

THE AUTHENTICITY OF 2 PETER

MICHAEL J. KRUGER*

J. N. D. Kelly in his commentary on 2 Peter confesses that “scarcely anyone nowadays doubts that 2 Peter is pseudonymous.”¹ Indeed, from the very start this epistle has had a difficult journey. It was received into the New Testament canon with hesitation, considered second-class Scripture by Luther, reluctantly accepted by Calvin, rejected by Erasmus, and now is repudiated as pseudonymous by modern scholarship. Joseph B. Mayor agrees with the current consensus when he declares that 2 Peter “was not written by the author of 1 Peter, whom we have every reason to believe to have been the Apostle St. Peter himself . . . We conclude, therefore, that the second Epistle is not authentic.”²

Why all the difficulty? The argument against the authenticity of 2 Peter turns on three main problems: (1) problem of external attestation in the early church; (2) stylistic and literary problems with 1 Peter and Jude; and (3) historical and doctrinal problems that seem to indicate internal inconsistency and a late date. Undoubtedly, 2 Peter has a plethora of problems. Most scholars believe its path towards canonical status was littered with pitfalls and detours for good reason. If so, then why reopen a discussion which apparently deserves to stay closed? It is not because I presume to have solved all the conundrums that have so vexed capable scholars throughout church history, but because, in the case of 2 Peter, the other side of the argument seems mainly untold. It is untold because scholars have reached a conclusion about its authorship upon which they agree (a novel event in a field where there is little agreement on anything). Therefore, it would be most beneficial for us to reconsider the “other side”—indeed, scholarly progress is ensured by a willingness to rethink what has already been thought—and to question what has already been decided.

Therefore, this essay will take a fresh look at 2 Peter’s pseudonymous label. I hope to demonstrate that the case for its pseudonymity is simply too incomplete and insufficient to warrant the dogmatic conclusions issued by much of modern scholarship. Although 2 Peter has various difficulties that are still being explored, we have no reason to doubt the epistle’s own claims in regard to authorship.

* Michael J. Kruger is a doctoral student at New College, The University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

¹ J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1969) 235.

² Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistles of Jude and II Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) cxxiv.

I. PSEUDEPIGRAPHY IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Before proceeding, it is important to pause and consider this concept of pseudepigraphy. Much has been written on this subject, and it is not the intention of this paper to provide a comprehensive historical overview of ancient pseudonymous writings.³ The question that concerns us is much more narrow: Could a *known* pseudepigraphic epistle have found its way into the canon? It is often claimed that this was a common and accepted literary device in the early church that was not considered the least bit deceptive or immoral. Richard Bauckham states this view: "The pseudepigraphal device is therefore not a fraudulent means of claiming apostolic authority, but embodies a claim to be a faithful mediator of the apostolic message."⁴ P. N. Harrison concurs that the author of such a pseudepigraphy "was not conscious of misrepresenting the apostle in any way; he was not consciously deceiving anybody; it is not, indeed, necessary to suppose that he did deceive anybody."⁵

If Harrison and Bauckham are correct and no one was deceived by such a device, then one wonders why it was used at all. What purpose would it serve if all who read such a document knew exactly what was happening? Although pseudepigraphic devices may have been acceptable for certain types of writings of antiquity,⁶ it seems presumptuous to suggest that they were equally acceptable when applied to epistles whose authors were considered by the early church to hold a unique authority.⁷ Indeed, there seems

³ Two important articles on this subject are: K. Aland, "The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian Literature of the First Two Centuries," *JTS* 12 (1961) 39–49 and Bruce M. Metzger, "Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha," *JBL* 92 (1972) 3–24.

⁴ Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (Waco, TX: Word, 1983) 161–162.

⁵ P. N. Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles*, 12, quoted in E. M. B. Green, *2 Peter Reconsidered* (London: Tyndale, 1960) 32.

⁶ The most common form of pseudepigraphy in the ancient world was the intertestamental apocalyptic literature such as *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *The Assumption of Moses*, and *The Book of Enoch*. However, the literary genre of these writings is predominantly apocalyptic whereas pseudepigraphic *epistles* among the Jews were extremely rare. In fact, the only two pseudonymous letters we have from Jewish sources (which aren't really letters at all) are the *Epistle of Jeremy* and the *Letter of Aristeas* (for a fuller discussion see Richard Bauckham, "Pseudo-Apostolic Letters," *JBL* 107/3 [1988] 469–494). Thus, we could hardly declare that Jewish apocalyptic pseudepigrapha provides a historical basis for believing that the early Christian church would accept known pseudonymous letters. Carson, Moo and Morris declare, "That pseudonymous *apocalypses* were widespread is demonstrable; that pseudonymous *letters* were widespread is entirely unsupported by the evidence" (Carson, Moo and Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992] 495, emphasis mine).

⁷ E. M. B. Green, *2 Peter Reconsidered* (London: Tyndale, 1960) 32. Even within the early church it was clear that the apostles held a unique authority that differed from other popular and respected church leaders. Ignatius declared, "I do not as Peter and Paul, issue commandments unto you. They were apostles; I am but a condemned man" (*Epistle to the Romans* 4.1). In his *Epistle to the Trallians* (3.3), Ignatius makes a similar statement, "Should I issue commands to you as if I were an apostle?" Polycarp also recognized the special role of the apostles and links them with the prophets when he said, "Let us then serve him in fear, and with all reverence, even as he himself has commanded us, and as the apostles who preached the gospel unto us, and the prophets who proclaimed beforehand the coming of the Lord [have alike taught us]" (*The Epistle to the Phillipians* 6.3). Furthermore, the early church Fathers recognized the words of the apostles as scripture itself. The *First Epistle of Clement* says that Paul was "truly, under the inspiration of the

to be little dispute that apostolic authority was an essential criterion of canonicity for the early church.⁸ Consequently, most of the hesitation to accept 2 Peter into the NT canon was precisely on the grounds that there was doubt concerning whether Peter was actually the author.⁹ This would hardly be the case if pseudepigraphy was as widely accepted in the early church as is sometimes claimed.

This rejection of pseudepigraphy by the early church can be determined from several factors. First, the apostle Paul himself speaks out against such a practice in his correspondence with the Thessalonians: “[Don’t] become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come” (2 Thess 2:2; see also 2 Thess 3:17).¹⁰ Second, we see that Tertullian actually removed the author of *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* from his position as a presbyter for passing off his work under Paul’s name.¹¹ Despite the fact that this author had the best intentions and was even essentially orthodox, Tertullian disciplined him for “augmenting Paul’s fame from his own store.”¹² Third, Serapion, Bishop of Antioch (c. 180), wrote a work entitled, *Concerning the so-called Gospel According to Peter*. This was a refutation of the *Gospel According to Peter* which was being circulated in certain areas of the church.¹³ Upon examination of the gospel he determined that Peter did not write it and said, “We receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ, but the writings which falsely bear their names (ψευδεπίγραφα) we reject.”¹⁴ Serapion rejected

Spirit” (47.3). The author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* clearly recognized Paul’s words (Rom 4:3) as scripture by combining it with an Old Testament passage (Gen 15:6): “Because thou has believed, it is imputed to thee for righteousness: behold, I have made thee the father of those nations who believe in the Lord while in [a state] of uncircumcision” (13.7).

⁸ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 253. See also Frank Thielman, “The New Testament Canon: Its Basis for Authority,” *WTJ* 45 (1983) 400–410; F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988) 256–259; R. Laird Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969) 219–245; D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, eds., *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) 320–342; Bruce M. Metzger (*The New Testament: Its Background, Growth and Content* [New York: Abingdon, 1965] 276) declares that “the chief criterion for acceptance of particular writings as sacred, authoritative, and worthy of being read in services of worship was apostolic authorship.”

⁹ Kelly, *Commentary* 224. See also discussion below under “The Problem of External Attestation.”

¹⁰ Of course, some scholars regard 2 Thessalonians itself as pseudonymous and explain such a statement as an attempt by the pseudepigraphic author to “throw off the scent” of those tracking him down (see Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writing* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1997] 323–324).

¹¹ Some have claimed that the criticism toward the author was not for passing himself off as Paul but for promoting false doctrine; e.g. allowing women to baptize (see David G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986] 205). However, the passage from Tertullian explicitly says that *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* are “writings that *wrongly* go under Paul’s name” (Tertullian, *On Baptism* 17).

¹² Tertullian, *On Baptism* 17.

¹³ For an examination of the relationship between the *Gospel of Peter* and the canonical Gospels see Alan Kirk, “Examining Priorities: Another Look at the Gospel of Peter’s Relationship to the New Testament Gospels,” *NTS* 40 (1994) 572–595.

¹⁴ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.12.2.

the work explicitly upon the grounds that it purported to be from the apostle Peter, but in fact was not.¹⁵ One final example is the spurious epistles to the Laodiceans and to the Alexandrines that were listed among the rejected works in the Muratorian Fragment. These letters, although claiming to be from the apostle Paul, were rejected as “forgeries”—hardly a term that suggests pseudonymous works were looked upon with acceptance by the early church. The document goes on to declare that these epistles “cannot be received into the catholic church, since it is not fitting that poison be mixed with honey.”¹⁶

These latter examples shed invaluable light upon the attitude of the church towards pseudepigraphic writings at the end of the second century.¹⁷ Are we to believe that it was in this very environment that 2 Peter was accepted as canonical by Clement of Alexandria and Origen (and later by a host of other church fathers) despite the fact that they knew it was pseudepigraphic? Bart Ehrman, who is honest enough to label such pseudonymous letters as “forgeries,” declares: “Indeed, despite its common occurrence, forgery was almost universally condemned by ancient authors.”¹⁸

In light of these considerations, those who continue to insist that a document can be both a *known* pseudepigraphic work and legitimately in the canon seem to be out of step with the early church fathers themselves. This of course does not imply that 2 Peter is authentic, but we cannot embark

¹⁵ Some have attempted to show that Serapion’s rejection of the *Gospel According to Peter* was only because it was promoting false doctrine, not because it was not written by Peter (William R. Farmer, “Some Critical Reflections on Second Peter: A Response to a Paper on Second Peter by Denis Farkasfalvy,” *The Second Century* 5:1 [1985–1986] 31–46). Farmer contends that since Serapion initially let the *Gospel According to Peter* be read in the church before he found out its heretical content, then it was the content, not the authorship, that was the main issue. However, Farmer fails to make a distinction between authoritative writings in the early church and those writings that were merely *used* by the early church (many documents were highly valued by the early church but clearly not seen as canonical). It seems evident that Serapion simply did not want to unnecessarily interfere with the readings of a church unless they proved harmful. But this does not imply that he accepted these readings as authoritative or that authorship was unimportant; indeed the express words of Serapion state otherwise (see above). J. A. T. Robinson comments: “Though the *motive* of [Serapion’s] condemnation of [the Gospel of Peter] was the docetic heresy that he heard it was spreading, the *criterion* of his judgment, to which he brought the expertise in these matters that he claimed, was its genuineness as the work of the apostle” (J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976] 188, emphasis mine).

¹⁶ Cited from Bruce, *Canon of Scripture* 160.

¹⁷ The date of the Muratorian Fragment is still in dispute. A. C. Sundberg, Jr. argues for a fourth-century date in “Canon Muratori: A Fourth Century List,” *HTR* 66 (1973) 1–41. An earlier date and a response to Sundberg is provided by E. Ferguson, “Canon Muratori: Date and Provenience,” *Studia Patristica* 18/2 (1982) 677–683.

¹⁸ Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction* 323. Ehrman is refreshingly candid in his willingness to admit that pseudonymous writings are forgeries: “Many scholars are loath to talk about New Testament ‘forgeries’ because the term seems so loaded and suggestive of ill intent. But the word does not have to be taken that way. It can simply refer to a book written by an author who is not the famous person he or she claims to be. It is striking that few scholars object to using the term ‘forgery’ for books, even Christian books, that occur outside of the New Testament. This may suggest that the refusal to talk about New Testament forgeries is not based on historical grounds but on faith commitment, that is, it represents a theological judgment that the canonical books need to be granted special status” (323).

upon this discussion with the misconception that authorship was inconsequential to the Church Fathers. J. A. T. Robinson sums up the situation in the early church, "If we ask what is the evidence for orthodox epistles being composed in the name of the apostles within a generation or two of their lifetime, and for this being an acceptable literary convention within the church, the answer is nil."¹⁹

II. THE PROBLEM OF EXTERNAL ATTESTATION

The first major pin in the argument against the authenticity of 2 Peter is its poor attestation among the early church Fathers. J. N. D. Kelly comments: "No NT document had a longer or rougher struggle to win acceptance than 2 Peter."²⁰ Indeed, there is no question that of all the New Testament books 2 Peter is found most lacking in regard to evidence for its canonical status. However, despite 2 Peter's difficulties (and there are many), it still has significantly more support for its inclusion in the canon than the best of those books which have been rejected.²¹

From the outset two questions must be distinguished: (1) How did the early church view the epistle (i.e. did they consider it authentic and canonical)? (2) What is the evidence of an early date for 2 Peter? The first question allows the early church to render its verdict (which must be given some weight) and the second deals with whether Peter was even still alive during the epistle's composition to be considered as a potential author. Let us treat these two questions in order.

1. *2 Peter and the Early Church.* Origen (c. 182–251) is the first to cite 2 Peter by name at the beginning of the third century and thus often finds himself as the pivotal church father in discussions over the epistle's authenticity. If one assumes that the date of the first explicit citation is roughly concomitant with a book's composition, then Origen's late citation certainly casts the only and deciding vote against 2 Peter. However, the date of the first explicit citation is hardly the only data that proves to be relevant.

Despite the fact that Origen recognizes that some had doubts about the epistle,²² he himself certainly did not. He quoted the epistle six times²³ and clearly regarded it as Scripture.²⁴ It is evident that he considers 2 Peter as equal in authority with 1 Peter by saying that "Even Peter blows on the twin

¹⁹ J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating* 187. J. I. Packer also sums up the situation well: "We may lay down as a general principle that, when biblical books specify their own authorship, the affirmation of their canonicity involves a denial of their pseudonymity. Pseudonymity and canonicity are mutually exclusive" (J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985] 184).

²⁰ Kelly, *Commentary* 224.

²¹ Robinson, *Redating* 188.

²² "Peter has left behind one acknowledged epistle, and perhaps a second; for it is questioned" (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.25.11).

²³ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990) 806.

²⁴ "Et ut ait quodam in loco scriptura" (Origen, *Numer. Hom.* 2.676).

trumpets of his own Epistles.”²⁵ It seems quite difficult to believe that an epistle that Origen treated in such a manner could have been just recently composed in his own day. Indeed, the fact that he quotes it so thoroughly as Scripture in his writings suggests that it may have been accepted widely as canonical by this time.

Interestingly, Origen fails to indicate the reason for the doubts some of his contemporaries maintained, nor does he discuss their extent or location. It seems fair, therefore, to suggest that Origen did not deem these doubts to be of any serious nature or at least not enough to question 2 Peter’s scriptural status. In addition, considering the fact that Origen was one of the sharpest literary critics in the ancient world, his silence on 2 Peter’s literary style seems quite conspicuous.²⁶ Perhaps he was not persuaded that the epistles were fundamentally all that different. In light of these and the aforementioned considerations the fact that Origen is the first to cite 2 Peter by name in no way argues conclusively against 2 Peter’s authenticity.

Eusebius (c. 265–339) makes it clear that the majority of the church accepted the epistle as authentic although he himself had certain reservations about it. He mentions that his doubts stem from the fact that writers he respected did not affirm its canonicity and that it was not to his knowledge quoted by the “ancient presbyters.”²⁷ But it is interesting to note that despite his reservations he lists 2 Peter along with James, Jude, 2 and 3 John as “the Disputed books which nevertheless are known to most.”²⁸ So even Eusebius does not place 2 Peter in with the “spurious” writings such as the *Apocalypse of Peter*.²⁹

Church Fathers subsequent to Origen, such as Jerome, Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianus and Augustine, all acknowledge the canonicity of 2 Peter.³⁰ Even though Jerome was a main proponent of 2 Peter’s authenticity, he recognized the significant stylistic divergence with 1 Peter. He sought to account for this divergence by suggesting that Peter used a different amanuensis.³¹ After Jerome’s time, there were no further doubts concerning 2 Peter’s place in the NT canon.³²

As far as canonical lists are concerned, we find 2 Peter absent from the Muratorian Fragment (c. 180), one of the earliest extant lists in church history. Although this may seem to be substantial evidence against the epistle’s

²⁵ “Petrus etiam duabus epistolarum suarum personat tubis” (Origen, *Hom. in Josh.* 7.1).

²⁶ Green, *Reconsidered* 5. Green goes on to note Origen’s exceptional literary perceptions about the book of Hebrews as recorded in *Hist. Eccl.* 6.25.11.

²⁷ *Hist. Eccl.* 3.3.1: τοῖς πάλαι πρεσβυτέροις. It is of course recognized that Eusebius may have meant that 2 Peter was not quoted by any of the ancient presbyters “by name.”

²⁸ *Hist. Eccl.* 3.25.3.

²⁹ Metzger, *Canon* 203–204.

³⁰ Green, *Reconsidered* 6.

³¹ Michael Green, *The Second Epistle General of Peter and the General Epistle of Jude* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 14.

³² It must be noted that the Syriac churches did not receive the epistle until some time between the Peshitta (c. 411) and the Philoxenian Version (c. 506). However, there is speculation that the Syriac canons actually at one time contained the catholic epistle (see Warfield, “The Canonicity of Second Peter,” in *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, vol. 2 [ed. John E. Meeter; New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973] 60).

authenticity, it is important to note that 1 Peter, James, and Hebrews were also not included.³³ Furthermore, although this list *omits* 2 Peter, by no means does it regard it as spurious; silence does not equal rejection. 2 Peter was recognized as fully canonical by the Canons of Laodicea and by the time of the church councils of Hippo and Carthage of the fourth century.³⁴ It is significant that these latter church councils were the very ones that rejected the Letters of Barnabas and Clement of Rome—which were both very respected writings in the early church and often used alongside Scripture³⁵—indicating that these church councils exhibited careful analysis of all documents and rejected all they considered sub-apostolic.

2 Peter's full acceptance into the canon of the church by the fourth century is confirmed by its appearance in various early manuscripts of the New Testament. The Bodmer papyrus, designated p⁷², is a papyrus dating to the third century³⁶ and contains the oldest copies of 1 and 2 Peter.³⁷ In addition, 2 Peter finds a firm canonical home with its appearance in some of the most important textual discoveries: Codex Sinaiticus (4th century), Codex Vaticanus (4th century) and Codex Alexandrinus (5th century).³⁸

In our quest to determine the authenticity of 2 Peter we cannot overlook the fact that 2 Peter, despite the reservations of some, was finally and fully accepted by the church as canonical in every respect. The fact that 2 Peter faced such resistance—resistance coupled with the incessant competition of pseudo-Petrine literature—and *still* prevailed proves to be worthy of serious consideration. Is it so easy to dismiss the conclusions of Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen, Ephiphanius, Athanasius, Augustine, Rufinus, Jerome, and the church councils of Laodicea, Hippo and Carthage?³⁹ Thus, if the epistle of 2 Peter held such a firm position in the fourth-century canon, then perhaps the burden of proof should fall on those who suggest it does not belong there. Maybe the question, then, is not, "What *further* evidence is there for 2 Peter's canonicity?" but, "What reasons are there to put 2 Peter out of the canon considering its authentication by the consensus of the 4th-century church?" It is to that question that we now turn.

³³ Metzger, *Canon* 200.

³⁴ Bruce, *Canon* 210–232.

³⁵ Green, *Reconsidered* 6.

³⁶ This early manuscript evidence for 2 Peter in the third century confirms the fact that Origen (who wrote in the third century) was not citing from a recently composed forgery.

³⁷ Some dispute this papyrus as evidence for 2 Peter's canonicity due to the fact that it is listed along with several non-canonical works, such as the Nativity of Mary, the apocryphal correspondence of Paul to the Corinthians, the Apology of Phileas, etc. (see W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* [London: SCM, 1984] 433–434). However, it must be noted that 1 Peter and Jude were also included in the list and, as Edwin A. Blum comments, "p⁷² shows acceptance of 2 Peter as canonical, for in that manuscript 2 Peter shares with 1 Peter and Jude a blessing on the readers of these sacred books and receives even more elaborate support than the other two epistles" (Edwin A. Blum, "2 Peter," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981] 257). See also R. H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970) 353.

³⁸ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

³⁹ *Num. Hom.* 2.676; *Catechetical Lecture* 4.36; *Hymn* 1.1.12.31; *Panarion* 76.22.5; *Epistle* 39; *On Christian Learning* 2.13; *On the Creed* 37; *Epistle* 53.9. See also Warfield, "Canonicity" 58–59.

2. *Evidence of an Early Date for 2 Peter.* The main argument (from external considerations) for why 2 Peter ought to be removed from the canon (or at least declared pseudonymous) is that it was written too late to have been composed by the apostle himself. Indeed, there is no doubt that the evidence for 2 Peter's early existence is not as abundant as could be desired—quite scarce in fact. But allow me to make two observations. First, we must be careful with arguments from silence; absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence.⁴⁰ Second, it must be acknowledged that our perspective on the wealth (or poverty) of support for 2 Peter is greatly conditioned by the other documents to which we compare it. Is it possible that we only consider 2 Peter's evidence to be meager and inadequate when we compare it to the overabundance of evidence that is available for the primary books of the New Testament? Perhaps when 2 Peter is compared with what is necessary to authenticate any other early writings of the time period it will prove to be quite sufficient.⁴¹

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215), in his *Hypotyposeis*, wrote a commentary on 2 Peter although that commentary has been lost.⁴² Eusebius, speaking of Clement, said that he wrote on “all the canonical Scripture, not even passing over the disputed writings—I speak of the epistle of Jude and the *other Catholic Epistles*.”⁴³ But, some have doubted whether Clement actually meant to include 2 Peter in his list of disputed works.⁴⁴ Although this may be difficult to ascertain, the following two considerations seem to suggest 2 Peter was included in the disputed works: (a) Eusebius elsewhere defines what books he includes in the “disputed writings” and explicitly *includes* 2 Peter.⁴⁵ What reason do we have to believe that he did not mean the same books when speaking of Clement? (b) Clement's *Letter to Theodorus* makes a very striking parallel to 2 Peter 2:19 which indicates it was likely well known by him.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ See the discussion later in this section on why 2 Peter was used so rarely by the early church fathers.

⁴¹ Warfield, “Canonicity” 65. Warfield lists some examples of how other writings with as much (or less) support as 2 Peter are never questioned: “Herodotus is quoted once in the century which followed its composition, but once in the next, not at all in the next, only twice in the next, and not until its fifth century is anything like as fully witnessed to as 2 Peter is in its second. Again, Thucydides is not distinctly quoted until quite two centuries after its composition; while Tacitus is first cited by Tertullian. Yet no one thinks of disputing the genuineness of Herodotus, Thucydides or Tacitus.”

⁴² Guthrie, *NT Introduction* 807.

⁴³ *Hist. Eccl.* 6.14.1 (emphasis mine).

⁴⁴ See James Moffatt, *An Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961) 371 and Robert M. Grant, *The Formation of the New Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965) 167. Critics of 2 Peter's authenticity often appeal to Cassiodorus who seems to indicate that 2 Peter was not included in Clement's *Hypotyposeis* (*Introduction to the Reading of Holy Scripture* 8). However, not only does Cassiodorus have quite a late date, but the opposite claim has been made by another later citation, Photius, who seems to suggest that 2 Peter indeed was included (*Bibliotheca*, Codex 109). For a treatment of Photios' life and works see D. S. White, *Patriarch Photios of Constantinople* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982).

⁴⁵ *Hist. Eccl.* 3.25.3.

⁴⁶ Clement, *Letter to Theodorus* 1.6–7: *καυχώμενοι ἐλευθέρους εἶναι, δοῦλοι γεγόνασιν ἀνδραποδώδων ἐπιθυμιῶν* (“boasting they are free, they have become slaves of servile lusts”). Compare with 2 Peter 2:19: *ἐλευθερίαν αὐτοῖς ἐπαγγελλόμενοι, αὐτοὶ δούλοι ὑπάρχοντες φθορᾶς* (“they promise them freedom, themselves being slaves of corruption”). See Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* 276.

If Clement did possess, use and comment upon 2 Peter (and the evidence suggests this as probable), then this not only means that he viewed the epistle worthy of a scriptural commentary (showing he gave it some degree of authenticity), but that the date of 2 Peter must be placed at least in the first half of the second century if not sooner. Indeed, not only would someone of Clement's stature not be duped by a forgery that was only a few years old, but he would hardly write a commentary on a book that most of the church rejected as a recently composed imitation of Peter.

Irenaeus (c. 130–200) in his writings gives us ample reasons to believe he knew and read 2 Peter. We read in Irenaeus: ἡ γὰρ ἡμέρὰ κυρίου ὡς χίλια ἔτη;⁴⁷ and in 2 Peter 3:8: ὅτι μία ἡμέρα παρὰ κυρίῳ ὡς χίλια ἔτη—hardly a coincidence. Of course, as some have observed, Irenaeus could have simply been quoting Psalm 90:4.⁴⁸ However, this Psalm reads: ὅτι χίλια ἔτη ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς σου ὡς ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ ἐχθές, ἥτις διήλθε.⁴⁹ Irenaeus's quotation varies widely from the LXX, as does 2 Peter's, but they are virtually identical with each other. It is highly unlikely that they both would independently diverge from the LXX in the exact same manner, thus inclining us to think Irenaeus was quoting directly from 2 Peter. Our suspicions are confirmed by Methodius in the third century who specifically cites the apostle Peter as the source of the quotation.⁵⁰ In addition, there are other literary connections between Irenaeus and 2 Peter that space does not allow us to discuss.⁵¹

These considerations lead us to believe that Irenaeus had access to 2 Peter. If one as influential as Irenaeus knew and used the epistle, then it was probably known to many others during this time period. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Irenaeus would have cited a scriptural proof from a known forgery, perhaps suggesting that he at least considered it to be authentic. A scholar of his stature, like Clement above, would not likely be fooled by a recently composed fake, thus the date of 2 Peter could be pushed even farther back into the beginning of the second century, if not late in the first.⁵²

⁴⁷ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.23.2.

⁴⁸ It must be noted that Psalm 90:4 was commonly used in the second century and given a "chiliastic" interpretation (namely that the world would last for as many thousand years as there were days in creation). In view of the fact that this interpretation was seen as a sign of Christian orthodoxy and used extensively by early church writers (2 Clement, Methodius, Justin and Barnabas), it seems difficult to believe our pseudepigraphic author could have quoted this verse and resisted the temptation to make any sort of chiliastic reference. Even more interesting is that 2 Peter does not even use it to allude to the duration of the world at all, but to the time of the parousia—something completely foreign to 2nd century use of this text. The silence in reference to chiliasm is strong evidence in favor of a first century date. See Robinson (*Redating* 181) and Green (*Reconsidered* 19) for discussion.

⁴⁹ In the LXX it is actually Psalm 89:4.

⁵⁰ Mayor (cxvii) refers to a fragment of his *De Resurrectione* which says the source of the citation is from ὁ ἀπόστολος Πέτρος. Methodius (c. 260–312), also known as Eubulius, was bishop of both Olympus and Patara in Lycia, and was later moved by Jerome to the episcopal See of Tyre in Phoenicia. He likely suffered martyrdom at the hands of Chalchis in Greece.

⁵¹ One example of such is 2 Peter 1:15 which reads μετὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ἔξοδον. Compare with Irenaeus (3.1.1.): μετὰ δὲ τὴν τοῦτων ἔξοδον. Merely coincidental? See Warfield's comments, "Canonicity" 52.

⁵² At least a second century date is further confirmed by Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–235) in a most likely reference to 2 Peter 2:22. Hippolytus (*Refutation of All Heresies* 9.7.3) declares: οἱ πρὸς μὲν ὄραν αἰδοῦμενοι καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας συναγόμενοι ὁμολογοῦν, μετ' οὐ πολὺ δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν αὐτὸν βόρβορον ἀνεκλυίουτο. Compare with 2 Peter 2:22: συμβέβηκεν αὐτοῖς τὸ τῆς ἀληθοῦς

Justin Martyr (c. 115–165) makes a striking allusion to 2 Peter 2:1 in his *Dialogue with Trypho*. Justin states: “And just as there were false prophets (ψευδοπροφήται) contemporaneous with your holy prophets [the Jews], now there are many false teachers (ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι) amongst us, of whom our Lord forewarned us to beware.”⁵³ 2 Peter 2:1 reads: “But, there were also false prophets (ψευδοπροφήται) among the people [the Jews], just as there will be false teachers (ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι) among you.” Bauckham comments: “The comparison of false prophets (ψευδοπροφήται) in OT Israel and false teachers (ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι) in the church does not seem to appear in early Christian literature outside these two passages. Moreover, the word ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι is found only in these two passages in literature up to the time of Justin.”⁵⁴ This likely reference by Justin Martyr introduces the possibility of 2 Peter’s acceptance in the early second century which causes us to consider even a first-century beginning.

There is also ample evidence that the *Apocalypse of Peter* (c. 110) was dependent upon 2 Peter in its construction. Mayor catalogs an impressive list of literary and structural connections between the two documents which he regards as evidence that 2 Peter was basic to the *Apocalypse*.⁵⁵ Richard Bauckham considers this “very good evidence” that is “sufficient to rule out a late date for 2 Peter.”⁵⁶ J. A. T. Robinson concurs, “It seems quite clear that the *Apocalypse* is the later document.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, hardly anyone would question that 2 Peter is the superior work, both from a literary and a spiritual perspective.⁵⁸ Considering that it is highly unlikely that the inferior work would give rise to the superior work—indeed, imitations tend to decline in quality—it seems reasonable to give 2 Peter literary priority.⁵⁹ If the above analysis proves cogent, then the date for 2 Peter can be pushed all the way into the first century, giving us substantial impetus to reconsider its authorship.

Finally, a first-century date is further hinted at by the number of references shared between 1 Clement (c. 95–97) and 2 Peter.⁶⁰ Space allows us to men-

παροιμίας, Κύων ἐπιστρέψας ἐπὶ τὸ ἴδιον ἐξέραμα, καί, Ὡς λουσαμένη εἰς κυλισμὸν βορβόρου. Both writers use the second half of the proverb to refer to heretics (Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* 163). Harry Y. Gamble does not doubt in the least that Hippolytus knew and used 2 Peter and declares, “Hippolytus is the first writer to show any knowledge at all [of 2 Peter]” (Harry Y. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985] 51).

⁵³ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 82.1.

⁵⁴ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* 237.

⁵⁵ Mayor, *Jude, 2 Peter* cxxx–cxxxiv.

⁵⁶ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* 162.

⁵⁷ Robinson, *Redating* 178.

⁵⁸ E. M. Sidebottom, *James, Jude and 2 Peter* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1967) 100.

⁵⁹ Terence V. Smith, *Petrine Controversies in Early Christianity* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985) 52–53, also concurs that it is more likely that the *Apocalypse* used 2 Peter: “Thus, the relationship between the two documents is best explained on the basis of 2 Peter having been known and utilized by the author of the *Apoc-Pet*” (53).

⁶⁰ The date for 1 Clement is generally agreed upon to be the latter part of the first century. See Cyril C. Richardson, ed., *Early Christian Fathers* (New York: McMillan, 1970) 33–34, and Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament and other Early Christian Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 296.

tion only two:⁶¹ (1) 1 Clement 23.3 cites an unidentified “Scripture” as saying: “Wretched are the double-minded, those who doubt in their soul and say, ‘We have heard these things even in our Father’s times, and, see, we have grown old and none of them has happened to us.’”⁶² There is a strikingly similar idea in 2 Peter 3:4 which tells us that mockers will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” Although the vocabulary is different,⁶³ there is a common pattern shared by the context of these two citations.⁶⁴ First, there is a reference to false teachers (1 Clem 21.5; 2 Pet 2:1ff.); second, there is the discussion of the doubts about the future (1 Clem 23; 2 Pet 3:4); and third, there is mention of the nearness of Christ’s second coming (1 Clem 23.5; 2 Pet 3:10).⁶⁵ (2) There are two phrases in 2 Peter that are unique in the Bible, but used by 1 Clement in the exact same manner. The first is found in 2 Pet 1:17 where God is referred to as τῆς μεγαλοπρέπους δόξης (“the magnificent glory”). 1 Clem 9.2 refers to God as τῆ μεγαλοπρέπει δόξη αὐτοῦ (“his magnificent glory”). The second is found in 2 Pet 2:2 where the Christian life is described as τῆ ὁδοῦ τῆς ἀληθείας (“the way of truth”).⁶⁶ 1 Clem 35.5 uses the exact same Greek. It is unlikely that phrases so distinctive and rare could appear in both places by coincidence.⁶⁷

Of course, one may inquire at this point why 2 Peter was so hesitantly used and received if it was known since the first century? It may have been avoided—even looked on with suspicion—because of the abundance of pseudo-Petrine literature circulating at the time.⁶⁸ Various Gnostic groups may have been using Peter’s name as the driving force behind their heretical thinking which undoubtedly would have made the early church wary of writings claiming to be Petrine. Again it must be noted that the final acceptance of 2 Peter by the Church Fathers, while rejecting all other works claiming his name, suggests that 2 Peter stood out among the rest.

Thus, having perused the evidence from church history, though it is not as abundant and conclusive as may be desired, there appears to be no compelling reason to remove 2 Peter from the canon and to attach to it a pseudographic label. At best the external evidence against 2 Peter’s authenticity

⁶¹ I am indebted to Robert E. Picirilli, “Allusions to 2 Peter in the Apostolic Fathers,” *JSNT* 33 (1988) 59, for his discussion of allusions to 2 Peter in 1 Clement. See also Mayor, *Jude, II Peter cxxi*.

⁶² 1 Clem 23.3.

⁶³ However, there is a notable verbal connection between 2 Pet 2:8 and 2 Clem 11.2 where both use the phrase ἡμέραν ἐξ ἡμέρας (Picirilli, “Allusions” 59).

⁶⁴ Also noting the connection between 2 Peter and 1 Clement is H. C. C. Cavallin, “The False Teachers of 2 Peter as Pseudoprophets,” *NovT* 21 (1979) 268.

⁶⁵ Picirilli, “Allusions” 59–60.

⁶⁶ For the theological significance of the phrase “the way” see the third section of this paper.

⁶⁷ Warfield comments: “. . . in each case a very rare and peculiar phrase occurs, peculiar in the New Testament to 2 Peter, and in the sub-apostolic age to Clement. Certainly this is enough to raise some probability that as early as AD 97, Clement had and borrowed a peculiar phraseology from 2 Peter” (“Canonicity” 57).

⁶⁸ *The Gospel of Peter, The Preaching of Peter, The Apocalypse of Peter, The Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles, and The Epistle of Peter to Philip* are examples. For further discussion see Terence V. Smith, *Petrine Controversies* 34ff.

proves inconclusive and throws the burden of proof upon internal considerations. It is that to which we now turn.

III. STYLISTIC AND LITERARY PROBLEMS

The second pin in the argument against 2 Peter's authenticity is that its literary style seems to indicate that the author is not the same as that of 1 Peter.⁶⁹ David Meade reflects the current consensus. "The language and style of 2 Peter is very different from that of 1 Peter. The two works could not have come from the same man."⁷⁰ So, with such a bold statement in mind, let us examine the language and style that Meade finds so compelling.

1. *Differences between 1 and 2 Peter.* Bauckham observes that in comparison to 1 Peter, the author of 2 Peter is "fond of rather grandiose language."⁷¹ J. N. D. Kelly says that the author of 2 Peter is "at times pretentiously elaborate."⁷² Indeed, there seems to be a definitive difference between the "dignified" style of 1 Peter and the "high-sounding words" of 2 Peter. This is seen in the many rare and unusual words used in 2 Peter such as *ροιζηδόν* (3:10) and *ταρταροῦν* (2:4).⁷³ In fact, out of the 399 words in 2 Peter, 57 are *hapax legomena* (14%). Although 14% is the highest percentage of *hapax legomena* in the NT,⁷⁴ it is surprising to note that out of the 543 words in 1 Peter, 63 are *hapax legomena* (12%).⁷⁵ Thus, both epistles appear similar in this respect.

Many of 1 Peter's commonly used words, such as *ἀγαθός*, *ἀλλήλων*, *ὑπακόν*, *κακός*, *ἐλπίζ* and a host of others, do not appear in 2 Peter. 1 Peter has 543 words, 2 Peter has 399 words, and they have 153 in common.⁷⁶ Consequently, of the words used in 2 Peter, 38.6% are shared by both epistles whereas 61.4% are unique to 2 Peter.⁷⁷ It is precisely these types of figures that many

⁶⁹ Some scholars also deny that 1 Peter was written by the apostle himself. They may point out, therefore, that simply showing common authorship between the two epistles does not then prove the author was Peter. This is true. However, those who deny the authenticity of 1 Peter then certainly cannot refer to stylistic divergence with 2 Peter as evidence for 2 Peter's pseudonymity!

⁷⁰ Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon* 180.

⁷¹ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* 137.

⁷² Kelly, *Commentary* 228.

⁷³ Green, *Reconsidered* 12.

⁷⁴ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* 135.

⁷⁵ Green, *Reconsidered* 12.

⁷⁶ These figures taken from *ibid.* 12 (see also Mayor, *Jude, 2 Peter* lxx–lxxi). The number of words in a book can be computed in three different ways: (1) The total number of words, even counting the repetition of certain words. This total is 1680 for 1 Peter and 1098 for 2 Peter (J. Arthur Baird and J. David Thompson, *A Critical Concordance to 1 and 2 Peter* [Biblical Research Associates, 1989]). (2) The total number of *different* words, counting the same vocabulary words with different endings; e.g., it would count both *αὐτήν* and *αὐτῆς*, but not the repetition of either. This total is 817 for 1 Peter and 605 for 2 Peter (Baird and Thompson). (3) The total number of different *vocabulary* words. So, both *αὐτήν* and *αὐτῆς* would count as only one word since they both come from the same vocabulary word. This is likely the method used by Green who came up with 543 for 1 Peter and 399 for 2 Peter.

⁷⁷ U. Holzmeister, "Vocabularium secundae epistolae S. Petri erroneae quidam de eo divulgati," *Bib* 30 (1949) 339–355.

critics of 2 Peter find most compelling.⁷⁸ However, though the high degree of divergent vocabulary certainly must be admitted, statistics like these prove to be unconvincing because we see approximately these same figures when we compare other New Testament epistles by the same author such as 1 Timothy and Titus.⁷⁹ 1 Timothy has 537 words, Titus 399, and they have 161 in common.⁸⁰ Thus, of the words used in Titus, 40.4% are shared by both epistles and 59.6% are unique to Titus. Furthermore, when comparing 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians (both commonly held to be Pauline) we see that of the words used in 2 Corinthians, 49.3% are shared by both epistles, whereas 50.7% are unique to 2 Corinthians⁸¹—figures not very different from those of 1 and 2 Peter. Thus the linguistic argument against 2 Peter proves to be less than conclusive.

There are many other suggested differences, one of which is that 1 Peter commonly employs the connecting particles whereas they are conspicuously absent in the second epistle.⁸² However, criticisms of this sort tend to be unpersuasive because they depend on what particular characteristic of the epistles is contrasted. For example, if we examine how each uses the article instead of the particle we may reach a very different conclusion. Joseph Mayor notes that “as to the use of the article, [1 and 2 Peter] resemble one another more than they resemble any other book of the N.T.”⁸³ Thus, it seems little weight ought to be given to these types of arguments.

Some scholars have noticed that 2 Peter tends to be repetitive in its use of language, indicating a “poor and inadequate”⁸⁴ vocabulary (which is then contrasted to 1 Peter’s “polished Greek”⁸⁵). But, again, the differences here seem more exaggerated than real. 1 Peter has quite a degree of its own repetition/reiteration: ἀποκαλύπτω, ἀποκάλυψις (1:5, 7, 12, 13; 4:13); δοκίμιον, δοκιμαζομένου (1:7); δόξα, δεδοξασμένη (1:7, 8, 11); σωτηρία (1:5, 9, 10); ἅγιος (four times in 1:15–16); ἀναστροφή (1:15, 18; 2:12; 3:1, 2, 16).⁸⁶ Such a degree of repetition within each epistle would be a subtlety extremely difficult to duplicate by a pseudepigraphic author, but quite a natural occurrence if we accept the epistle’s own authorial claims.

Another inconsistency raised is that the two epistles have very different ways of relating to the OT. 2 Peter not only has fewer references to the OT, but according to Mayor, the contacts he does have are “far less intimate” than 1 Peter.⁸⁷ However, even though there certainly are differences at this point, it hardly warrants the rejection of Petrine authorship. Although 2 Peter has

⁷⁸ Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude* (New York: Doubleday, 1993) 119. Neyrey cites authors who refer to 2 Peter’s language as “pompous” and “Baboo Greek.” See also discussion by Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 443.

⁷⁹ Although it must be acknowledged that many scholars deem 1 Timothy and Titus to also be pseudepigraphic (Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction* 243).

⁸⁰ Green, *Reconsidered* 12.

⁸¹ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* 144.

⁸² Mayor, *Jude, II Peter* ci–cii.

⁸³ *Ibid.* civ.

⁸⁴ Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude* 119.

⁸⁵ Donald Senior, *1&2 Peter* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1980) xiii.

⁸⁶ Mayor, *Jude, II Peter* civ.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* lxxxix.

fewer formal quotations, his clear allusions to the OT are made from Psalms (2 Pet 3:8), Proverbs (2 Pet 2:22); Isaiah (2 Pet 3:13) which are each explicitly cited in 1 Peter.⁸⁸ This remarkable correlation seems to suggest the separate writings of one person rather than a deliberate imitation; thus it can hardly be considered accidental. This connection is supported by references to Noah in each epistle (1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 3:6) and to the OT prophecy (1 Pet 1:10–12; 2 Pet 1:20–21). Both of these topics will be discussed further below.

After examining these general arguments from vocabulary and style two critical observations are in order. First, these type of arguments for pseudonymity often fail to consider the different *Sitz im Leben* of the two epistles. At points it seems the critics almost expect Peter's second epistle to be simply a rehash of the same material so that identical vocabulary and themes would reappear.⁸⁹ However, this expectation is certainly unreasonable considering the very different circumstances and purposes behind each epistle. 1 Peter deals with the church facing persecution and 2 Peter is battling false teachings. Thus 1 Peter is designed to encourage and foster hope, whereas 2 Peter is designed to warn and inform. One would expect an entirely different tone, attitude, vocabulary and disposition. In fact, considering their substantially different themes, it would be quite strange if the two epistles exhibited too much correlation; indeed this would cause us to suspect that 2 Peter was a deliberate forgery.

Second, another difficulty with these types of arguments is seen in the fact that Peter's writing style is not so easily defined or identified as some other New Testament authors (e.g. John and Paul). J. E. Huther comments: "It should not be left unnoticed that Peter's literary character, as seen in his first epistle, is not . . . so sharply defined or original that each of his productions reveals its authorship."⁹⁰ He goes on to admit: "Peter's style is difficult to determine."⁹¹ Indeed, Peter's style is difficult to determine because we have so little that is written by him. Can we really assume that the 543 different vocabulary words⁹² of his first epistle really capture the fullness, breadth and potential of Peter's style?⁹³ Thus it seems that many of the stylistic ar-

⁸⁸ Sidebottom, *James, Jude, 2 Peter* 97.

⁸⁹ Gleason Archer notes: "The same author tends to use an entirely different vocabulary and tone when he discusses different subject matter. This is readily demonstrable for all the great authors of world literature who have written on different themes and in different genres. For example, Milton's prose essays bear little resemblance to his pastoral poems . . . and those in turn present a notable contrast to his epic poetry like *Paradise Lost*. Yet these contrasts, which could be supported by long lists of words found in the one composition but not in the other, would hardly suffice to prove a difference in authorship. Everybody knows that Milton wrote them all" (Gleason Archer, *The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982] 426).

⁹⁰ J. E. Huther, "The Second Epistle of Peter," *Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. x (Winona Lake, IN: Alpha 1980) 359.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² See footnote 77 for an explanation of the origin of this figure.

⁹³ See Moisés Silva, "The Pauline Style as Lexical Choice: ΓΙΝΩΣΚΕΙ and Related Verbs," in *Pauline Studies: Essays presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on his 70th Birthday*, ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris (Devon, England: Paternoster, 1980) 184–207, for an excellent treatment of how different vocabulary doesn't necessarily imply different authorship but may just be due to natural stylistic diversity. Silva states: "To be sure, extensive lists . . . may create a cumulative effect of some significance but even this may be illusory, due to the small sample of material available to us" (p. 198).

guments against 2 Peter engage in circular reasoning at this point: 1 Peter's style is only able to provide an absolute standard for what is constituted "Petrine" (thus not allowing any other document with stylistic divergence) if we already assume from the outset that 1 Peter is the only authentic work that we possess.⁹⁴

2. *Similarities between 1 and 2 Peter.* Despite the fact that there genuinely are differences between the epistles we must not fail to overlook the similarities between the two. There are clear parallels in the use of language and ideas:⁹⁵ (1) The ἰσότημον of 2 Peter 1:1 and τίματα in 1:4 correspond to the τιμήν of 1 Peter 1:7 and the τιμῶν of 1 Peter 1:19. (2) The salutation in 2 Peter 1:2, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη πληθυνθείη, corresponds exactly to that of 1 Peter 1:2, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη πληθυνθείη. Neither of these salutations appears anywhere else in the NT. This evidence corresponds well if Peter is the author of both epistles, but it would be rather odd for a pseudepigraphic author to meticulously copy this particular phrase word for word and yet copy nothing else from the introduction. (3) In 2 Peter 1:3 ἀρετή is also found in 1 Peter 2:9, ἀρετᾶς. It is important to note that this word is rare in the NT and in both verses the word is applied to God himself. (4) ἐπόπται of 2 Peter 1:16 parallels ἐποπτεύοντες in 1 Peter 2:12. (5) We see similarity in idea when the ἀγοράσαντα in 2 Peter 2:1 speaks of whom Christ "bought" with his blood and 1 Peter 1:18 speaks of how we have not been redeemed with perishable things, such as silver or gold, but with the imperishable, i.e. the blood of Christ. (6) Correspondence is seen between ἀσελγεία in 2 Peter 2:7 and ἀσελγείας in 1 Peter 4:3. This word is found only nine times in the NT and occurs in the above two references and also 2 Peter 2:18. Thus, three out of the nine occurrences are found in the Petrine epistles. (7) It seems Peter draws a contrast between the κατάρας τέκνα of 2 Peter 2:14 and the τέκνα ὑπακοῆς of 1 Peter 1:14. (8) The reference in 2 Peter 3:3 to the end of time as ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν parallels 1 Peter which describes them as ἐσχάτου τῶν χρόνων. This is a prominent theme in both epistles. (9) When one reads in 2 Peter 3:14 that followers of Christ are to be found ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμόμητοι, one cannot help but recall 1 Peter 1:19 which declares that Christ himself was ἀμόμου καὶ ἀσπίλου. Furthermore, the combination of these words is found only in these two places in the entire New Testament.⁹⁶

In addition to grammatical comparisons between the two epistles there are also several prominent topics that appear in both. (1) The second coming of the Lord is an obvious theme in both epistles.⁹⁷ 2 Peter 2:9 describes it as the "day of judgment" where the world will be destroyed by fire (2 Pet 3:7). The readers are urged by the author to look forward to this time (2 Pet 3:12). In 1 Peter

⁹⁴ This is exemplified by E. M. Sidebottom when he justifies his rejection of 2 Peter's authenticity with a statement like the following: "Such a sentence as 3:1 . . . sounds odd in the mouth of Peter" (*James, Jude, 2 Peter* 100). But, how does Sidebottom really know what "sounds odd" in Peter's mouth when we have such a small amount written by him? And since when does "sounding odd" qualify a document as pseudonymous?

⁹⁵ The following compilation is adapted from Green, *Reconsidered* 12–13.

⁹⁶ Warfield, "Canonicity" 71.

⁹⁷ Mayor, *Jude, II Peter* lxxx–lxxxi.

we see that our inheritance waiting for us in heaven is ready to be revealed “in the last time” (1 Pet 1:5). The chief shepherd will appear and will give to his people a crown of glory (1 Pet 5:4). 1 Peter also calls the readers to look ahead and be watchful because “the end of all things is near” (1 Pet 4:7). (2) Noah being saved from the flood is another common theme.⁹⁸ 2 Peter speaks of how Noah was delivered from the flood (2 Pet 2:5) and how the earth was formerly destroyed by water (2 Pet 3:6–7). We see this theme also in 1 Peter 3:19–21 when it is said that Christ preached to those who disobeyed in the days of Noah. There is an interesting connection to note here. 2 Peter 2:5 describes Noah as a κήρυκα (“preacher”) of righteousness which is the only place in the NT where Noah is described as such. In 1 Peter 3:19 we see the fact that Christ went and ἐκήρυξεν (“preached”) to those in Noah’s day. If one understands this text in 1 Peter as Christ preaching “through” Noah,⁹⁹ then we have an amazing correlation between the two epistles. Also we see how God is μακροθυμῆ (longsuffering) so that all may come to repentance in 2 Peter 3:9, 15 and how the gospel was preached in 1 Peter 3:20 to those in the days of Noah when God’s μακροθυμία (longsuffering) waited. These intimate connections can hardly be attributed to any sort of pseudonymous author. (3) The final topical connection to make at this point is that both epistles are concerned with prophecy.¹⁰⁰ 2 Peter 1:21 tells us that no προφητεία (prophecy) ever came about by the will of a man, but by the πνεύματος (spirit) were they carried along. 1 Peter 1:10–11 speaks of how the προφῆται (prophets) spoke by the πνεῦμα (spirit) of Christ.

The cumulative effect of the above examples, which is by no means exhaustive, demonstrates that there are clear parallels between the two epistles pointing to Peter as a possible (if not likely) author. I suppose one could posit that the “real” author of 2 Peter merely carried over these nuances and incorporated them into the second epistle. However, to believe that an author pretending to be Peter would be able to weave such an intricate and subtle literary web is surely gratuitous. Any man that could do such would be a compositional genius with unspeakable abilities. But this would seem peculiar in light of the fact that many other parts of the letter seem to be “clumsy” and the author at points makes clear grammatical errors.¹⁰¹ Would our imposition be so inconsistent?

In addition to the above mentioned parallels between 1 and 2 Peter, there are also significant parallels between 2 Peter and some of Peter’s speeches in the book of Acts. The verb λαγχάνω (“I receive”) in 2 Peter 1:1 occurs only four times in the NT including Peter’s speech to the eleven in Acts 1:17.¹⁰² The word εὐσέβεια is used four times in 2 Peter (1:3, 6, 7; 3:11) and occurs only 11 times elsewhere in the NT, one of which is Peter’s speech in Acts 3:12.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Ibid. lxxxi.

⁹⁹ This is the interpretation of Augustine, Aquinas, Bede, Lightfoot, Grudem and E. P. Clowney and the one I find the most convincing.

¹⁰⁰ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 443.

¹⁰¹ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* 137–138.

¹⁰² Green, *Reconsidered* 13.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 13.

2 Peter 2:13 and 2:15 use the phrase *μισθὸν ἀδικίας* (“wages of wickedness”), and the only other place in the entire NT where this phrase is used is on the lips of Peter in Acts 1:18.

3. *The Relationship between 2 Peter and Jude.* It is necessary at this point to briefly comment upon the relationship between 2 Peter and Jude. E. M. Sidebottom states, “The correspondence between the two writings are [*sic*] too close to be a matter of accidental coincidence.”¹⁰⁴ Richard Bauckham agrees: “That some kind of close relationship exists between 2 Peter and Jude is obvious to all readers.”¹⁰⁵ Most scholars see a clear literary relationship between Jude 4–13, 16–18 and 2 Peter 2:1–18, 3:1–3. This leaves us with three choices: (a) 2 Peter is dependent upon Jude, (b) Jude is dependent upon 2 Peter, or (c) both are dependent on some common document.

What relevance does this debate have on the authorship of 2 Peter? The current consensus is that 2 Peter is dependent upon Jude, and since Jude is generally dated after the life of Peter, it is determined that he could not have been the author of 2 Peter.¹⁰⁶ Space does not permit a lengthy discussion here, but two observations are in order. First, it is not at all obvious that 2 Peter is dependent upon Jude. Many scholars such as Luther, Guthrie, Spitta, Zahn and Bigg all see Jude as dependent upon 2 Peter. Guthrie comments, “It is not absolutely conclusive, in spite of an overwhelming majority verdict in favor, that 2 Peter actually borrowed from Jude.”¹⁰⁷ Neyrey argues that those who suggest the priority of Jude “have by no means proven it.”¹⁰⁸

Second, even if 2 Peter did borrow from Jude, the date of Jude is still very much up for debate. Neyrey comments again that “there is scant data for taking a firm position as to date.”¹⁰⁹ Luke Timothy Johnson concurs, “There is also no way to date [Jude] accurately. There is nothing about Jude that would prohibit its being a letter written by a follower of Jesus in Palestine during the first generation of the Christian movement.”¹¹⁰ Bauckham, who ultimately rejects the authenticity of 2 Peter, makes the startling declaration that Jude “might very plausibly be dated in the 50’s, and nothing requires a later date.”¹¹¹ Thus, considering the degree to which these two questions are open-ended, we need not overly concern ourselves with this question of literary dependence between Jude and 2 Peter. The evidence at this point is inconclusive and does not point us in one way or the other.¹¹²

¹⁰⁴ Sidebottom, *James, Jude, 2 Peter* 141.

¹⁰⁵ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* 141.

¹⁰⁶ W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1984) 431. See also A. Feuillet, “Le peche eroque aux chapitres 3 et 6, 1–4 de la Genese. Le peche des Auges de l’Epi-tre de Jude et de la Seconde Epitre de Pierre,” *Divinitas* 35/3 (1991) 207–229. Feuillet argues that 2 Peter 2:4 depends on Jude 6.

¹⁰⁷ Guthrie, *NT Introduction* 816.

¹⁰⁸ Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude* 122.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 31.

¹¹⁰ Johnson, *Writings* 444.

¹¹¹ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* 13.

¹¹² Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction to the New Testament* 438.

In conclusion to this section, it can be said that the literary and stylistic considerations in 2 Peter, although providing helpful insights, fail to present a conclusive case against its authenticity. There seems to be no overwhelming reason offered for why we could not accept the epistles own claims to authorship—moreover, there are significant similarities between the two epistles which prove to be quite impressive. When all the evidence is weighed, we can at least agree with Joseph Mayor, who ultimately denies the epistle's authenticity, that at least when it comes to stylistic divergence, "there is not the chasm between [1 & 2 Peter] which some would try to make out."¹¹³

IV. HISTORICAL AND DOCTRINAL PROBLEMS

The third and final pin in the argument against 2 Peter is various historical and doctrinal contradictions that seem to indicate that Peter could not have been the author. The suggested problems are quite numerous so we will be able to examine only the primary ones below.

1. *Personal References.* One cannot help but notice the many personal allusions to the authorship of the epistle. The author identifies himself as Συμεὼν Πέτρος which is different from simply Πέτρος in 1 Peter 1:1. It is of course alleged by the critics that the addition of "Simon" is simply an pseudonymous device designed to give the illusion that this is the Simon Peter of the Gospels where this double name is mostly used. However, this suggestion seems strange for several reasons. First, if the author used the first epistle as a model and was trying to convince the readers that he was the same author of the previous letter (2 Pet 3:1), then why make such an obvious (and therefore risky) change? Secondly, and even more problematic, is the use of the Hebraism Συμεὼν rather than the more common Σιμῶν. This is a much older form of the name and is used in reference to Peter only one other time in the New Testament in Acts 15:14 where James speaks of Peter.¹¹⁴ If the pseudonymous author wanted to promote a stigma of authenticity, then why would he not use the name Σιμῶν which is the most common in the Gospels?¹¹⁵ Furthermore, this older name does not appear in any of the Apostolic Fathers nor in any of the pseudo-Petrine literature of the time period.¹¹⁶ It is difficult to imagine that this author would have known of a name for Peter which was no longer used in his day.

The mention of the transfiguration (2 Pet 1:17–18) is considered by many scholars to be yet more evidence of a pseudepigraphist. It was common for the authors of pseudonymous works to include references to events in the

¹¹³ Mayor, *Jude, II Peter* civ.

¹¹⁴ The term is only used seven times total in the New Testament (only 2 Peter 1:1 and Acts 15:14 refer to the apostle Peter).

¹¹⁵ If our impostor was seeking an air of authenticity, then surely he would have picked the form of "Simon" that appears in Matthew 16:17–18 when Jesus says, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

¹¹⁶ Guthrie, *NT Introduction* 820.

lives of the authors they are trying to imitate in order to bring an illusion of authenticity.¹¹⁷ However, why would the author choose the transfiguration considering it was not a prominent topic in later Christian preaching? The only reason for choosing the transfiguration would have been if the author sought to use it as a basis for some new revelation supposedly received on the mountain. However, the transfiguration is not mentioned along with any new teaching nor is there any of the characteristic embellishment we would expect to find in standard pseudepigraphic literature. The event is almost mentioned incidentally. This would be perfectly natural if Peter was the author, but inexplicable if he was not.

There are also clear connections between 2 Peter's account of the transfiguration and the Matthean and Lukan accounts.¹¹⁸ 2 Peter 1:17 speaks of the voice of the Lord: 'Ο υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός μου οὗτός ἐστιν, εἰς ὃ ἐγὼ εὐδόκησα. Matthew 17:5 reads: Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα. The similarities between these two accounts are striking—striking enough to suggest the writer of 2 Peter was an eyewitness. Perhaps it could be suggested that our pseudonymous author simply copied from Matthew's Gospel. However, it would seem strange that, when trying to demonstrate eyewitness authenticity, he would unnecessarily diverge from Matthew's account instead of copying it directly.¹¹⁹ The slight variations in the quote fit exceptionally well with a man quoting from his own memory, but not with a pseudonymous author trying to improve his disguise.¹²⁰

Recollections and imagery from Luke's transfiguration account also appear in 2 Peter. Luke makes a double reference to the "glory" of the transfiguration:¹²¹ ὀφθέντες ἐν δόξῃ (9:31) and εἶδον τὴν δόξαν (9:32). This has remarkable correspondence with 2 Peter 1:17: λαβὼν γὰρ παρὰ θεοῦ πατρὸς τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν φωνῆς ἐνεχθείσης αὐτῷ τοιαῦδε ὑπὸ τῆς μεγαλοπρεποῦς δόξης. In addition, Luke 9:31 tells us that Jesus was discussing his ἔξοδον ("departure") with Moses and Elijah, and in 2 Peter 1:15 the author mentions his own ἔξοδον as an introduction to the transfiguration account.¹²² Finally, we notice in 2 Peter 1:15, when discussing this ἔξοδον, the author refers to his body as a σκηνώματι ("tabernacle") which is reminiscent of Peter's words at the transfiguration when he asked if he could construct three σκηνάς (Luke 9:33).¹²³

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 820.

¹¹⁸ Denis Farkasfalvy, "The Ecclesial Setting of Pseudepigraphy in Second Peter and its Role in the Formation of the Canon," *The Second Century* 5/1 (1985–86) 5–7.

¹¹⁹ The other synoptic accounts also do not explain the unnecessary changes in the quote. Farkasfalvy's attempt to show that the quote was a combination of Matt 17:5 and 12:8 seems like special pleading (p. 6) and, even if true, would not rule out Peter as the author. See also Robert J. Miller, "Is there an Independent Attestation for the Transfiguration in 2 Peter?" *NT* 42 (1996) 620–625, for another attempt to show direct literary dependence.

¹²⁰ Some scholars have even argued that the transfiguration account in 2 Peter is more original than the synoptic accounts because the latter have been changed and developed over the years. See F. Martin, "Figures et Transfiguration" *SemiotBib* 70 (1993) 3–12.

¹²¹ Farkasfalvy, "Ecclesial Setting" 6.

¹²² Warfield, "Canonicity" 69.

¹²³ Farkasfalvy, "Ecclesial Setting" 7.

To dismiss the aforementioned factors as all coincidence or as the brilliant and exhaustive homework of a pseudepigraphic author seems to be unpersuasive. All these factors continue to hint to the reader that the author may have been an eyewitness of these things. Thus it should not surprise us that as he recalls the events certain pieces of imagery and memory continue to emerge.

2. Historical Problems. There are several historical factors in the text of 2 Peter that scholars maintain point to a late date for the epistle, thus eliminating Peter as a potential author. We will discuss several of those here.

One historical problem is the reference in 2 Peter 3:16 to “all” of Paul’s letters as *γραφάς*. Many see this pointing to a late date because all of Paul’s letters were not in circulation nor were they considered as a corpus of *γραφάς* until after the life of Peter.¹²⁴ However, we have no need to understand “all” in 3:16 as referring to anything more than all the letters of Paul that were known to Peter at the time the epistle was written.¹²⁵ It need not be surprising that Peter would consider Paul’s works to be on par with the OT Scripture. Paul claimed that authority for his own writing (2 Thess 3:14; 1 Cor 2:16, 7:17, 14:37–39) and Peter, of all people, would certainly have understood that the prophetic/apostolic witness was essentially the revelation of God (2 Pet 1:19–21).¹²⁶

It is true that the Apostolic Fathers were not quite as explicit in putting Paul’s works on the same level with the OT; however, it is not unreasonable that Peter would more quickly realize the nature of Paul’s writings.¹²⁷ Paul was *ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἡμῶν ἀδελφός* to Peter (3:15), whereas he would not be called this by the Apostolic Fathers. Moreover, this is quite a peculiar phrase for a pseudepigraphist. It is unlikely he would have expressed personal affections of this type, but this is precisely what we would expect from the apostle Peter himself.¹²⁸ It also should not be missed that Peter states Paul’s works are “hard to understand.” Would a pseudepigraphist have portrayed Peter as not understanding Paul’s letters? It would seem strange for him to attribute this epistle to Peter and then to expose Peter’s weaknesses. Indeed, the history of Jewish and Christian pseudepigraphy tends toward embellishment and exaggeration of its hero’s abilities rather than any sort of honest confession of weakness.¹²⁹ Thus, Peter’s self-deprecation favors the epistle’s authenticity.

¹²⁴ Both Moffatt (*Introduction* 363) and Kümmel (*Introduction* 432) make this objection.

¹²⁵ Blum, “2 Peter” 259.

¹²⁶ The rapidity and extent to which Paul’s epistles were circulated is often underestimated. Paul gives explicit instructions about exchanging letters (Col 4:16) and about their public reading (1 Thess 5:27).

¹²⁷ Guthrie, *NT Introduction* 826.

¹²⁸ Mayor comments, “There are many difficulties in the way of accepting the genuineness of this epistle; but the manner in which St. Paul is spoken of seems to me just what we should have expected from his brother the Apostle” (*Jude, II Peter* 166).

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* 827.

Another suggested historical problem is that οἱ πατέρες in 2 Peter 3:4 would refer to the fact that first-generation Christians have died, thus pushing the date of the epistle to the end of the first century.¹³⁰ Indeed, this verse does present some difficulties if we are to believe Peter to be the author. However, nowhere else in the NT or in the Apostolic Fathers is οἱ πατέρες used to refer to Christian “Fathers,” but is consistently used to refer to Jewish patriarchs. Indeed, this use may even make more sense when we understand the context more fully. The “scoffers” that come will mock the parousia on the grounds that things have been changeless since the very creation of the world (3:4), thus even denying the event of Noah’s flood (3:6). Now, if these scoffers are willing to refer back to the beginning of time to oppose the parousia, then it certainly is consistent for them to refer back to the Jewish patriarchs who preceded them. Bauckham admits, “Those that wish to maintain that ‘the fathers’ are OT patriarchs or prophets have the weight of usage on their side.”¹³¹ Furthermore, the entire question over the delay of the parousia was a concern in apostolic times, not during the times of the Church Fathers.¹³² Thus the fact that the question was raised at all fits with Petrine authorship.

One final historical problem we will consider is that in 2 Peter 1:14 the author mentions how his death is imminent. This seems to be a clear reference to John 21:18 where Christ told Peter how he would die. Since the book of John was not written until late in the first century, this reference would date 2 Peter later than the life of Peter. But, this connection need not demand a *literary* dependence. If the author was Peter, he certainly heard Christ’s words with his own ears and there is nothing unusual about his reference to them. Furthermore, the author of 2 Peter offers no details of Christ’s description of Peter’s death, but makes only a general and almost incidental allusion

¹³⁰ Undoubtedly, if such a reference was to the Christian fathers then it would have been quite a significant blunder on behalf of our pseudonymous author, thus giving away his true identity. It seems hard to believe that a writer pretending to be Peter would not have noticed such an obvious glitch in his disguise. Of course, it could be objected that pseudonymous authors often gave themselves away with such slips. This is true in cases where the pseudepigraphic writings are obviously substandard and full of historical and factual discrepancies but it certainly must be admitted that such a blunder seems odd in the case of 2 Peter where our author has displayed such incredible precision and attention to detail.

In addition, if this verse obviously referred to Christian “fathers” as claimed, then it would have been obvious to any observant 2nd century reader that the author was not the apostle Peter. However, we read of no such objection or observation from the Church Fathers, who were quite meticulous in their examination of documents claiming apostolic authority.

¹³¹ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* 290. Although Bauckham acknowledges the weight of the evidence is against him, he takes the position that “the fathers” refers to the previous Christian generation. He argues, “It would not be very relevant to object that these prophecies had remained unfulfilled *since OT times*” (emphasis his). However, Bauckham seems not to acknowledge the fact that the very appeal in this verse is to the “beginning of creation” and to the flood of Noah; how much more clearly could this passage refer to OT times? If he wants to maintain that “the fathers” refers to NT times, then he still has to explain the obvious appeal to the OT era.

¹³² Blum, “2 Peter” 259. Not only does the NT itself reflect the earlier concern over the parousia (John 21:20–23; Matt 25:1–13; Acts 1:6–11; 2 Thess 2:1–4), but both 1 Clement 23.3ff. and 2 Clement 11.2ff., which seem to indicate a similar concern as 2 Peter, appear to be referring to questions which arose much earlier in the church (Guthrie, *NT Introduction* 830).

to it. This seems overly subtle for a pseudonymous author because we would expect him to be unable to resist including the details of Christ's description in order to buttress his claim to be Peter himself.

The problem with 2 Peter 1:14 does not end there. Critics also ask how Peter would know his death was "imminent" (ταχινή). Some have suggested that this implies that the author was claiming some sort of direct revelation from God concerning the time of his death, thus placing the entire epistle of 2 Peter into a literary genre known as "last testaments."¹³³ Supposedly, this literary genre was used by pseudonymous authors to make sure that their words were the last on the subject—after all, if the author was dead he could not write anything else. But, the word ταχινή can be understood not only as "soon" but also as "swift," which is precisely how it is rendered in 2 Peter 2:1.¹³⁴ Thus, the reference would not be to the time of Peter's death but to the manner of Peter's death. Even if "soon" is the preferred rendering, it would not take much for an old man, as Peter most likely was, to know that his end was near. Either way, there is no explicit mention of external revelation and no compelling reason from 1:14 to assume 2 Peter is a pseudonymous "last testament."

3. *Doctrinal Differences.* Since we have considered many of the historical issues in the epistle, we now turn our attention to the alleged doctrinal contradictions between 1 and 2 Peter. Due to the subjective nature of this sort of criticism there seem to be as many alleged doctrinal differences as there are scholars to suggest them. It is interesting to note, however, that doctrinal differences were never a problem for the ancient church Fathers when examining this epistle.¹³⁵ In this section we will mainly address the criticisms of Ernst Käsemann who is a fair representative of the doctrinal concerns of modern scholarship.

The soteriology of 2 Peter is considered to be substantially different from 1 Peter and also out of step with the NT as a whole.¹³⁶ Käsemann exemplifies such a perspective: "The cross has disappeared from the Christian message . . . the vocabulary of being has replaced that of soteriological function."¹³⁷ In 1 Peter, references to the cross, the resurrection and the atoning work of Christ are common (1:3, 18–21; 2:23–25; 4:1). But references to these events are absent in 2 Peter and seem to be replaced by the mention of the transfiguration (1:17).

But does this difference indicate a defective soteriology as so many, like Kasemann, maintain? Indeed, it seems that 2 Peter has a very clear picture of the cross even though it is not as explicitly stated. 2 Peter 1:9 speaks of being τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ τῶν πάλαι αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτιῶν, which is very common language referring to Christ's atoning work. Again in 2:1 we read about those who

¹³³ Farkasfalvy, "Ecclesial Setting" 4. Bauckham classifies it as a "farewell speech" (*Jude, 2 Peter* 131).

¹³⁴ Guthrie, *NT Introduction* 821.

¹³⁵ Green, *Reconsidered* 14.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* 16.

¹³⁷ Ernst Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM, 1971) 183–184.

deny τὸν ἀγοράσαντα αὐτοὺς δεσπότην ἀρνούμενοι. This theme was seen in 1 Peter 1:18–19 which says we were redeemed with a price, namely the precious blood of Christ. Indeed, it must be remembered that 2 Peter was written to deal with false teachers, a very different purpose than that of 1 Peter, and thus we should not expect the same emphasis. In the midst of 2 Peter's purpose the cross of Christ is presupposed and forms a backdrop for all his exhortations.

Furthermore, it seems that 2 Peter reflects some soteriological themes found elsewhere in the New Testament, most importantly the concept of salvation being deemed "the way." G. C. Berkouwer notes that this phrase is consistently used throughout the New Testament as the way of salvation found in the cross of Christ.¹³⁸ Paul refers to early Christians as followers of "the way" (Acts 24:14), Christ spoke of the narrow "way" of salvation (Matt 7:13–14), the messengers of the Pharisees and Herodians acknowledged Christ taught "the way of God" (Mark 12:14), and Christ answered Thomas's question, "How do we know the way?" (John 14:5) by pointing to himself, "I am the way" (John 14:6). 2 Peter echoes this soteriological element in 2:2 where he mentions how the false teachers blaspheme "the way of truth," in 2:15 when he speaks of how these men are guilty of forsaking "the right way" in exchange for the "way of Balaam," and in 2:21 when he mentions their forsaking of "the way of righteousness."¹³⁹ These striking soteriological consistencies not only make such critiques of 2 Peter seem ill-founded but also raise questions about whether our pseudonymous author could have even perceived such subtle NT trends.

Käsemann and others also attack the Christology of the epistle and consider it to be deficient. He claims that the "manward-oriented eschatology" (which we will examine below) pushes the lordship and prominence of Christ into the background.¹⁴⁰ However, upon examination, the Christology of 2 Peter is an exalted one and consistent with the rest of the NT. The transfiguration of 1:17 declares Christ to be God's own son by the lips of the Father himself thus ensuring that power, majesty, honor and glory are his (1:16–17). Christ is given the titles of κύριος (14 times), σωτήρ (5 times) and δεσπότης (once), which all clearly emphasize his divinity and power. He is the one whose ἐντολή we must heed (2:21), it is only by him that we can hope to produce godly fruit (1:8), and it is by him that men find salvation (2:20). The doxology sums up the author's emphasis on Christ, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen" (3:18).

Since 2 Peter speaks so much of the parousia, it is no surprise that Käsemann also attacks his eschatology as being sub-Christian. He comments, "The real theological problem of the epistle we are considering lies in the fact that its eschatology lacks any vestige of Christological orientation."¹⁴¹ What then is the orientation of this eschatology, according to Käsemann? "The great and

¹³⁸ G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: Faith and Justification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) 35.

¹³⁹ Bauckham acknowledges the theme of "the way," *Jude, 2 Peter* 152.

¹⁴⁰ Käsemann, *Essays* 182.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 178.

glorious promises which have been made to us are all aimed at making us partakers of the divine nature.”¹⁴² In other words, due to 2 Peter 1:4 and other texts, Käsemann suggests that the eschatological hope is really for us to become filled with the divine nature, thus eliminating any sort of apocalyptic elements in the parousia. Consequently, he has his own version of why the transfiguration instead of the resurrection was included: “[The author of 2 Peter] sees the resurrection of Christ as something which affects only Christ himself and no longer as that eschatological event which brings in the general resurrection. Against this, the Transfiguration is something which happened to the earthly Jesus and can therefore be used as an example of what awaits us also.”¹⁴³

Bauckham correctly notes that these charges by Käsemann “are not entirely fair to 2 Peter.”¹⁴⁴ It seems evident that Käsemann has misunderstood several key texts which he uses to undergird his conclusions. First, it is apparent that he misunderstands the purpose in mentioning the transfiguration. Peter’s appeal to the transfiguration was not designed to demonstrate what will be true of us, but to demonstrate the “power” and “majesty” of Christ (1:16) and the “honor and glory” (1:17) given to Christ by the Father by which he would rule and judge the universe in his second coming.¹⁴⁵ Käsemann, in his efforts to make the transfiguration the focal point, conveniently ignores the obvious declaration in 2 Peter 3 concerning the literal future return of Christ and apocalyptic judgment. He provides an explanation for this and casually dismisses it as “probably drawn from some other material.”¹⁴⁶

Second, it seems that Käsemann makes 2 Peter 1:4 say more than it intends. To be partakers of the “divine nature” is not to participate in some potential transfiguration experience as Käsemann suggests, but is simply a reference to the sanctification Christians receive in the present. The context makes this evident. 2 Peter 1:3 tells us that “his divine (θείας) power has given us everything we need for life and godliness”—clearly pointing to the sanctification of the believer. Then in the very next verse (1:4) the author appeals to the promises of God in order that the readers “might become partakers of the divine (θείας) nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust” (NASB). The aorist active participle ἀποφυγόντες (escaping/having escaped) is set up as a coincident action with the verb γένησθε, clearly showing that the essence of partaking in the divine nature is the removal of worldly corruption.¹⁴⁷ The repetition of θείας further buttresses the connection between v. 3 and v. 4 and demonstrates that author is simply calling his readers to be more and more conformed to the image and glory of

¹⁴² Ibid. 179.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 187.

¹⁴⁴ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* 151.

¹⁴⁵ Bauckham concurs here by saying the author included the transfiguration “as a basis for the Parousia hope because it was God’s installation of Jesus as the one who will exercise God’s universal rule” (ibid. 152).

¹⁴⁶ Käsemann, *Essays* 180.

¹⁴⁷ R. H. Strachan declares, “The aorist participle is used of coincident action. Moral emancipation is part of the θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως,” in W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 126.

Christ (Col. 3:10). This theme is consistent with the rest of the New Testament and does necessitate any sort of alternate version of eschatology.

Furthermore, the degree to which a believer is already a partaker in the divine nature and yet looking forward to his complete transformation in Christ captures well the “already but not yet” vision of eschatology so common in the New Testament.¹⁴⁸ As Christians we already “participate in the divine nature” (1:4), but we have not yet entered into “the eternal kingdom of our Lord” (1:11). In one sense we have already escaped “the corruption in the world” (1:4), but have not yet been fully sanctified and are still to “make every effort to add to your faith” (1:5). Even though we are already elect (1:3), we are still to make our “calling and election sure” (1:10). Indeed, 2 Peter understands NT eschatology all too well.¹⁴⁹

Continuing our thoughts on eschatology, we also see that 2 Peter draws two implications from the imminent parousia that are regularly drawn elsewhere in the NT.¹⁵⁰ First, the coming of Christ is often the motive for calling Christians to *holy living*. 2 Peter exhibits this characteristic in 3:14, “So, then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.” Also, in 3:11 read, “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives.” This teaching corresponds well with 1 John 2:28 and also 1 John 3:3 when we read: “Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself.” Secondly, Christ’s return is a reason for Christians to be *watchful*. Since the day of the Lord will come swiftly like a thief (3:10), Christians are to “be on your guard so that you may not be carried away” (3:17). This certainly is parallel to the teaching of Christ when at the end of the parable of the ten virgins he says “keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour” (Matt 25:13).

Thus, we see that 2 Peter’s eschatology—and his Christology and soteriology—is surprisingly consistent with that of the NT. We can agree with Michael Green when he says, “It would appear that these discrepancies in doctrine between 1 and 2 Peter are more fancied than real.”¹⁵¹

V. CONCLUSION

As we make some concluding observations allow me to mention a particular weakness that I have observed in the case against 2 Peter. If 2 Peter is a pseudonymous work, then it fails to offer any adequate *raison d’être*. In other words, the pseudepigraphist lacks a motive. In most Christian pseudepigrapha

¹⁴⁸ This “already but not yet” theme is captured brilliantly in Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 487–497.

¹⁴⁹ Critics of 2 Peter’s eschatology, such as Mayor, often point out that 2 Peter uses a different term for the parousia. 1 Peter uses the terms ἀποκάλυψις and 2 Peter uses παρουσία, ἡμέρα κρίσεως and ἡμέρα κυρίου. However, using different terms at different times is nothing peculiar. We see Paul doing this very thing in 2 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians where he uses both ἀποκάλυψις and παρουσία (Guthrie, *NT Introduction* 836).

¹⁵⁰ Green, *Reconsidered* 18.

¹⁵¹ Michael Green, *Second Epistle* 22.

it is clear that the writing sought to promote a view which would not be accepted otherwise by the Christian church. The *Gospel of Peter*, for example, was written to promote a Docetic Christology and even seems to have an anti-Semitic agenda,¹⁵² the *Gospel of Thomas* has a clear Gnostic worldview to promote,¹⁵³ and the *Apocalypse of Peter* was designed to add to our knowledge about the future life.¹⁵⁴ Thus pseudepigraphic literature is normally connected to heretical groups.¹⁵⁵ Orthodox groups had no need for the device because their teaching was consistent with the church already and thus they would have no motive to promote it falsely under the name of an apostle. Indeed, there is nothing found in 2 Peter that could not have been said by any of the other NT writers. So, for what polemical purpose was 2 Peter written? There seems to be no convincing answer to this question. It has no evident heterodoxical agenda,¹⁵⁶ bears no clear resemblance to any other pseudo-Petrine literature, and exhibits no references to any of the second-century doctrinal controversies.¹⁵⁷ Of course, the contents are perfectly understandable if Peter was their source.

Thus, we have seen in this paper the three main problems that lead scholars to question the authenticity of 2 Peter. First, we dealt with the problems from 2 Peter's lack of external attestation. Although the support for 2 Peter is significantly weaker than the other canonical books, there is more evidence of an early date than most are willing to acknowledge. The fact that the early church finally accepted 2 Peter as fully canonical ought to add some degree

¹⁵² The Docetic influence can be seen in a comment describing Christ's crucifixion: "He was silent as if he had no pain" (v. 10; see Kelly, *Commentary* 141). Cartlidge and Dungan comment on the anti-Semitism, "this Gospel is significant in the way it reflects the rising tide of militant anti-Semitism in the second-century church" (David R. Cartlidge and David L. Dungan, *Documents for the Study of the Gospels* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980] 83). For more treatment on the anti-Semitic impulse of the Gospel of Peter see Alan Kirk, "Examining Priorities: Another Look at the Gospel of Peter's Relationship to the New Testament Gospels," *NTS* 40 (1994) 572–595.

¹⁵³ Gnosticism's emphasis on the androgynous is evident in the last verse: "For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven" (114). For more on androgyny and Gnosticism see Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1981) 57ff.

¹⁵⁴ Ehrman, *New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings* 407. Furthermore, the *Apocalypse of Peter* was also Docetic in its Christology. Peter's vision of the crucifixion is as follows: "who is this one glad and laughing on the tree? And is it another whose feet and hands they are striking?" (81:10–14). It is evident that Peter's vision here describes two different pictures of Jesus; the one laughing on the tree is the living Jesus, whereas the one being crucified is the physical, fleshly body that only appears to be Jesus. See Terrence V. Smith, *Petrine Confessions* 127ff. for more discussion.

¹⁵⁵ Guthrie, *NT Introduction* 839.

¹⁵⁶ Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961) 367. Meade (180–181) would disagree here. However, note the comment of J. A. T. Robinson, "All [pseudepigraphs], including the other pseudo-Petrine literature, had other axes to grind . . . 2 Peter does none of these things" (*Redating* 189).

¹⁵⁷ Green, *Reconsidered* 37. Many have suggested that 2 Peter is battling Gnosticism, thus dating it to the second century. However, the evidence for such a claim is significantly lacking. Many scholars find no hint of Gnosticism whatsoever: J. E. Huther says that 2 Peter "contains no reference to Gnostic views" (*Second Epistle of Peter* 371) and Bauckham states bluntly that "the opponents in 2 Peter are not Gnostics" (*Jude, 2 Peter* 156). See also Donald Senior, *1 & 2 Peter* 100. H. C. C. Cavallin, "False Teachers of 2 Peter as Pseudoprophets," seems unsure about whether these false teachers could properly be called Gnostics (266).

of weight in favor of its authenticity. Secondly, we perused the various stylistic and literary arguments against this epistle. Once again, although there are marked differences, upon closer scrutiny the evidence actually seems to introduce the possibility that there is a rather fundamental unity between both 1 and 2 Peter. Third, we discussed the various historical and doctrinal inconsistencies. The case for historical contradictions seemed somewhat inconclusive, and there was even a significant correlation between 2 Peter's doctrine and the doctrine of 1 Peter and of the NT as a whole.

Although one may not agree with every argument that seems to support the authorial claims of 2 Peter, one certainly must conclude that the case for 2 Peter's pseudonymity is somewhat tendentious and incomplete. Perhaps the issue of 2 Peter's authenticity should be taken down from our forgotten shelves, dusted off and given a closer look. If that happens, then scholarship will flourish because we were not willing to settle for conclusions that had already been reached.