains of gloom, kept for judgment; 5 and if he did not spare the ancient world but guarded Noah, as an eighth, the herald of justice, having brought a deluge on the world of the impious; 6 and if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, having reduced them to ashes in a catastrophe, having made them an example of the things about to happen to the impious, 7 and he rescued just Lot, worn out by his life amidst the licentiousness of the lawless 8 for by means of seeing and hearing the just man dwelling among them day after day tortured his just soul with respect to their lawless works; 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the pious from trial and how to keep the unjust confined for the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who go after the flesh in desire for defilement and despise dominion.

8 Acknowledging the Divine Benefactor

Step 3: Prophetic blended with >	Apocalyptic	Priestly	Miracle	Wisdom
Peter criticizes the false teachers; they have followed the way of the prophet Balaam	The false teachers will be destroyed; darkness has been reserved for them; Jesus is savior and Christ	The false teachers are corrupt; the addressees have escaped the defilements in the world	Balaam's donkey spoke	One escapes the defilements of the world through knowledge of Jesus Christ

Stubborn bold ones, they do not tremble, slandering the glories, 11 where angels, being greater in strength and power, do not bear against them a slanderous judgment from (the side of) the Lord. 12 But these, like irrational animals begotten naturally for capture and corruption, slandering things of which they are ignorant, will also be corrupted in their corruption, 13 being wronged as the reward of wrongdoing, considering luxuriousness during the day a pleasure, spots and blemishes luxuriating in their deceits while feasting together with you, 14 having eyes full of an adulteress and not ceasing from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, children of a curse. 15 Abandoning the straight way, they have gone astray, having followed in the way of Balaam, son of Bosor, who loved the reward of wrongdoing. 16 And he received a rebuke of his own lawbreaking. A voiceless donkey having spoken with a human's voice prevented the madness of the prophet. 17 These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm for whom the gloom of darkness has been kept. 18 For speaking boastful words of futility they entice with the desires of the flesh, with licentiousnesses, those who are just escaping from the people who live in error, 19 promising them freedom while being themselves slaves of corruption. For by whatever someone has been overcome, to this he has been enslaved. 20 For if, having escaped the defilements of the world by full knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, and again having been implicated in them, people are overcome, for them the last things have become worse than the first. 21 For it was better for them not to have fully known the way of justice than, having fully known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 The meaning of the true proverb has applied to them: a dog having turned back to his own vomit, and a sow, having been washed, to wallowing in the mud.

Step 4: Prophetic blended with >	Wisdom	Apocalyptic	Priestly	Miracle
Peter restates the occasion of the letter and resumes replying to opponents after the digression of 2:10b-22	Occasion is reminding addressees of beneficial knowledge	Jesus is savior; scoffers will appear in the last days doubting the promise of Jesus' parousia; day of judgment will lead to a new heaven and earth	The addressees should be sincere etc.; the scoffers indulge their own lusts etc.	The flood is a precedent for the day of judgment

3:1 Beloved, I now write this second letter to you, in which I arouse in your remembrance the pure understanding 2 to remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of your apostles of our Lord and savior, 3 first knowing this, that in the last days scoffers will come with scoffing, going according to their own desires 4 and saying: "Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers have fallen asleep all things continue thus from the beginning of creation." 5 For it escapes the notice of those maintaining this that there were heavens long ago and an earth constituted from water and through water by the word of God, 6 through which [water and word] the world of that time was destroyed, having been deluged with water. 7 And the present heavens and the earth are treasured up by the same word, kept for fire on the day of judgment and destruction of impious human beings. 8 And let this one thing not escape your notice, beloved, that one day with the Lord is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. 9 For the Lord of the promise does not delay, as some consider delay, but he is patient toward you, not wishing that any be destroyed, but that all come to repentance. 10 And the day of the Lord will come like a thief, on which the heavens will pass away with a rushing noise, and the elements, set on fire, will be dissolved, and the earth and the works on it will be discovered. 11 Since all these things will thus be dissolved, what sort of people is it necessary that you be with holy lives and pieties, 12 awaiting and eagerly seeking the coming of the day of God on account of which the heavens, burning, will be dissolved and the elements, set on fire, are melted. 13 And we await new heavens and a new earth according to his promise, in which justice dwells.

III. Concluding with Prophetic blended with Apocalyptic, Priestly, and Wisdom (3:14–18)

Prophetic blended with >	Apocalyptic	Priestly	Wisdom
The addressees should strive to be found at peace, not be carried away with the error of the lawless, and grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus	They should do so on the basis of the expectations stated in 3:3–13, regard the patience of the Lord as salvation, and await the day of eternity	It should take the form of being without spot or blemish; prayer of praise	This is in accord with the wisdom of Paul; addressees should avoid error and seek knowledge

14 Therefore, beloved, awaiting these things, be eager to be discovered by him spotless and unblemished in peace. 15 And consider the patience of our Lord salvation, as also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him, 16 so also in all his letters speaking in them about these things, in which [letters] there are some things hard to understand which the ignorant and unstable twist, as they also do the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. 17 Therefore you, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, be on guard in order that you may not fall away from your own firm footing, having been led astray by the error of the lawless. 18 But grow in favor and knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and into the day of eternity. Amen



As I discuss each section of the text, I will begin with a description of the passage’s rhetography, i.e., the way it evokes and elaborates the contexts associated with these discourses. I will then analyze the interweaving of the five textures in the passage—inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture—showing how each contributes to the passage’s rhetography and rhetology, i.e., its persuasive impact on those to whom it is addressed. I will conclude by discussing the rhetorical force of the passage.

Some aspects of 2 Peter’s rhetography, rhetology, and texture can be seen more clearly and satisfactorily when considering 2 Peter as a whole rather than section by section. An overview of these aspects follows.

RHETOGRAPHY AND RHETOLOGY

Literary Form

The most basic rhetography of 2 Peter is evoked by the literary form of the document. Second Peter is a letter. It begins with a letter salutation (1:1–2) that is very similar to the salutations of other New Testament letters (see discussion of 1:1–2 below). The author of 2 Peter explicitly calls his composition a letter in 3:1.

Second Peter also has the form of a testament. This is a characteristically Jewish literary form in which a notable person, shortly before his death, bids farewell to his associates, giving them ethical advice and/or revelations about the future to guide them after his death. Commentators since Hans Windisch have generally agreed that 2 Peter should be seen as an example of a testament.⁵ Richard J. Bauckham develops this understanding of 2 Peter at greatest length.⁶ The testamentary character of 2 Peter is clearest in 1:12–15, where Peter refers to his imminent death and says that his purpose in writing is to continue reminding the addressees about his teaching after he dies. It is also clear in 2:1–3 and 3:1–4 where Peter predicts the rise of false teachers.⁷ The best-known example of the testament is the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. The best example of a testament in letter form is 2 *Baruch* 78–86;⁸ 2 Timothy is another possible example.⁹

Recognition of 2 Peter as a testamentary letter evokes the mental picture of Peter as writing the letter before his death to provide instruction for those who lived after him. A usual feature of testaments is that they are

5. Windisch, *Die Katholischen Briefe*, 87–88; see also Schelkle, *Die Petrusbriefe*, 181; Reicke, *James, Peter and Jude*, 146; Spicq, *Épîtres de Saint Pierre*, 193–94; Kelly, *Peter and Jude*, 311; Grundmann, *Brief des Judas und zweite Brief des Petrus*, 55–58; Knoch, *Erste und Zweite Petrusbrief*, 200–202; Paulsen, *Zweite Petrusbrief*, 89–90; Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 163–64; Vögtle, *Der Judasbrief/Der 2. Petrusbrief*, 122. Harrington, “Jude and 2 Peter,” 229. Green (*Second Epistle General of Peter*, 36–38), Davids (*2 Peter and Jude*, 148–49), Green (*Jude & 2 Peter*, 164–67), and Harvey and Towner (*2 Peter & Jude*, 10–11) are not convinced; Charles (*Virtue Amidst Vice*, 49–75) also argues against identification of 2 Peter as a testament.

6. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 131–35; “2 Peter,” 3734–35.

7. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 132.

8. *Ibid.*, 133.

9. Luke T. Johnson argues that 2 Timothy is not a testament, but perhaps mainly to evade the implications of this for the authenticity of 2 Timothy (*First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 320–24). On the other hand Raymond F. Collins (*1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 182–85) and Benjamin Fiore (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 8–9) regard 2 Timothy as a testament.

12 Acknowledging the Divine Benefactor

pseudonymous.¹⁰ The twelve sons of Jacob were not the actual authors of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, nor was Baruch, Jeremiah's secretary, author of the testamentary letter of Baruch. Thus the mental picture evoked by recognition of 2 Peter as a testamentary letter probably includes awareness that someone other than Peter has presented his message as a testamentary letter from Peter.

In evoking the picture of Peter as writing a testamentary letter, 2 Peter calls to mind the image of Peter as functioning like a prophet as he brings the addressees a challenging message from God. Because this message includes prediction of the eschaton and a call to live in its light, 2 Peter also evokes the image of Peter as an apocalyptic visionary who reveals the divine plan for the world.

This rhetographical frame for 2 Peter as a whole has rhetorical implications. Presentation of 2 Peter's message as deriving from Peter, slave and apostle of Jesus Christ and a principal leader of the Christian church, implies that it is authoritative and should be followed. Second Peter carries the authority of prophecy and of apocalyptic revelation.



Within the rhetographical and rhetorical frame established by the form of the testamentary letter (found especially in 1:1–2, 12–15; 3:1), 2 Peter displays additional rhetography and rhetoric. The main features of this can be summarized as follows:

- 1:3–11 is patterned on a decree honoring a benefactor. Insofar as this section is perceived as resembling a decree, it evokes the mental image of Peter as acting like a civic leader or member of a club who proposes that the addressees honor Jesus for his benefactions by living virtuously. In this highly argumentative section, rhetoric is more prominent than rhetography. However, in the latter part of this section (vv. 8–11) the author's arguments make use of vivid pictures.
- 1:16–2:10a constitutes two arguments that Jesus will come again and are thus basically rhetorical. However, the arguments are highly rhetographical. They involve telling the story of Jesus' transfiguration in 1:16–18, painting a vivid picture of prophecy as a light that shines in darkness until day dawns in 1:19, describing future false teachers in 2:1–3, and briefly telling three stories of God's past punishment of evildoers and rescue of the upright in 2:4–8.

10. Bauckham *Jude, 2 Peter*, 134.

- 2:10b–17 continues the denunciation of the false teachers begun in 2:1–3. As is true in the latter passage, the denunciation in 2:10b–17 presents vivid pictures of the false teachers’ multifarious misbehavior.
- 2:18–22 argues that the views of the false teachers are destructive both for those who follow them and for the false teachers themselves. This is another basically rhetological section whose arguments are rhetographical, vividly picturing the false teachers as enticing those who follow them, and describing these followers and the false teachers as slaves of corruption and behaving like dogs and pigs.
- 3:3–4 describes future scoffers who are probably identical to the false teachers described earlier. Their speech is quoted, evoking them clearly.
- 3:5–13 continues the argument that Jesus will come again and is thus basically rhetological. But as often in 2 Peter the argument is very rhetographical, briefly describing the creation of the world, its destruction by the flood, God’s relationship to time, God’s patience, and the future destruction of the present world by fire and its replacement by new heavens and earth.
- 3:14–18 concludes 2 Peter by repeating briefly the main points made earlier. Like much of 2 Peter it is basically rhetological, but depends on rhetography for the force of its argumentation.

These and other aspects of the rhetography and rhetology of 2 Peter are examined further in the discussion of its sacred texture below.

Inner texture

Much of the inner texture of 2 Peter is best seen in considering each passage. However, one element of its sensory-aesthetic texture, namely its style, benefits from summary overview. This and other aspects of the rhetoric of 2 Peter have been thoroughly explored by Duane F. Watson in *Invention, Arrangement and Style*.

The Style of 2 Peter

The style of a composition can be considered from two perspectives: vocabulary and syntax. Rare words, new coinages, and metaphors and other tropes are ways to ornament vocabulary. Avoiding hiatus of vowels and harsh clash of consonants, using rhythm, and using figures of speech and

thought are ways to ornament syntax. Using the period, a sentence the completion of whose sense is suspended until the end, is another way to make syntax ornate. Compositions are said to exhibit grand, middle, or plain style depending mainly on the quantity and quality of ornament.

The style of 2 Peter is striking. Second Peter frequently repeats words. It also uses many words not found elsewhere in the New Testament. According to Bauckham, 2 Peter contains fifty-seven such words. Twenty-five of these words are found in the Septuagint; another seventeen are found in other contemporary Jewish literature; and one more is found in the Apostolic Fathers. Most of the remaining fourteen words are very rare; two of them are not found anywhere else in Greek literature: *παραφρονίαν* (madness) in 2:16 and *ἐμπαυμονῆ* (scoffing) in 3:3.¹¹

According to Bauckham, “The incidence of rare words is part of a general impression 2 Peter gives of aiming at ambitious literary effect.”¹² Other things that give this impression, according to Bauckham, are the author’s characteristic use of pairs of synonyms and the already noted repetition of words. The complex sentences found in 1:3–7 and 2:4–10a, the many figures of speech used in 2 Peter, especially the ladder of virtues in 1:5–7 and the image in 1:19, and the poetic rhythm found in parts of 2 Peter are other indications of 2 Peter’s literary ambition.

Second Peter is written in grand style. The poetic rhythm of 2 Peter (and some of the other features mentioned above) probably manifests the author’s attempt to write in the Asian style.¹³ This was one of the two principal varieties of Greek prose style in the rhetorical schools of the Hellenistic and Roman periods; the other was the Attic style. Unfortunately, few examples of Asianism survive, and we derive our understanding of it largely from those who criticized it.

Just as Asianism was criticized in its own time, many today do not find the style of 2 Peter appealing. However, if 2 Peter is written in this style, its author’s literary aspirations are clear. Bo Reicke compares it to European art and literature of the baroque period; this parallel may help us be more appreciative of the style of 2 Peter.¹⁴

Following Cicero, Eduard Norden described two kinds of Asianism: the delicate and the bombastic. The delicate Asian style was characterized by 1) replacement of the period with short, choppy sentences; 2) each of

11. *Ibid.*, 135–36.

12. *Ibid.*, 137.

13. Reicke, *James, Peter and Jude*, 146–47; Kelly, *Peter and Jude*, 228; Bauckham *Jude, 2 Peter*, 137; Watson, *Invention*, 145–46; Callan, “Style of the Second Letter of Peter.”

14. Reicke, *James, Peter and Jude*, 146–47.

which had a marked rhythm; and 3) unusual usage, e.g., nonsensical metaphors and absurd paraphrases. The bombastic style shared the second and third characteristics with the delicate style, but used long instead of short sentences.¹⁵

Reicke describes the second kind of Asianism as “characterized by a loaded, verbose, high-sounding manner of expression leaning toward the novel and bizarre, and careless about violating classic ideals of simplicity.”¹⁶ This is the kind of Asianism that 2 Peter represents. The attempt to write in this style accounts for all the features of 2 Peter mentioned above: unusual vocabulary; figures of speech, including use of synonyms and repetition of words; complex sentences; and rhythm.

The grand style of 2 Peter implies that the author sees himself as expressing powerful and impressive thoughts and that the author is attempting primarily to appeal to the emotions of the addressees, rather than to inform or please them. Writing in the Asian style implies that the author stood outside the mainstream of literary development in the first and second centuries. It would have been possible to write in this style anywhere, even in Rome. The Asian style may imply, however, that 2 Peter was not written in a cultural center, but rather somewhere like Commagene, the location of the Nemrud Dagh inscription that 2 Peter resembles stylistically. The style of 2 Peter makes it likely that its author had received higher education in rhetoric.¹⁷

The style of 2 Peter serves the general purposes just mentioned, i.e., making his communication impressive and emotionally appealing. Many elements of its style also serve more specific purposes, namely contributing to the mental images the letter evokes or making it more persuasive. I will mention instances of both where they occur.

Intertexture

The oral-scribal intertexture of 2 Peter, i.e., the way it incorporates other texts, is notably complex. Several times 2 Peter quotes from another text, either reproducing its exact words, or reproducing its exact words with one or more differences. We find the following instances of this kind of recitation in 2 Peter:

1:2a = 1 Pet 1:2a

15. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa*, 134–47.

16. Reicke, *James, Peter and Jude*, 147.

17. Callan, “Style of the Second Letter of Peter.”

16 Acknowledging the Divine Benefactor

- 1:17b = Matt 17:5 with differences
- 2:17b = Jude 13b with one difference
- 2:20b = Matt 12:45/Luke 11:26 with one difference
- 2:21 = Job 24:13 with differences
- 3:2 = Jude 17 with several changes
- 3:8b = Ps 90:4 (LXX 89:4) with several changes
- 3:10a = 1 Thess 5:2
- 3:13a = Isa 65:17; 66:22 with several changes

Second Peter 2:22 is a recitation of a saying using words different from the authoritative source. The verse cites a double proverb. The first part comes from Prov 26:11; the second part seems to come from *The Story of Ahikar* 8:15/18. Bauckham thinks Hellenistic Jews may have combined the two before they were incorporated into 2 Peter.¹⁸

Second Peter includes several recitations of a text in substantially the author's own words:

- 1:14 may be such a recitation of John 21:18–19
- 1:16–18 may be such a recitation of Matt 17:1–8; as noted above 1:17b reproduces the exact words of Matt 17:5 with some differences
- 2:15–16 is a recitation of Num 22, perhaps as interpreted in targums
- 3:1–2 is probably such a recitation of 1 Peter
- 3:15–16 is a recitation of the letters of Paul

Second Peter also includes recitations that summarize a span of text that includes various episodes:

- 2:4–8 summarizes Gen 6:1–19:29
- 3:5–6 summarizes Gen 1–7

In all but the first two cases where 2 Peter recites the exact words of a source, 2 Peter also recontextualizes these words. In addition to this, in 2:1–3:3 2 Peter completely recontextualizes Jude 4–18.¹⁹ This is the most significant literary relationship between 2 Peter and another text.

18. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 273.

19. On this see Callan, "Use of the Letter of Jude." See also Mayor, *Second Epistle of St. Peter*, xxi–xxv; Chaine, *Les Épitres Catholiques*, 18–24; Windisch, *Katholischen Briefe*, 91–92; Schelkle, *Die Petrusbriefe*, 138–39; Sidebottom, *James, Jude, and 2 Peter*,

Second Peter's use of Jude can be described as a rather free paraphrase.²⁰ Beginning with the written text of Jude, the author of 2 Peter rewrote Jude, using much of Jude's language, but avoiding direct quotation. The procedure was similar to that used by the author of a work like the one you are now reading who paraphrases the work of others in developing his own presentation. Bauckham says, "This dependence is never slavish. The author takes what he wants from Jude, whether ideas or words, and uses it in a composition that is very much his own."²¹ "It is characteristic of our author's use of Jude that he gets an idea from Jude and then gives it a fresh twist or development of his own."²² Gene L. Green characterizes 2 Peter's use of Jude as *imitatio*.²³

In addition to these recitations, commentators have proposed that 2 Peter alludes to other texts. These suggested allusions include the following:

1:17 might allude to Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1

1:19 might allude to Num 24:17

3:9 might allude to Hab 2:3; 3:10, 12; Mal 3:19 + Isa 34:4

Some of these possibilities are discussed at appropriate places below.

To summarize, 2 Peter is related to the following writings of the Old Testament—Genesis, Numbers, Isaiah, Proverbs, and Psalms—and the following writings of what is now the New Testament—Matthew, possibly John, 1 Thessalonians and the letters of Paul in general, 1 Peter, and Jude. At the appropriate points, I will discuss these relationships in more detail. The author knows and uses much of what is now the Christian bible. He does not take over from Jude the quotation of 1 Enoch in Jude 14–15 or Jude's

68–69; Kelly, *Peter and Jude*, 226–27; Grundmann, *Brief des Judas und zweite Brief des Petrus*, 102–7; Knoch, *Erste und Zweite Petrusbrief*, 205–6; Senior, *1 and 2 Peter*, 102; Bauckham *Jude, 2 Peter*, 142–43; Bauckham, "2 Peter," 3714–16; Watson, *Invention*, 160–87; Paulsen, *Zweite Petrusbrief*, 97–100; Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 122; Vögtle, *Der Judasbrief/Der 2. Petrusbrief*, 122–23; Perkins, *First and Second Peter*, 178; Gilmour, *Significance of Parallels*, 90–91, 120; Harrington, "Jude and 2 Peter," 232–33; Davids, *2 Peter and Jude*, 136–43; Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, 159–62. Bigg argues that Jude depends on 2 Peter (*St. Peter and St. Jude*, 216–24); so also Wohlenberg (*Der erste und zweite Petrusbrief*, xli–iii) and Moo (*2 Peter and Jude*, 16–18). Lapham argues that in the process of transmission both 2 Peter and Jude have undergone redactive cross-interpolation ("Second Epistle of Peter," 152–54, 157).

20. Sidebottom, *James, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 95, 112.

21. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 236.

22. *Ibid.*, 260.

23. Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, 161–62; see also his essay "Second Peter's Use of Jude: *Imitatio* and the Sociology of Early Christianity," 1–25.

possible allusion to the *Assumption of Moses* in Jude 9. Perhaps he purposely avoids referring to these texts that are not now authoritative for Christians.

Social and Cultural Texture

The presence of common social and cultural topics in 2 Peter is best seen in the discussion of each section. Jerome H. Neyrey's Anchor Bible commentary on 2 Peter thoroughly explores this aspect of 2 Peter.

Second Peter's basic relationship to the world can be seen as what Robbins, following Bryan Wilson, calls revolutionist, the idea that the world is so thoroughly bad that supernatural powers must destroy it in order to set people free from it.²⁴ This is the apocalyptic outlook that is fundamental to 2 Peter. One of 2 Peter's main themes is defense of the apocalyptic expectation of Jesus' second coming from those who doubt or deny it. When Jesus comes again, this world will be destroyed and replaced by a new heaven and earth (3:1–13).

Subordinate to this, but very prominent in 2 Peter, is what Robbins calls the introversionist response to the world, i.e., withdrawing from it. Because this world is irredeemably evil and destined to be replaced by a new world, it is necessary to keep oneself separate from this world now, as one awaits the coming of the end of this world and the beginning of the new world. As it is found in 2 Peter, this introversionist response is another aspect of apocalyptic thought. Thus, 2 Pet 1:4 describes the addressees as ones who have escaped from the corruption in the world by desire, and much of the letter is devoted to ethical instruction. 2:20–21 makes it clear that full knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of Jesus is the means by which one escapes the pollutions of the world.

The emphasis on full knowledge, which is found throughout 2 Peter, points to a third response to the world in 2 Peter. Robbins calls this gnostic-manipulationist, i.e., the view that one can learn how to overcome the evil in the world. However, in 2 Peter gnostic-manipulationist language is subordinate to introversionist and revolutionist language. In the final analysis, what one needs to know is that it is necessary to live virtuously as one awaits the second coming of Jesus.

The discourse in 2 Peter, principally in its expectation of the return of Jesus and call for virtuous life in preparation for it, seems to be a subculture of apocalyptic Judaism, but countercultural with respect to Greco-Roman culture in general and likewise with respect to those Christians against whom it argues.

24. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 72–74.

Ideological Texture

I begin by acknowledging some of my own beliefs, assumptions and values as an interpreter of 2 Peter. I am a Roman Catholic who believes that 2 Peter is part of the inspired word of God found in the Bible. I regard this inspired word of God, however, as communicated by means of fully human words. Thus in order to gain access to the word of God, it is necessary to interpret the Bible in the same way one would interpret any human writing. Whatever means we can use to interpret any writing can also be used to interpret the Bible. Reading the Bible and reading other writings are methodologically the same; they differ only in their results. When we have read other writings, we understand only what their human authors have expressed; when we read the Bible, we understand what its human authors have expressed, but also what God has revealed through them.

Because the Bible is the word of God in human words, it is also subject to the limitations of human beings. The limited knowledge of the human authors is reflected in the biblical texts. It is impossible to say beforehand where these limitations are found. When they are discovered, I conclude that this was not the inspired communication of God.

As I have already said above, in this book I approach 2 Peter using socio-rhetorical interpretation. This combines many of the approaches to biblical interpretation currently used by academic biblical scholars. One reason I find this interpretive approach attractive is that it attempts to unify the somewhat fragmented field of academic biblical studies. I agree with the presupposition of socio-rhetorical interpretation that all of these approaches make a contribution to a complete interpretation of a text. Perhaps this partly reflects a Catholic impulse on my part toward inclusion rather than exclusion.

Second Peter probably reflects conflict between Christian groups who claim to embody the authentic faith of Jesus and the apostles. The author of 2 Peter explicitly claims the authenticity of his teaching and rejects the views of others (see 1:16; 3:1–4). His opponents, the “false teachers” (2:1), probably also claim to embody authentic Christianity. From 2 Peter’s arguments against them, we can see that they held different views than the author did about eschatology and ethics. The author does not present their rationale for these views, but it seems likely that the “false teachers” regarded them as authentically Christian.

Many interpreters have seen 2 Peter as an expression of an ideology, or theological outlook, they call “early Catholicism.” Protestants use this as a pejorative term to designate theological positions rejected by the Protestant Reformation. Ernst Käsemann is the most prominent Protestant interpreter

who has criticized 2 Peter as the expression of an early Catholic viewpoint,²⁵ but many others have followed him in this. Catholics evaluate the same theological outlook differently, understanding it as a legitimate development of Christian theology.²⁶ Because one's confessional stance determines the meaning of "early Catholicism," it is not a helpful exegetical category.

"Early Catholicism" is also an unsatisfactory category because its content is rather vague. According to Bauckham, following J. D. G. Dunn, early Catholicism has three main characteristics: 1) fading of hope for Jesus' parousia, 2) increasing institutionalization, and 3) crystallization of the faith into set forms.²⁷ Bauckham argues, correctly I think, that these characteristics are not found in 2 Peter.²⁸ More specifically Bauckham argues that 2 Peter expresses hope for the imminent arrival of the parousia and does not insist on formal creedal orthodoxy. The only manifestation of institutionalization in 2 Peter is its emphasis on the role of the apostle and particularly that of Peter. This is rather slight evidence of institutionalization. Thus even if "early Catholicism" were a more satisfactory characterization of a particular theological position, it would not be accurate to describe the theology of 2 Peter as early Catholic.

Obviously my own individual location and my use of the socio-rhetorical mode of discourse underlie my whole discussion of 2 Peter. In the course of this discussion, I will call attention to the ways 2 Peter shows its origin in conflict between Christian groups and itself participates in that conflict. The main way I will take account of the ideological texture of 2 Peter is by discussing its sacred texture. The sacred texture of 2 Peter reflects the belief system of its author and thus can be seen as the sphere of ideology within which he writes.²⁹

25. Käsemann, "Apologia," 169.

26. See Schelkle, *Die Petrusbriefe*, 241–45; Knoch, *Erste und Zweite Petrusbrief*, 226–27.

27. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 8.

28. *Ibid.*, 151–54; Bauckham, "2 Peter," 3728–34. Charles (*Virtue Amidst Vice*, 11–37) also argues against application of the category "early Catholicism" to 2 Peter.

29. Further insight into current discussion of ideological texture in SRI can be found especially in the essays by Kloppenborg, Gowler, Bloomquist, Wanamaker, Sisson, Wachob, and Braun in Gowler, Bloomquist, and Watson, *Fabrics of Discourse*.

Sacred Texture

Theology and Theography

Second Peter uses the word *θεός* (god) seven times. These seven uses of *θεός* present the following picture of God:

- there were of old heavens and earth created by the word of God (3:5). Second Peter does not say explicitly that God created the present heavens and earth, but this can probably be assumed.
- God did not spare the angels who sinned, but sent them to Tartarus (2:4)
- God did not spare the ancient world (cf. 3:6), but preserved Noah (2:5)
- God condemned Sodom and Gomorrah, reducing them to ashes and establishing them as a sign of what will happen to the ungodly (2:6), but saved Lot (2:7–8)
- the prophets were men who spoke from God (1:21)
- God the father gave Jesus honor and glory when a voice was conveyed to him by the majestic glory, “My son, my beloved, is this one, in whom I am well pleased” (1:17).
- the present heavens and earth have been treasured up by the word of God for fire on the day of judgment (3:7); this is also the day of God (3:12).
- the justice of God is the source of the addressees’ faith (1:1)
- full knowledge of God (and of Jesus) is the source of increasing grace and peace for the addressees (1:2)

The six occurrences of *κύριος* (lord) that probably refer to God add the following items to the depiction of God in 2 Peter:

- God knows how to save the pious and punish the wicked (2:9), a general conclusion from the specific cases mentioned in 2:4–8
- time is different for God than for humans (3:8)
- God is not slow to keep the promise of Jesus’ return and all that will accompany it, but is patient, wanting all to repent (3:9,15)

Although 2 Peter’s presentation of God is clearly drawn from the Hebrew Scriptures, the author does not say anything about God’s election of, and subsequent dealings with, Israel. Second Peter presents God as God of the whole world and has little to say about the relationship of God to Israel. This probably indicates that the author writes for Gentiles, for whom God’s

22 Acknowledging the Divine Benefactor

dealing with people in general is more meaningful than is God's involvement with Israel.

It is noteworthy that 2 Peter often avoids making "God" the subject of sentences. The main exception to this is 2:4–8, where the author speaks about God's punishment of sinners and salvation of the righteous. Elsewhere the author is respectfully indirect, making "God" the object of a preposition to indicate that God is the source of something (1:17, 21), or putting "God" in the genitive case (1:1, 2; 3:12). The author also refers to God by speaking of the majestic glory (1:17) and the word of God (3:5).

Even more striking is the emphasis on the word of God in 2 Peter's references to God. This is explicit in the statements, mentioned above, that God created the first heavens and earth by the word, then destroyed them through the word, and has treasured up the present heavens and earth for destruction by the same word.³⁰ It is implicit in the statement that prophets spoke from God, i.e., they spoke the word of God, and in the story of the transfiguration, when God spoke words concerning Jesus. It may also be implicit in the examples of God's saving the pious and punishing the wicked that are cited in 2:4–8, if they are seen as examples of prophecy that point to the end of the world.

The author of 2 Peter does not attempt to describe God directly, even in the circumspect way this is done in a passage like Rev 4. However, much of the author's discourse about God consists of description of God's activity rather than reasoning about God and is thus theography rather than theology in a strict sense. The author's assertion that the faith of the addressees derives from the justice of God (1:1); his prayer that their grace and peace will increase through full knowledge of God and Jesus (1:2); and most of all his arguments that time is different for God than for humans (3:8) and is patient (3:9) are theological in a strict sense. But everything else the author says about God pictures God's activity and is thus theography. As is evident from the lists at the beginning of this section, the theography of 2 Peter presents a story of God's activity from the beginning to the end of the world.³¹

The most vivid descriptions of God's activity occur in 1:16–18 and 2:4–10a. 1:16–18 describes an occasion when God the father gave honor and glory to Jesus. This is simultaneously theography and Christography, a graphic depiction of Christ. 2:4–10a describes occasions when God punished the wicked and rescued the pious in the past, and argues that God will

30. Reicke, *James, Peter and Jude*, 175.

31. On narrative in 2 Peter see Reese, "Narrative Method and the Second Epistle of Peter."

do the same in the future. This is simultaneously theography and eschatography, a graphic depiction of the end times.³²

Christology and Christography

In the first verse of the letter, the author of 2 Peter calls Jesus God. He says that the readers have received faith by the justice τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (of our God and savior Jesus Christ). Because there is only one article, the phrase probably refers to Jesus as both God and savior (see the discussion of this verse below).

This is the only place where 2 Peter explicitly calls Jesus God. However, other things 2 Peter says about Jesus more or less clearly imply this same understanding. One of the clearest instances is 1:3 where the author of 2 Peter speaks of τῆς θείας δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ (his divine power), and the antecedent of αὐτοῦ (his) is probably Jesus, the last named substantive (in v. 2). Because the author of 2 Peter sees Jesus as God, he also believes that Jesus possesses divine power.³³ Another clear instance is 1:4 where the author of 2 Peter says that those he addresses are destined to become θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως (sharers of divine nature). If divinity is the destiny of those who follow Jesus, Jesus himself is surely divine.

The view that Jesus is divine is probably also implied by 2 Peter's use of κύριος (lord) as a title both for Jesus and for God. In itself "Lord" does not imply divinity. Use of this title indicates a relationship between the one who uses the title, and the one to whom it is applied. Calling someone "Lord" indicates recognition of that person as a superior to whom one gives respect, and even obedience. "Lord" was widely used as a title for God, but also as a title for any other superior (see discussion of 1:2 below). Nevertheless, 2 Peter's use of the title both for Jesus and for God suggests that they are Lord in the same sense of the word, as does the ambiguity of some of 2 Peter's uses of the title; at times it is not clear whether the title refers to Jesus or to God.

Second Peter uses the title "Lord" fourteen times. Seven times Jesus is explicitly said to be the Lord (1:2,8,11,14,16; 2:20; 3:18). In addition, the Lord and savior in 3:2 is very likely to be Jesus; elsewhere in 2 Peter Jesus is explicitly said to be the Lord and savior (1:11; 2:20; 3:18) or God and savior (1:1). The remaining six occurrences of "Lord" probably refer to God and have been discussed above in connection with 2 Peter's theology.

32. On the terminology "theography," "Christography" and "eschatography" see Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 86–88.

33. Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, 253.

Other passages also imply the divinity of Jesus. In 1:16 the author of 2 Peter says that he and others were eyewitnesses (*ἐπόπτται*) of Jesus' majesty. Since this term was used to designate the highest level of initiate into the Eleusinian mysteries, it implies that the vision of Jesus transfigured was comparable to that. And if the highest level of initiation involved a vision of the goddess,³⁴ the word may also suggest that the transfiguration was a vision of Jesus' divinity.

The transfiguration was an occasion on which God, the *μεγαλοπρεποῦς δόξης* (magnificent glory), gave *τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν* (honor and glory) to Jesus. This suggests that Jesus' glory is the same as God's and that Jesus is divine. (This may also be implied by 2:10; see discussion of this passage below.) Thus in 3:18 the author of 2 Peter praises Jesus with the kind of doxology usually reserved for God. According to Bauckham, the phrase *δόξῃ καὶ ἀρετῇ* (glory and virtue) in 1:3 is synonymous with divine power.³⁵

The description of Jesus in 2:1 as the master who has purchased his followers might allude to the practice of sacral manumission at Delphi.³⁶ This involved sale of slaves to a god in order to free them. If this is what the author of 2 Peter has in mind, he thinks of those purchased by Jesus as effectively freed, and only nominally transferred to another owner. This would be another instance of 2 Peter's presentation of Jesus as divine.

Although 2 Peter calls Jesus God and consistently presents him as divine, God and Jesus are clearly distinguished in 2 Peter. They are first distinguished from one another in 1:2, where the author wishes that peace might be multiplied for the readers by the knowledge of both God and Jesus our Lord. Because this phrase closely follows and parallels the phrase in 1:1 that refers to Jesus as God, it is sometimes used to argue that Jesus is not being called God in 1:1.³⁷ However, we see a similar alternation between identifying Jesus with, and distinguishing him from, God in the first verses of the gospel according to John. In John 1:1–2 the author first says that the Word was with God, then that the Word was God, then (again) that the Word was with God.³⁸ It seems most likely that both 2 Peter and John consciously intend to identify Jesus with God and to distinguish him from God.

34. Fornberg, *Early Church*, 123.

35. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 179.

36. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 191–92. According to Dale B. Martin, however, this thesis, first proposed by Deissmann, is now generally rejected because of differences in terminology between the inscriptions that speak of sacral manumission and the New Testament (*Slavery as Salvation*, xvi).

37. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 148.

38. Harris, *Jesus as God*, 275. Another parallel to the way 2 Peter both identifies Jesus with, and distinguishes him from, God may be seen in 2 Peter's one reference to

Second Peter sees Jesus as God, yet distinct from God. How can this be? Despite the emphasis on the word of God noted above, the author of 2 Peter does not explain the relationship between Jesus and God by saying that Jesus is the Word of God. The gospel of John first proposed this explanation, and it has been very important in subsequent Christian theology. However, 2 Peter does not seem to identify Jesus and the word of God.

Second Peter offers some explanation of the relationship between Jesus and God by saying that Jesus is the Son of God. This occurs in 1:16–18, 2 Peter’s account of the transfiguration. In v. 17 the author says that Jesus received *τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν* (honor and glory) from God the Father and that a voice was conveyed to him from the *μεγαλοπρεποῦς δόξης* (magnificent glory) saying, “My son, my beloved, is this one, in whom I am well pleased.” In the Hebrew Scriptures “son of God” does not imply a special ontological relationship with God. In the Hellenistic world, however, “son of God” designated divinities who were seen as literal offspring of the gods (see discussion of 1:16–18 below). Since 2 Peter regards Jesus as God, it is very likely that 2 Peter understands the phrase on Hellenistic lines. This would be consistent with the presentation of Jesus as God, yet distinct from God described above. Jesus is God in the sense that he was revealed to be son of God at his transfiguration. He is distinct from God because he is the son, not God himself.

As is clear from the foregoing discussion, the author of 2 Peter has a very exalted understanding of Jesus. This understanding is mainly conveyed by simple assertion, e.g., the references to “our God and savior Jesus Christ” (1:1) and to “his divine power” (1:3), and by implication, e.g., the doxology with which the letter ends (3:18). This understanding is developed further by speaking of things Jesus has done, e.g., giving the addressees faith (1:1) and all things for life and piety (1:3). Presumably the author and addressees have some shared understanding of exactly how and when Jesus did these things, but this understanding is not expressed in 2 Peter. All of this is christological in the strict sense.

1:16–18, however, is a vivid portrayal of Jesus’ relationship to God that constitutes Christography rather than Christology, just as it is also theography rather than theology. This passage describes an occasion when God who is glory gave glory to Jesus, when God the father identified Jesus as his son. This has implications for understanding the nature of God and Jesus, i.e., theology and Christology, that I have discussed above. What the

the Holy Spirit. In 1:21 the author says that in prophecy, “moved by the Holy Spirit men spoke from God.” Prophecy is said to derive both from the Holy Spirit and from God. This suggests an identity between the two, but the use of two different names suggests that they are distinct.

author presents explicitly, however, is a story, a narrative about God and Jesus, rather than reasoning about them. This story evokes in the minds of the addressees a picture of the event narrated and is thus Christography. The author connects the story of this past event to the future coming of Jesus, but does not explicate the connection.

Another vivid portrayal of Jesus in 2 Peter is the reference in 2:1 to Jesus as the master who has purchased his followers. This is simultaneously Christography and soteriology, a graphic depiction of the way Jesus functions as savior.

Soteriology and Soteriology

The author of 2 Peter explicitly calls Jesus savior four times³⁹ and probably refers to Jesus when he speaks of the savior a fifth time in 3:2. This is the principal role played by Jesus in the letter. It is implicit in the designation of Jesus as Christ, i.e., Messiah,⁴⁰ though there is no indication that the author of 2 Peter is aware of this; he seems to use Christ simply as a name for Jesus. The designation of Jesus as Lord is also related to the presentation of Jesus as savior. This is suggested by the linking of the titles “Lord” and “savior” in several passages.⁴¹ It is most explicit in 2:1 where Jesus is described as the master having bought the false teachers opposed by 2 Peter (τὸν ἀγοράσαντα αὐτοὺς δεσπότην—the master who purchased them); “master” is a synonym for “Lord.”

Such assertions that Jesus is savior constitute soteriology in the strict sense. However, the description of Jesus as the master who bought the false teachers, and presumably all Christians, is soteriology, a graphic portrayal of the way Jesus saves, i.e., by purchasing his followers from those to whom they are enslaved. The picture might be that of setting free enslaved persons by purchase, something found in both the Old Testament and Greek literature. However, it is more likely that 2 Pet 2:1 pictures transferring ownership of slaves from one master to another. Jesus has purchased his followers from their previous owner, and they have become Jesus’ slaves. Thus the author of 2 Peter refers to himself as slave of Jesus Christ in 1:1. Second Peter says nothing about how Jesus made this purchase. Rev 5:9 says that the purchase price was the blood of Jesus, and this may be presumed by 2 Peter. If so, the author of 2 Peter regards Jesus’ death as the price he paid to purchase his followers from their previous owner and make them his own slaves.

39. 2 Pet 1:1, 11; 2:20; 3:18.

40. 2 Pet 1:1, 8, 11, 14, 16; 2:20; 3:18.

41. 2 Pet 1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18.

Second Peter 2:1 does not name the previous owner from whom Jesus purchased his followers. However, 2:19–20 strongly suggests they were previously owned by corruption and the defilements of the world. What does it mean to be a slave of corruption (φθορά)? φθορά means destruction; the author of 2 Peter may understand enslavement to corruption to mean “destined for destruction,” i.e., mortal. What does it mean to be overcome by the defilements (μιάσματα) of the world? μιάσμα means “stain,” e.g., a color imparted to a fabric, but it is often used to mean wrongful behavior of various kinds. Enslavement to bad behavior leads to destruction. Second Peter does not explain how this enslavement to corruption and the defilements of the world came to be. However, 2:18 suggests that error, deriving from futile speech, and the desires of the flesh are the cause of this enslavement. See the discussion of this passage below.

I suggested above that the author of 2 Peter understands Jesus as having purchased his followers from enslavement to corruption by his death, even though the author does not say explicitly that Jesus’ death was the purchase price. However, the author does speak explicitly about the way followers of Jesus appropriate this salvation. In 1:3 the author says that Jesus’ divine power has given them everything pertaining to life and piety through full knowledge of the one who called them by his own glory and excellence (v. 3), i.e., Jesus.⁴² Jesus has done this by first calling them and then having them answer the call by recognizing him as savior. The author presupposes that Jesus’ death has transferred human beings from enslavement to corruption to his own service. However, this transfer does not take effect until it is known to have occurred. Prior to such knowledge, human beings continue to serve their previous master because they do not know they have a new one. For the author of 2 Peter faith, i.e., full knowledge of Jesus, is absolutely crucial.

The depiction of Jesus as the master who purchased his followers (2:1) and the author’s further discussion of freedom and slavery in 2:18–20 reflect a soteriological story line that underlies these passages.

- At some unspecified point in the past humans were enslaved to corruption and the defilements of the world by error, futility, and the desires of the flesh (2:19–20).
- Jesus purchased humans from this slavery, acquiring them as his own slaves (2:1); the purchase price may have been his death.
- Humans must know about this transfer of ownership in order to take advantage of it. When they know that they have a new master, they

42. Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, 253–54; Kelly, *Peter and Jude*, 300–301; Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 178.

can live in freedom from their old master. After having ceased to serve their old master, however, it remains possible to resume doing so (2:20–21). This is the danger the author of 2 Peter seeks to avert.

A full account of 2 Peter's soteriology must include a discussion of ethics and eschatology, which are the main immediate concerns of the letter. In the view of 2 Peter's author, ethics is a matter of remaining in the condition of having been saved by Jesus, and eschatology describes the completion of this salvation.

ETHICS

Much of 2 Peter's ethical discourse is rhetology, reasoning about ethics. The central instance of such reasoning is found in 2:20–21, which implies that it is possible to have escaped slavery to the defilements of the world by full knowledge of Jesus and then return to one's former master. Jesus' purchase of human beings from their former master, and their full knowledge of him as their new master, does not eliminate the possibility that they serve their old master. They can undo their salvation by returning to their former way of living. Acknowledging Jesus as their master makes possible a life of freedom from corruption and the defilements of the world, but also requires such a life in order to continue acknowledging Jesus as master. This basis for ethics is similar to that found in the letters of Paul. For 2 Peter virtue is a matter of continuing in the full knowledge of Jesus which is the appropriation of the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Similar ethical reasoning is found in 1:3–11, a series of interlocking enthymemes that argues the necessity of a virtuous life. In vv. 5–8 the author urges the addressees to progress in virtue because having and increasing in these things makes them fruitful for full knowledge of Jesus. Those who have been set free from slavery by recognizing Jesus need to persist in that freedom from slavery by an ongoing full knowledge of Jesus. This is how they make secure their call and election (v. 10), which is the starting point of their salvation (cf. v. 3). Those who do this will receive entrance into the eternal kingdom of Jesus (v. 11). Similarly, in 3:11–13 the author argues that the addressees must be holy and pious because this world is about to be replaced by a new one in which justice dwells.

The main examples of ethical rhetography, are to be found in 2:1–3, 10b–22, which present vivid descriptions of the false teachers' ethical failings and those of their followers. Since the false teachers are destined to appear and be destroyed at the end of the world, the descriptions of them and their vices form part of 2 Peter's eschatography.

ESCHATOLOGY AND ESCHATOGRAPHY

Jesus' salvation of his followers from slavery to corruption is a present reality, but not a final one. At present it is always possible to return to slavery; hence the need for ethics. Salvation only becomes final when this world is destroyed at the end of time. Those enslaved to corruption will be destroyed along with it. Those who have been freed from slavery to corruption will then be definitively free.

The end of the world not only completes salvation in this negative sense, it also completes the life of freedom begun through full knowledge of Jesus. This positive dimension is indicated in 1:3 where the author says that Jesus' divine power has given them everything pertaining to life and piety. By setting them free from impiety, Jesus has given them what they need for piety. And this piety will bring them to life.

In 1:4 the author says that Jesus has given promises in order that through these promises the readers might be *θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως* (sharers of divine nature). Not only do they look forward to life as a result of piety, they are also destined to share divine nature.⁴³ The most salient characteristic of divine nature is incorruptibility; the immediately following reference to having escaped the corruption in the world makes it very likely that the author equates sharing divine nature with becoming incorruptible.⁴⁴ If so, the hope of sharing divine nature is equivalent to that of putting on incorruptibility and immortality in 1 Cor 15:50–55. This will occur when they enter the eternal kingdom of Jesus (2 Pet 1:11).

The promises of definitive freedom from corruption and entry into Jesus' eternal kingdom are part of the prophetic word that points forward to the end of the world (1:19), which is found in Scripture (1:20). What is promised includes the return of Jesus (3:4), destruction of the present heavens and earth (3:10, 12), and the establishment of new heavens and earth (3:13). The author of 2 Peter emphasizes that the future completion of salvation has been promised by Jesus in order to convince those he addresses to maintain this expectation.

43. Like the idea that followers of Jesus escape the corruption in the world, the idea that they become sharers of divine nature expresses the meaning of Christianity in terms taken from dualistic Greek philosophical and religious thought. However, these terms are given new meaning (Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, 255–56; Kelly, *Peter and Jude*, 302–4; Käsemann does not think the terms have been given new meaning [“Apologia,” 184]). Just as for 2 Peter the corruption in the world derives from desire, not from the nature of the world; so the followers of Jesus do not share divine nature by essence, but receive a share in divine nature as a gift.

44. Fornberg, *Early Church*, 86–88; Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 180–81; Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 157–58.

Much of 2 Peter's discourse about the end of the world is eschatology in the strict sense, i.e., reasoning about the last times. Thus 1:16–18 and 1:19–2:10a present arguments that Jesus will come again; the second of these passages ends by arguing that the past actions of God show that God will save the pious and punish the wicked in the future (2:4–10a). 2:1–3, 10b–22, and 3:1–4 implicitly argue against the false teachers/scoffers by presenting their appearance as part of what is to be expected at the end of the world. 3:5–7 refutes the argument that the end of the world is unprecedented; 3:8–10a rejects the perception that the end of the world has been delayed.

The author develops these arguments by using vivid pictures of the events that lead to the end of the world and of the end itself, i.e., eschatography. These pictures imply an eschatographical story line extending from the beginning of time to the end of the world. This story line includes the theography, Christography, and soteriography of 2 Peter; all of these ultimately serve 2 Peter's eschatography.

- There were heavens long ago and an earth constituted by the word of God (3:5).
- At some point humans were enslaved to corruption and the defilements of the world by error, futility, and the desires of the flesh (2:19–20).
- God did not spare the angels who sinned, but sent them to Tartarus (2:4).
- God did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah (2:5). Through the word of God the world was destroyed in a deluge; this serves as a precedent for another destruction of the world at the end of time (3:6).
- God condemned Sodom and Gomorrah, reducing them to ashes and establishing them as a sign of what will happen to the ungodly (2:6), but saved Lot (2:7–8).
- The three incidents mentioned in 2:4–8 show that God knows how to save the pious and punish the wicked (2:9), and will do so in the future
- borne by the Holy Spirit, human beings spoke from God, serving as prophets (1:21). This prophetic speech included accounts of the incidents mentioned in 2:4–8 and was put in writing (1:20). In this way the prophetic word predicts the end of the world, serving as a light in darkness (1:19).
- God the father gave Jesus honor and glory when a voice was conveyed to him by the majestic glory, “My son, my beloved, is this one,

in whom I am well pleased” (1:17). This shows that Jesus will come again at the end of the world (1:16). This will be the dawn that follows darkness (1:19).

- Jesus purchased humans from slavery to corruption and the defilements of the world, acquiring them as his own slaves (2:1); the purchase price may have been his death.
- Humans must know about this transfer of ownership in order to take advantage of it. When they know that they have a new master, they can live in freedom from their old master. After having ceased to serve their old master, however, it remains possible to resume doing so (2:20–21).
- The prophetic word predicts the appearance of false teachers (2:1–3, 10b–22) or scoffers (3:1–4) before the end of the world.
- The present heavens and earth have been treasured up by the word of God for fire on the day of judgment (3:7); this is also the day of God (3:12).
- One cannot say that God is slow to keep the promise that Jesus will return and this world will come to an end because time is different for God than for humans (3:8); God is patient, giving all an opportunity to repent (3:9); and the time of the end is unknown (3:10).
- On the day of the Lord, the heavens will pass away and the elements will be dissolved (3:10, 12). The false teachers/scoffers and their followers will be destroyed with them (2:1, 3, 12; 3:7).
- After this there will be new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells (3:13). Holy and pious people will be sharers in divine nature (1:4) and enter the eternal kingdom of Jesus (1:11).

At some points the sequence of events is uncertain. The author does not say when and how humans were enslaved to corruption, but might be thinking of the story told in Gen 3, to which Paul refers in Rom 5:12–21 and elsewhere. The author also does not say when prophets were active. And he does not say when the transfiguration of Jesus occurred or when Jesus purchased humans from slavery to corruption, but may presume the ordering of these events in the synoptic gospels.

TEXT

The text of 2 Peter on which my interpretation is based is that of *The Greek New Testament*, fourth revised edition (UBS). This edition identifies eight passages in which the text is uncertain. In five cases this uncertainty is indicated by enclosing material in the text within brackets; this is the case in 2:6 (twice), 20; 3:11, 18. In two of the remaining three cases, i.e., in 2:4 and 11, this uncertainty is indicated by footnotes rating the reading of the text “C,” meaning that the editorial committee had difficulty deciding which variant to place in the text. In the remaining text, i.e., in 3:10, a footnote rates the reading of the text “D,” meaning that the committee had great difficulty in arriving at a decision.

The *Novum Testamentum Graecum, Editio Critica Maior IV Catholic Letters* (ECM) text of 2 Peter differs from that of UBS in eight passages. Four of these differences are at points where UBS found the text uncertain, namely in 2:6, 11; 3:10, and 18. In adopting a different reading from that of UBS in 2:6 and 3:18, ECM indicates that the text is uncertain by marking it with bold dots. In adopting a different reading from that of UBS in 2:11 and 3:10, ECM does not indicate that the text is uncertain. ECM also differs from UBS in 2:15; 3:6, and 16 (twice). ECM indicates that all of these but its different reading in 3:6 are uncertain.

ECM also indicates that the text is uncertain in sixteen other passages although its text is the same as that of UBS in these passages. Two of these passages are also ones where UBS indicated textual uncertainty, namely 2:6 and 20. The remaining passages are not marked as uncertain by UBS; the passages are in 1:2, 4 (twice), 9, 12, 21; 2:13, 18 (twice), 19, 22; 3:3 (twice), and 18. Interestingly ECM does not see uncertainty, as UBS does, in 2:4 and 3:11.

The Greek New Testament SBL Edition (SBL) text of 2 Peter differs from that of UBS in six passages. Two of these differences are at points where UBS found the text uncertain, namely in 2:11 and 20. SBL also differs from UBS in 1:9; 2:15, 19; and 3:16.

Most of these textual uncertainties (and some others) are discussed in the notes on each section of 2 Peter. In every case the result is affirmation of the UBS text, with varying degrees of assurance.

AUTHOR

The salutation of 2 Peter names the sender of the letter as Simeon Peter, slave and apostle of Jesus Christ (1:1). This unambiguously identifies its

author as Peter, chief of the twelve apostles of Jesus. The rest of the letter is consistent with this in several ways. According to 1:14 Jesus has revealed that the author will soon die; in John 21:18–19 Jesus predicts the death of Peter. According to 1:16–18 the author witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus; Mark 9:2–8 and parallels say that Peter was one of those who witnessed Jesus’ transfiguration. In 3:1 the author says that he is writing a second letter; this might be a reference to 1 Peter.

Nevertheless, most commentators do not think Peter actually wrote the letter.⁴⁵ Of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century commentaries I have consulted only eight—those of Bigg, Wohlenberg, Mounce, M. Green, Moo, G. Green, Harvey and Towner, and Giese—argue that Peter wrote 2 Peter.⁴⁶ Those who do not think Peter wrote 2 Peter take this position for reasons such as the following (listed in order of importance):

- The letter was probably written too late to have been composed by Peter. *Acts of Peter* 36–41 (c. 200) says that Peter was crucified in Rome during the reign of Nero, i.e., during the mid ’60s. If so, Peter died too early to have written the letter, as we will see when we discuss the date of the letter below.
- As we have seen, the letter is also a testament, and testaments are usually pseudonymous.
- The language and style of the letter seem unlikely to have been used by Peter; the literary skill and ambition that are manifested in the style of 2 Peter (see discussion above) seem unlikely to derive from a Galilean fisherman whose native language was probably not Greek. An additional problem is that the language and style of 2 Peter differ from the language and style of 1 Peter.
- It seems unlikely that Peter would have made use of Jude in the way 2 Peter does (see the discussion of this above).⁴⁷

45. Bauckham, “2 Peter,” 3719–24.

46. Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, 242; Wohlenberg, *Der erste und zweite Petrusbrief*, xxvi; Mounce, *A Living Hope*, 99; Green, *Second Epistle General of Peter*, 13–39; Moo, *2 Peter and Jude*, 23–24; Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, 150; Harvey and Towner, *2 Peter and Jude*, 9–16; Giese, *2 Peter and Jude*, 6–11. Of course, the authorship of 2 Peter is discussed not only in commentaries but also in New Testament introductions and other writings, and some of these argue that Peter was the author. One example of this is Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 173–99. Robinson argues that Jude composed 2 Peter acting as the agent of Peter. Naturally, such arguments also imply an early date for 2 Peter; Robinson suggests 61–62 CE.

47. Bauckham gives a somewhat different list of reasons for doubting the authenticity of 2 Peter (“2 Peter,” 3722–24).

For these reasons it seems most likely that an anonymous author composed 2 Peter as a testamentary letter from Peter. Bauckham discusses various explanations that have been offered for the composition of 2 Peter in the name of Peter. He suggests that it is one means by which the church of Rome, represented by Peter, exercised pastoral responsibility for other churches.⁴⁸ Neyrey argues that the author of 2 Peter is highly literate, rhetorically sophisticated, and writes from a city in Asia Minor.⁴⁹ Such a description is consistent with the implications of the style of 2 Peter; see discussion above.

ADDRESSEES

The addressees of 2 Peter are indicated very generally in 1:1 as those who have received faith equal in honor to ours (i.e., the author of the letter and others). This is a more general specification of addressees than that found in any other New Testament letter except Jude 1. This might mean that the letter is addressed to Christians generally, not a specific group of Christians. For this reason Jude and 2 Peter are often called catholic or general letters. However, both Jude and 2 Peter might have been intended for specific groups even though these groups are not identified in the salutation. This would be especially true for 2 Peter if 3:1 indicates that it has the same addressees as 1 Peter.

The author of 2 Peter says in 3:1 that he is writing a second letter to the addressees. If the first letter was 1 Peter, this implies that 2 Peter is addressed to the same people whom 1 Peter addresses, i.e., residents of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pet 1:1).⁵⁰

In 3:15 the author of 2 Peter says that Paul also wrote to the recipients of 2 Peter. As far as we know, Paul never wrote to people in Pontus, Cappadocia, or Bithynia. Paul did write to the Galatians, however, and he wrote letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Laodiceans (see Col 4:16); all of these cities are located in the Roman province of Asia.

If 2 Pet 3:14–15a summarizes what Paul wrote to the recipients of 2 Peter, v. 14 (“be eager to be discovered by him spotless and unblemished in peace”) might refer to Eph 4:3 (“being eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”). Such a reference to Eph 4:3 is consistent with

48. *Ibid.*, 3736–40.

49. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 128–41.

50. So Chaine, *Les Épîtres Catholiques*, 32–33; Grundmann, *Brief des Judas und zweite Brief des Petrus*, 58; Knoch, *Erste und Zweite Petrusbrief*, 199. Mayor (*Second Epistle of St. Peter*, cxxxv) rejects this idea.

understanding 2 Pet 3:1 as implying that 2 Peter is addressed to the addressees of 1 Peter.

If 2 Peter is not addressed to the addressees of 1 Peter, we have no information about the specific identity of those to whom 2 Peter is addressed. However, wherever they lived, it seems likely that they were Gentile Christians whose culture was more strongly influenced by Hellenism than by Judaism, insofar as the two can be distinguished.⁵¹

PLACE AND TIME OF COMPOSITION

Nothing is known about where 2 Peter was written. If it is not only addressed to the same people as 1 Peter, but also written from the same place, it might have been written in Rome. This might also be indicated by attribution of the letter to Peter, since he was connected with Rome.

The date of 2 Peter is most clearly indicated by the reference to Paul in 3:15–16 (see discussion of this passage below). In 3:15 the author of 2 Peter first mentions what Paul wrote to the recipients of 2 Peter, then states that Paul says the same thing in all his letters. This implies that Paul's letters, originally sent to different places, have been collected.

Exactly when such a collection was made is unknown. Some argue that Paul collected his own letters.⁵² Most see the collection as likely to have been made c. 100 because the first references to it date from about that time.⁵³ The earliest reference to more than one letter of Paul is probably found in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, written c. 108. In his letter *To the Ephesians*, Ignatius says that Paul makes mention of the Ephesians in every letter (12.2). In his letter *To the Romans*, Ignatius says that he does not command the Romans as Peter and Paul did (4.3), possibly referring to Paul's letter to the Romans. Ignatius seems to know at least Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Romans. He probably knows them by way of a collection of Paul's letters that includes them.

In 3:16 the author of 2 Peter says that the ignorant and unstable twist difficult elements of Paul's letters as they do the other Scriptures. This suggests that the author of 2 Peter regards the letters of Paul as having status comparable to that of the Jewish Scriptures, which were accepted as authoritative by Christians. This presumably happened some time after Paul's

51. On this see Fornberg, *Early Church*.

52. Trobisch, *Paul's Letter Collection*; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer*, 114–30.

53. E.g., Kümmel, *Introduction to the NT*, 480–81.

36 Acknowledging the Divine Benefactor

letters were collected. By c. 140 Marcion used a collection of ten letters of Paul that he regarded as authoritative.

Second Peter was probably written sometime between 100 and 140, perhaps about 125.⁵⁴ Others argue for different dates; Bauckham gives the most comprehensive survey.⁵⁵ Dates proposed by the commentaries I have consulted include the following:

- c. 60 (Bigg)
- 63 (Wohlenberg)
- early '60s (Giese)
- mid '60s (Mounce, M. Green)
- 64–110 (Davids)
- c. 65 (Moo)
- 65–68 (Harvey and Towner)
- c. 70 or 80 (Chaine)
- 80–90 (Bauckham)
- c. 90 (Reicke, Spicq)
- late first or early second century (Perkins, Harrington)
- c. 100 (Schelkle)
- 100–110 (Kelly, Knoch)
- 100–125 (James, Paulsen, Vögtle)
- 130 (Sidebottom)
- 110–50 (Grundmann)⁵⁶

The earliest proposed dates, those of Bigg, Wohlenberg, Giese, Mounce, M. Green, Moo, and Harvey and Towner, are based on the view that Peter is the actual author of 2 Peter; I and most others argue that he is not (see above).

54. So also Mayor, *Second Epistle of St. Peter*, cxxcii; and Senior, *1 and 2 Peter*, 99.

55. Bauckham, “2 Peter,” 3740–42.

56. Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, 242–47; Wohlenberg, *Der erste und zweite Petrusbrief*, xxxvii; Giese, *2 Peter and Jude*, 11; Mounce, *A Living Hope*, 99; Green, *Second Epistle General of Peter*, 41; Davids, *2 Peter and Jude*, 130–31; Moo, *2 Peter and Jude*, 24–25; Harvey and Towner, *2 Peter & Jude*, 15; Chaine, *Les Épitres Catholiques*, 34; Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 157–58; Reicke, *James, Peter and Jude*, 144–45; Spicq, *Épitres de Saint Pierre*, 195; Perkins, *First and Second Peter*, 160; Harrington, “Jude and 2 Peter,” 237; Schelkle, *Die Petrusbriefe*, 178–79; Kelly, *Peter and Jude*, 237; Knoch, *Erste und Zweite Petrusbrief*, 213; James, *Second Epistle General of Peter*, xxx; Paulsen, *Zweite Petrusbrief*, 94; Vögtle, *Der Judasbrief/Der 2. Petrusbrief*, 128–29; Sidebottom, *James, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 99; Grundmann, *Brief des Judas und zweite Brief des Petrus*, 65.

Chaine bases his date on the date at which the views rejected by 2 Peter first appeared. Reicke's date is based partly on the idea that 2 Pet 2:10 is a positive reference to magistrates and society; I interpret the passage differently (see discussion of this passage below). Bauckham, Spicq, Kelly, and Knoch's dates are based on the dates of other early Christian writings whose thought parallels that of 2 Peter. Bauckham and Harrington's dates are based on understanding 2 Pet 3:4 to mean that the generation of the apostles has died; I interpret this passage differently (see discussion of this passage below). Perkins, Schelkle, and Bauckham mention 2 Pet 3:15–16; Perkins and Schelkle see its implications for the date of 2 Peter somewhat the same way I do, although they arrive at a somewhat earlier date than I have suggested. Chaine denies these implications.⁵⁷

Attestation

The earliest writer to mention the second letter of Peter by name is Origen (185–254). He does so in his *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* on John 5:3, quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25.8.⁵⁸

And Peter, on whom the Church of Christ is built, against which “the gates of Hades will not prevail,” has left one acknowledged epistle, and let it be granted that there is also a second, for it is doubtful.

Origen also cites or alludes to 2 Peter a number of other times.⁵⁹ As can be seen in the passage quoted, Origen refers to the existence of doubts that Peter wrote 2 Peter. Eusebius, writing c. 324, mentions the consequent uncertainty about the canonical status of 2 Peter in *Ecclesiastical History* 3.3.1; 3.25.3. However, Athanasius, writing in 367, included 2 Peter in the New Testament.

The *Apocalypse of Peter* includes the earliest likely allusions to 2 Peter.⁶⁰ For example, § 22 of the Greek fragment of the *Apocalypse of Peter* refers to *βλασφημοῦντες τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης* (slandering the way of justice; cf. also § 28). This entire phrase is not found in 2 Peter, but *τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης* (the way of justice) is found in 2 Pet 2:21, and elsewhere 2 Peter

57. Chaine, *Les Épîtres Catholiques*, 28–29.

58. Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, 201; Spicq, *Épîtres de Saint Pierre*, 190; Bauckham *Jude, 2 Peter*, 163. The translation is mine.

59. Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, 201; Spicq, *Épîtres de Saint Pierre*, 190.

60. Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, 207; Spicq, *Épîtres de Saint Pierre*, 189; Bauckham *Jude, 2 Peter*, 162.

makes rather frequent use of βλασφημέω (to slander) and its cognate adjective (2:2, 10, 11, 12); 2 Pet 2:2 says that ἡ ὁδὸς τῆς ἀληθείας βλασφημηθήσεται (the way of truth will be slandered). *Epistle of Barnabas* 15.4 contains an even more likely allusion to 2 Peter. This passage quotes an unidentified “he” as saying, “Behold, the day of the Lord shall be as a thousand years.” This is almost certainly a reference to 2 Pet 3:8 because this is 2 Peter’s own expansion of the quotation from Ps 90:4 (LXX 89:4) which says only that in God’s eyes a thousand years are as one day. Sayings very similar to the one quoted from *Epistle of Barnabas* are also found in Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 81; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.23.2. A possible allusion to 2 Pet 2:1 is found in Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 82.1.⁶¹ Such allusions are compatible with a date c. 125 for 2 Peter. Bigg discusses many other possible allusions, both earlier and later.⁶²

P⁷² (dating from c. 300) provides the earliest copy of 2 Peter, along with copies of Jude and 1 Peter. These texts were part of a codex that included eight other writings, both biblical, i.e., Pss 33 and 34, and non-biblical Christian writings, e.g., Melito’s *Homily on Passover*.

OUTLINE OF 2 PETER

- I. Letter opening—2 Pet 1:1–15
 - A. Salutation—1:1–2
 - B. Theme—1:3–11
 - C. Occasion of letter—1:12–15
- II. Letter body—2 Pet 1:16–3:13
 - A. Two arguments that Jesus will come again—1:16–2:10a
 1. First argument—1:16–18
 2. Second argument—1:19–2:10a
 - B. Critique of opponents—2:10b–22
 - C. Occasion and argument of letter restated—3:1–13
- III. Letter closing—2 Pet 3:14–18

61. Bauckham *Jude, 2 Peter*, 237.

62. Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, 202–10; see also Bauckham *Jude, 2 Peter*, 162–63.