

THE CURIOUS CASE OF P⁷²: WHAT AN ANCIENT MANUSCRIPT CAN TELL US ABOUT THE EPISTLES OF PETER AND JUDE

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Abstract: *This paper takes a different line of approach in exploring the canonical journeys of the epistles of Peter and Jude. Going beyond discussions of patristic witnesses, which tends to be the focus of commentaries, this study instead seeks to discover what an ancient manuscript can tell us about how these NT letters were received and used by early Christians. The focus of this study is Papyrus 72, which is the earliest extant copy of the letters of Peter and Jude in Greek. Instead of looking solely or even primarily at the text-critical issues associated with this manuscript, however, this study instead takes an artifactual approach by interpreting the manuscript artifact through the lens of its own social and literary contexts, as well as the context of its discovery, in order to understand how 1–2 Peter and Jude might have been significant for the Coptic Christian community to whom this papyrus belonged. The study argues that, in a social context where there was sharp disagreement over what represented authentic Petrine teaching, 1–2 Peter and Jude were viewed by this proto-orthodox Coptic community as consisting of the authentic and authoritative Petrine tradition.*

Key words: *papyrology, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude, Egyptian Christianity, New Testament canon, Nag Hammadi*

The history of the development of the canon lies at the heart of the question of how we got the NT. However, what quickly becomes evident to those who first study the history of the canon is that this process was not always as straightforward as one might have initially been led to believe. Such is the case for the history of the letters of Peter—especially 2 Peter—and Jude.

Concerning the canonical status of 1 Peter, the testimony from the early church is nearly unassailable. While it was evidently not included in the Muratorian Fragment or in the Syriac Canon, 1 Peter was used as authoritative Scripture by notable early Christian writers such as Polycarp, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria.¹ The church historian Eusebius also considered 1 Peter to be authentic.² In general, it was widely known, and wherever 1 Peter was known it was believed to have been genuinely authored by the apostle Peter. In regard to 2 Peter,

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¹ See D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 425–26; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, and Jude* (NAC 37; Nashville: B&H, 2003), 22–23.

² Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.3.25.

however, J. N. D. Kelly aptly describes its tumultuous journey into the canon when he says, “By contrast, no NT document had a longer or tougher struggle to win acceptance than 2 Peter.”³ Origen was aware that there were two letters attributed to Peter and accepted both as authentic,⁴ though he acknowledged that the second one was doubted by many.⁵ Second Peter also seems to have been unknown to much of the Western church prior to the middle of the fourth century, and Jerome testified that those who rejected it did so because of its significant stylistic and thematic divergences from 1 Peter.⁶ Eusebius categorized 2 Peter as one of the “disputed” books, but acknowledged that it was considered useful by many churches.⁷ Ultimately, however, 2 Peter also became recognized as canonical by both the Eastern and Western churches in spite of its embattled history.⁸

In the early church, the Epistle of Jude was also widely known and frequently used. By the beginning of the third century, Jude was accepted as authoritative Scripture by Christians from Rome (Muratorian fragment) to North Africa (Tertullian, *Cult. fem.* 1.3; Clement of Alexandria, quoted in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.1).⁹ However, even given such impressive early support, Eusebius also lists Jude among the books that were disputed within the church.¹⁰ Those who did question Jude’s authenticity often did so based on Jude’s use of *1 Enoch* and *The Assumption of Moses* from the Pseudepigrapha.¹¹ Even with due consideration given to the testimony of Eusebius, however, it does not appear that Jude’s authenticity was ever doubted to the extent that 2 Peter was in the early church, and its place in the canon was ultimately solidified as well by Athanasius in his thirty-ninth festal letter, issued in 367.

Regarding later reception history, some sixteenth-century interpreters including Protestants such as Luther and Calvin, and Catholic scholars like Erasmus and Cajetan, had shared concerns about 2 Peter and Jude.¹² Even so, most interpreters prior to the nineteenth century had no problem accepting the reputed apostolicity of these letters. However, following on the heels of historical criticism and textual

³ J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on The Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (BNTC; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1969), 224.

⁴ Origen, *Hom. Josh.* 7.1.

⁵ Eusebius quotes Origen as saying, “Peter has left behind one acknowledged epistle, and perhaps a second, for it is questioned” (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.11). See also Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 5.3.

⁶ Kelly, *Commentary*, 224; Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 1.

⁷ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.3.1–4. It is important to note, however, that Eusebius made a distinction between “disputed” books that were still canonical and those that were considered “spurious” and rejected by the church. See Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 201–8.

⁸ See the helpful discussion of the issues regarding 2 Peter in Michael J. Kruger, “The Authenticity of 2 Peter,” *JETS* 42.4 (1999), 645–71.

⁹ Kelly, *Commentary*, 223. See also the discussion on reception history in Wolfgang Grünstüdl and Tobias Nicklas, “Searching for Evidence: The History of Reception of the Epistles of Jude and 2 Peter,” in *Reading 1–2 Peter and Jude: A Resource for Students* (ed. Eric F. Mason and Troy W. Martin; Atlanta: SBL, 2014), 215–28.

¹⁰ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.13.6; 14.1.

¹¹ Kelly, *Commentary*, 223–24; Gene Green, *Jude & 2 Peter* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 26–33; cf. Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 4.

¹² See Kelly, *Commentary*, 223.

criticism, several biblical scholars today now dispute the dating and authenticity of 1–2 Peter and Jude, with many now considering them to be pseudonymous writings from early Christianity.

It must be candidly stated that, from a strictly evidentiary standpoint, the arguments for the authenticity of 1 Peter and Jude are easier to make than are those for 2 Peter. Where one stands on the question of 2 Peter's date and authenticity largely depends on whether one accords more weight to the evidence found within the text of that epistle, or instead to the spotty record of its reception history in the early church. Similarly, where one stands on the authenticity of 1 Peter and Jude depends on whether one accepts the internal testimony of those letters and the witness of the early church in their favor, or whether one is predisposed to regard these letters as pseudonymous. This has led to the current impasse in modern scholarship on issues pertaining to the date and authenticity of these Catholic Epistles, and one wonders whether rehashing these seemingly intractable debates by simply reviewing the same information again and again, as is often done in commentaries, can lead us to any further insight into the canonical journeys of 1–2 Peter and Jude, their relationship, or how they were regarded within the early church.

While most studies of the letters of Peter and Jude spend a great deal of time focusing on the patristic discussions and debates related to their authenticity, very few have looked to actual extant manuscripts of these letters in order to see what can be learned from them about how these Catholic epistles were received and used by various Christian communities in antiquity. This seems like a serious oversight since there is a wealth of information to be culled from the early manuscripts of the NT which can tell us a great deal about the social history of early Christianity and supplement the significant gaps in our knowledge left from our incomplete historical sources.¹³ Therefore, as a way of pushing the discussion forward, and perhaps in a different and more interesting direction, this paper will seek to reexamine the text of P⁷², which is the earliest manuscript that we possess of both the Petrine epistles and Jude, in order to see what this manuscript can possibly tell us, if anything, about how these letters were received and used by at least one ancient Christian community living in Egypt during the third and fourth centuries. Thus, rather than concentrating solely on the text-critical issues engendered by P⁷², which have typically been the focus of most prior publications on this manuscript, this paper will instead investigate what P⁷² as a *literary artifact with social significance* can tell us about the early reception history of the epistles of Peter and Jude. In doing so, the following paragraphs will discuss both the general characteristics of P⁷² and the social and literary contexts surrounding the manuscript and its discovery which are vital for understanding its significance as a piece of material culture.

¹³ For a discussion of the role of textual criticism and reception history as a vital part of this discipline, see Bart D. Ehrman, "The Text as Window: New Testament Manuscripts and the Social History of Early Christianity," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes; 2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 803–30. See also David C. Parker, *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 181–90.

Afterwards, this paper will discuss conclusions based on the available details of this manuscript. This paper will argue that the apostle Peter was of special importance for the Coptic community associated with \mathfrak{P}^{72} , and that they viewed 1–2 Peter and Jude as comprising the authentic and authoritative Petrine tradition of orthodoxy.

I. \mathfrak{P}^{72} AND THE LETTERS OF PETER AND JUDE IN EGYPTIAN CHRISTIANITY

1. *Description of the manuscript.* The curious case of \mathfrak{P}^{72} further associates the Petrine epistles with Jude.¹⁴ Part of the Bodmer collection (P.Bodmer VII and VIII), \mathfrak{P}^{72} dates to sometime around 250–300 CE and contains the earliest extant copies of both 1–2 Peter and Jude in Greek.¹⁵ This papyrus manuscript was originally part of a codex which was divided and sent to libraries in Geneva, Cologne, and Rome following its discovery in 1952. Before it was dismantled and sold, however, this codex and \mathfrak{P}^{72} had been discovered as part of the Dishna Papers collection found near the Pachomian monastery at Jabal Abu Mana, just north of the Dishna plain in Upper Egypt.¹⁶ In all, the codex probably originally contained 190 pages (172 are left),¹⁷ and there were at least four different scribes who played a role in its copying, pagination, and collection. The codex is also smaller than some others, measuring just 15.5 cm x 14.5 cm, leading scholars to believe that it was probably intended for personal use by members of the Pachomian community rather than for liturgical use in corporate worship.¹⁸ The phonetic misspellings, itacisms, and numerous corrections throughout the manuscript show that the copyist who produced \mathfrak{P}^{72} was a non-professional Coptic scribe for whom Greek was a second language.¹⁹ Concerning the text itself, the texts of 2 Peter and Jude in \mathfrak{P}^{72} have been found to bear the greatest similarity to that of Codex Vaticanus, while its text of 1 Peter has been shown to resemble that found in Codex Alexandrinus.²⁰ This evidence is especially interesting because it confirms that earlier forms of the

¹⁴ The first critical edition of \mathfrak{P}^{72} was published in Michel Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer VII–IX: L'Épître de Jude, les deux Épîtres de Pierre, les Psaumes 33 et 34* (Cologny-Geneva: Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, 1959).

¹⁵ Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer*, 7. See also Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* (trans. Erroll F. Rhodes; 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 87–93.

¹⁶ For a full inventory of what was discovered among the Dishna Papers, see James M. Robinson, *The Pachomian Monastic Library at the Chester Beatty Library and the Bibliothèque Bodmer* (The Institute for Antiquity and Christianity Occasional Papers 19; Claremont: Claremont Graduate School, 1990), 19–21. Other significant Greek biblical papyri discovered in this trove were \mathfrak{P}^{66} (Gospel of John), \mathfrak{P}^{75} (Gospels of Luke and John), and P.Chester Beatty XIV = Rahlfs 2150 (excerpts from Pss 2, 8, 26, and 31 [LXX]).

¹⁷ Tommy Wasserman, “Papyrus 72 and the *Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex*,” *NTS* 51 (2005): 137–54, 138.

¹⁸ E.g. see Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer*, 9–10.

¹⁹ See James R. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 549, 558–582.

²⁰ See Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer*, 34; Jerome Quinn, “Notes on the Text of the P72 1 PT 2,3; 5,14; and 5,9,” *CBQ* 27 (1965): 241–49, esp. 242 n. 12; Sakae Kubo, *\mathfrak{P}^{72} and the Codex Vaticanus* (Studies and Documents 27; Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1965); F. W. Beare, “1 Peter in Papyrus 72,” *JBL* 80 (1961): 253–60.

texts found in each of these great codices were being used by scribes working in Upper Egypt by at least the middle of the third-century CE, since most would agree that the copying of 1–2 Peter and Jude in P⁷² took place around that time.

What is particularly intriguing about the codex that originally contained P⁷², however, is what is *not* to be found among its contents. There are no other Catholic Epistles, no Paulines, no Pastorals, no Acts, and not a single Gospel. Instead we simply find the Petrine letters and Jude alone from the NT, gathered together with an odd assortment of apocryphal and other non-biblical texts. In all, the codex containing P⁷² included: the *Nativity of Mary*, 3 Corinthians, *Odes of Solomon* 11, the Epistle of Jude, Melito's *Paschal Homily*, a fragment of an unknown hymn, the *Apolo-gy of Phileas*, portions of Psalms 33 and 34 (LXX), and 1–2 Peter.²¹ The seemingly hodgepodge nature of this collection of texts is the reason why scholars have come to refer to it as “the Miscellaneous Codex.”

2. P⁷² in its social and literary contexts. What could have led scribes to put together such an odd assortment of manuscripts? Tommy Wasserman notes that there has long been speculation as to what sort of theological “common denominator” might have brought these texts together, and argues that a concern for Christological orthodoxy was likely a major unifying theme.²² This view is supported by the undeniable presence of scribal emendations in P⁷²'s text of 1–2 Peter and Jude that more explicitly identify the human Jesus as God (1 Pet 5:1; 2 Pet 1:2; Jude 5), a theme which Wasserman and others have shown to be repeated throughout other texts found in this codex as well.²³ However, Brice Jones has recently and forcefully challenged this idea by reviving the thesis of Eric Turner who argued that the codex came together through a simple process of gradual growth resulting from a practical concern to make the best use of limited writing materials.²⁴ Jones's argument effectively casts doubt on whether there was any theological rationale behind the codex's collection at all, and suggests more banal and arbitrary processes were responsible.

²¹ Tommy Wasserman, *The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission* (ConBNT 43; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell Intl, 2006), 33; Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barrett, *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts: New and Complete Transcriptions with Photographs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), 479; Stanley E. Porter, *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 122–23; Eric G. Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1977), 79–81.

²² Wasserman, *Epistle of Jude*, 47–49.

²³ See *ibid.*; *idem*, “Papyrus 72,” 147–48; Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 609–14; Barbara Aland, “Welche Rolle spielen Textkritik und Textgeschichte für das Verständnis des Neuen Testaments? Frühe Leserperspektiven,” *NTS* 52 (2006): 303–18, esp. 310; Terrance Callan, “Reading the Earliest Copies of 2 Peter,” *Bib* 93 (2012), 427–550, esp. 432–34; Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 85–86. 1 Pet 5:1 contains the phrase τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ παθημάτων instead of τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων, making it explicit that it was God who suffered in Jesus when he was on the cross. 2 Pet 1:2 also identifies the human Jesus as God with the line ἐν ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν, omitting the conjunction καὶ which comes after θεοῦ. Jude 5b substitutes θεὸς Χριστός for κύριος, making it explicit that Jesus was pre-existent as the God who saved Israel in the exodus.

²⁴ Brice C. Jones, “The Bodmer ‘Miscellaneous’ Codex and the Crosby-Schoyen Codex MS 193: A New Proposal,” *JGRChJ* 8 (2011–2012), 9–20, esp. 14–16. Cf. Turner, *Typology of the Early Codex*, 79–81.

While Turner (and, by extension, Jones) is certainly correct in noting the fact that scrupulous scribes were loath to waste perfectly good papyrus, this seems unsatisfactory by itself as an *in toto* explanation for the Miscellaneous Codex. It is important to note that Jones does not take into account that, because of insufficient access to the manuscript and due to incomplete information about the codex's provenance — problems which Turner himself lamented — Turner was simply unable at the time he conducted his initial research on the Bodmer Papyri to account for the larger social context of where this codex was discovered, or what that could have told him of its significance.²⁵ Since the intrepid investigative work of James Robinson in the 1980s, scholars now universally acknowledge that \mathfrak{P}^{72} was, indeed, unearthed as part of the Dishna Papers collection (also known as the Pachomian Monastic Library), and that it did not come from Panopolis with the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri as Turner had originally thought. It is also vital to note that the Dishna Papers were discovered just a mere 7.5 miles east of where the Nag Hammadi manuscript trove was found.²⁶ The astonishing geographical proximity of these manuscript finds; the clear overlap in dating of several of these texts; their shared cultural, religious, and linguistic contexts; and the striking literary artifacts found in each discovery (more to be said on this in a moment) led Robinson to believe that these collections were related.²⁷ Robinson also averred that the community who originally possessed the Nag Hammadi library might once have been a proto-orthodox monastic community like the people who owned the Dishna Papers.²⁸ However, subsequent research has significantly challenged Robinson's original theory of a Pachomian origin for the Nag Hammadi texts.²⁹ While most would still agree that there is a connection between the Dishna and Nag Hammadi finds, the vast differences in the contents of these collections instead more likely points to the existence of two Coptic Christian groups with vastly different theo-

²⁵ See Turner, *Typology of the Early Codex*, 79–80. Turner himself lamented the fact that while he had visited the Bodmer library on multiple occasions, he was not able to see the complete manuscript, and could not reach strong conclusions about its origins (see Eric G. Turner, *Greek Papyri: An Introduction* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968], 52–53). However, following the work of James Robinson which convincingly associated the Bodmer Papyri with the Dishna Papers, Turner issued a retraction of his former position, which was also published by Robinson (see the discussion in James M. Robinson, “The Discovering and Marketing of Coptic Manuscripts: The Nag Hammadi Codices and the Bodmer Papyri,” in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* [ed. Birger A. Pearson and James E. Goehring; Studies in Antiquity and Christianity; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986], 2–25, esp. 2 n. 2).

²⁶ See Wasserman, *Epistle of Jude*, 30–50; Comfort and Barrett, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts*, 479. For a fascinating history of the collection and of the monastic community with which \mathfrak{P}^{72} was associated, see James M. Robinson, *The Pachomian Monastic Library*.

²⁷ James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (3rd ed.; New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 17.

²⁸ Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library*, 16–22. See also James E. Goehring, “New Frontiers in Pachomian Studies,” in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (ed. Birger A. Pearson and James E. Goehring; Studies in Antiquity and Christianity; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 236–57, esp. 246–48.

²⁹ E.g. see Nicola D. Lewis and Justine A. Blount, “Rethinking the Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices,” *JBL* 133 (2014): 399–419; Ewa Wipszycka, “The Nag Hammadi Library and the Monks: A Papyrologist's Point of View,” *JJP* 30 (2000): 179–91.

logical orientations.³⁰ It is also not unrealistic to posit that these two communities might have been aware of each other, and that they might have interacted with each other at some level. Indeed, orthographical studies which have compared the scribal habits found within some of the other Bodmer Papyri and the Nag Hammadi codices suggest the possibility that they might even have purchased some of their texts from the same scriptoria³¹ operating in that vicinity of Upper Egypt.³² This information could significantly bolster Wasserman's hypothesis about the origins of the Miscellaneous Codex. While there are certainly questions that still remain concerning the collection and intention behind the Miscellaneous Codex,³³ the emphasis on Christological orthodoxy which permeates several of the its texts,³⁴ the scribal emendations in P⁷² intended to bolster said Christological orthodoxy, and the stern warnings in 1–2 Peter and Jude against antinomianism and false teachers probably would have made this an attractive collection of texts for proto-orthodox Coptic Christians living just a short distance from an affluent, heretical gnostic group.³⁵

Additionally, the presence of 1–2 Peter and Jude within the Miscellaneous Codex could also be taken as evidence of a still-forming canonical process for this particular Egyptian Christian community, especially in regard to Jude. For instance, the text of Jude does not contain any marginal notes like the texts of 1–2 Peter. Also, assuming Michel Testuz's reconstruction of the codex's ordering is right, Jude was originally placed in the front portion of the codex between *Odes of Solomon* 11

³⁰ A few scholars have also theorized that the Nag Hammadi texts belonged to a single wealthy individual. However, this does not adequately explain the scribal comments in the books which provide evidence of a community situation for these texts. See Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jennott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 5–6.

³¹ Lewis and Blount, "Rethinking the Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices," 416 n. 73. On this point, Lewis and Blount helpfully note that there is no evidence confirming the existence of private Pachomian scriptoria during or prior to the fourth century (they note that the earliest references to Pachomian scribal activity are to be found in Palladius Lausiac, *History* 32.12 and in John Cassian, *Institutes* 4.12). This suggests the probability that at least some of the earliest texts found among both the Dishna and Nag Hammadi collections were purchased by these groups from scriptoria in the vicinity, and that they did not all originate from scribes operating in Pachomian monasteries.

³² Lundhaug and Jennott, *Monastic Origins*, 227–30. Lundhaug and Jennott note studies that show similarities in orthography, the quality of the scribal work, the multi-lingual nature of some of the texts in both collections (especially the use of Bohairic and Sahidic), the similar types of blessings directed to readers by the scribes in some of the manuscripts, the use of centered subscript titles, and the occasional placement of titles on the front flyleaves of texts.

³³ See Tobias Nicklas and Tommy Wasserman, "Theologische Linien im *Codex Bodmer Miscellanea?*," in *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Texts and Their World* (ed. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas; Texts and Editions for NT Study 2; Boston: Brill, 2006), 161–88.

³⁴ There are a number of places throughout the Miscellaneous Codex where Jesus is identified as the God of the OT, and where it is said that God, through Jesus, suffered and died on the cross (*Nativity of Mary* 15:4; *Apology of Phileas* 7–8; Melito, *Paschal Homily*, 96; 1 Pet 1:11; 5:1; Jude 5). See Wasserman, "Papyrus 72," 147–48.

³⁵ Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library*, 16–22. The volume of literature discovered in the Nag Hammadi trove and the quality of some of the codices suggests the community associated with those texts was one of significant financial means.

and Melito's *Paschal Homily*, whereas 1–2 Peter were positioned at the end of the codex along with Psalms 33 and 34, which no doubt were recognized as authoritative Scripture by the community. The fact that Jude also seems not to have been copied as carefully as 1–2 Peter, even though most scholars believe the texts were copied by the same scribe, could be taken as evidence supporting this theory as well, and indeed this has been argued by Tobias Nicklas.³⁶ On this point, however, a word of caution is in order. The text in \mathfrak{P}^{72} of 1–2 Peter is not *vastly* superior to the text of Jude in quality, so this should not be overstated—many of the types of orthographical mistakes found in \mathfrak{P}^{72} 's text of Jude also appear in that manuscript's text of 1–2 Peter. Also, it seems likely that 1–2 Peter and Jude were originally copied together as a unit even though questions remain as to how they came to be positioned in the Miscellaneous Codex as later scribes added works to it.³⁷ Additionally, the question regarding whether Testuz has correctly reconstructed the ordering of these texts in the Miscellaneous Codex is an issue which probably needs to be revisited and explored at a deeper level than it has been to date.

Yet there is more that can be said concerning the Petrine epistles and Jude in the Miscellaneous Codex. While the reasoning behind the selection and ordering of the texts comprising this codex may not be entirely apparent, Jones rightly notes that the presence of 1–2 Peter and Jude together in \mathfrak{P}^{72} suggests the scribes who put together this codex believed there was some kind of “textual bond” shared between these NT texts—likely because 1–2 Peter were attributed to the apostle Peter, and Jude because of its obvious relationship to 2 Peter.³⁸ This at least confirms that 1–2 Peter and Jude were circulating together as a collection in Upper Egypt by as early as the third century; and later evidence from \mathfrak{P}^{74} —also part of the Bodmer collection (P.Bodmer XVII, sixth century), though from a different discovery—confirms that it remained established practice for other Christian scrib-

³⁶ See Wolfgang Grünstäudl and Tobias Nicklas, “Searching for Evidence: The History of Reception of the Epistles of Jude and 2 Peter,” in *Reading 1–2 Peter and Jude*, 215–28, 219.

³⁷ E.g. see Roysse, *Scribal Habits*, 547, where Roysse confidently asserts that the copying of \mathfrak{P}^{72} by a single scribe is “an assured result.” Cf. Brent Nongbri, “The Construction of P.Bodmer VIII and the Bodmer ‘Composite’ or ‘Miscellaneous’ Codex,” *NovT* 58 (2016): 394–410. Nongbri argues on the basis of digital photographs that 1–2 Peter (P.Bodmer VIII) were originally part of another codex, and were added later to what became the Miscellaneous Codex. Nongbri also expresses skepticism as to whether early Christians recognized a relationship between 1–2 Peter and Jude. Even so, the facts that (1) P.Bodmer VII and VIII were the work of one and the same scribe—which Nongbri himself admits—and (2) that 1–2 Peter and Jude were, indeed, placed together in this codex at some point, undercuts such skepticism. Also, evidence from \mathfrak{P}^{74} suggests that at some point it had become established scribal practice in upper Egypt for 1–2 Peter and Jude to be copied and circulated together.

³⁸ Jones, “Bodmer ‘Miscellaneous’ Codex,” 18. Also, the literary relationship between 2 Peter and Jude has been well commented upon by scholars, and most believe that Jude must have been a source for 2 Peter since 90% of the content of Jude appears again in some way throughout 2 Peter. The two minority positions in scholarship that challenge the majority view are: (1) that Jude instead borrowed from 2 Peter; and (2) that 2 Peter and Jude simply drew from a common source. The first possibility seems especially unlikely as it raises more questions than it answers. For instance, why would Jude change 2 Peter's use of the OT by not following the canonical ordering of the stories, and then use the Pseudepigrapha instead of just the OT? See the discussion in Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, 159–62.

al circles in Egypt to have 1–2 Peter and Jude circulating together as a unit.³⁹ This community's devotion to the NT's Petrine tradition is further confirmed by the presence of an additional third-century copy of 1 Peter, written in Sahidic Coptic, included within what is now known as the Crosby-Schøyen Codex which was also originally discovered as part of the Pachomian Monastic Library along with the Miscellaneous Codex.⁴⁰ It is also likely that the Petrine tradition served as an organizational locus for some of the other texts included in codices owned by this proto-orthodox community. For instance, Psalms 33 and 34 were probably included in the Miscellaneous Codex because of the use of those psalms in 1 Peter.⁴¹ Additionally, the decision to include Melito's *Paschal Homily* in both the Miscellaneous Codex and the Crosby-Schøyen Codex is probably due largely to Melito's literary dependence upon 1 Peter.⁴²

The proto-orthodox community's devotion to what became the canonical Petrine tradition, and by extension Jude, in P⁷² presents a notable contrast with their gnostic neighbors who also had a clear affinity for Peter as well, just not anything of Peter from the NT. Among the Nag Hammadi finds were included: *The Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC VI,3; not to be mistaken for the Ethiopic text by the same name), *The Acts of Peter* (NHC V,2–5), the apocryphal *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles* (NHC VI,1), and two copies of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* (NHC VIII,2). None of these texts were found present among the Dishna Papers, and no trace of the NT's Petrine letters or Jude was found present in the Nag Hammadi library either. The Coptic *Apocalypse of Peter*, dated to around the same time as P⁷², is especially interesting for our discussion as it provides evidence that the Nag Hammadi community believed their movement was started by Peter, and that they, not the proto-orthodox, were the true inheritors of his teaching. The *Apocalypse of Peter* contains a vision recounting the history of a gnostic sect whose beginnings can be traced back to Peter himself, and who are yet persecuted by those "who name themselves bishop and also deacons" (79.25).⁴³ In this text, Jesus speaks to Peter, and in language somewhat reminiscent of 2 Peter and Jude abusively denounces the opponents as "blind ones who have no guide" (72.10), "dry canals" (79.30), and claims that they

³⁹ Rodolphe Kasser, *Papyrus Bodmer XVII: Actes des Apôtres, Épîtres de Jacques, Pierre, Jean et Jude* (Cologny-Geneva: Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, 1961); Bruce Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (4th ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 58. P⁷⁴ contains Greek copies of 1–2 Peter and Jude along with portions of Acts, James, and the Johannine epistles.

⁴⁰ James E. Goehring, ed., *The Crosby-Schøyen Codex MS 193 in the Schøyen Collection* (CSCO 521, Subsidia 85; Leuven: Peeters, 1990). Cf. Grünstäudl and Nicklas, "Searching for Evidence," 222–23. Curiously, when Nicklas and Grünstäudl aver that the Crosby-Schøyen Codex provides evidence that scribes or readers were "unaware of 2 Peter" because only 1 Peter appears there, they give the unfortunate impression that they themselves are unaware that this codex and the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex were discovered in the same manuscript trove.

⁴¹ David G. Horrell, "The Themes of 1 Peter: Insights from the Earliest Manuscripts (the Crosby-Schøyen Codex ms 193 and the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex containing P⁷²)," *NTS* 55 (2009): 502–22, 516–17.

⁴² Horrell, "Themes of 1 Peter," 505–6.

⁴³ Translation taken from Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library in English* (1990).

“blaspheme the truth and proclaim evil teaching” (74.20–25). Peter especially combats the orthodox teaching that Jesus was resurrected in the same crucified, physical body (74.10–20). This persecuted group is encouraged to await the heavenly, gnostic Savior who will help them to prevail over their proto-orthodox oppressors (84.5–10).⁴⁴

While the Dishna and Nag Hammadi collections also contained several other texts not associated with Peter, the high concentration of “Petrine” texts found in each collection presents us with evidence suggesting that these two neighboring Coptic communities shared a keen interest in the apostle Peter and his teachings. Indeed, the interest in Peter shown by these two groups fits well within the context of early Christian Egypt. For instance, we may consider another fascinating third-century Egyptian manuscript, the so-called “Fayum Gospel” (P. Vindob.G 2325), where we find Peter’s name written uniquely as a *nomen sacrum* in red ink throughout the text of that papyrus.⁴⁵ These communities’ interest in Peter is also consistent with evidence from ancient sources that purport to trace Egyptian Christianity to the influence of Peter through Mark or other intermediaries.⁴⁶ Yet, interestingly, these two collections also show that these communities had a stark difference of opinion over what constituted genuine, authoritative Petrine tradition, and orthodoxy in general.

II. TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS ABOUT \mathfrak{P}^{72} AND THE MISCELLANEOUS CODEX

In any historical reconstruction, some ability to use one’s imagination is always necessary; and admittedly, some reconstructions tend to be more *imaginative* than others. The fact remains that while we have proverbial mountains of literature preserved for us from early Christian Egypt, we are not nearly so fortunate in regard to other types of physical evidence such as archaeological finds, inscriptions, or other forms of material culture.⁴⁷ Therefore, any conclusions regarding what \mathfrak{P}^{72} might tell us about the reception history of the letters of Peter and Jude should be considered tentative given the incomplete nature of the information we have available.

⁴⁴ If the Coptic *Apocalypse of Peter* originated with the Nag Hammadi community—and although some have speculated that was translated from a Greek original, so far the text has only been found to exist as part of that particular manuscript trove—it also might suggest there was an ongoing conflict between the Gnostic community and a group of proto-orthodox Coptic Christians, perhaps even those associated with the nearby monastic community who possessed the Miscellaneous Codex.

⁴⁵ See Thomas Kraus, “The Fayum Gospel,” in *The Non-Canonical Gospels* (ed. Paul Foster; T&T Clark Biblical Studies; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2008), 150–56.

⁴⁶ This was true for both proto-orthodox and Gnostic groups. For instance, Eusebius recounts the long-standing tradition of Mark’s role in the founding of the church at Alexandria (*Hist. eccl.* 2.16). Also, the second-century heresiarch Basilides of Alexandria claimed to have derived his teachings from one of Peter’s own “interpreters” named Glaucias (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.1–2; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.17; Pearson, “Gnosticism in Early Egyptian Christianity,” 202–5, 209).

⁴⁷ See the section on “sources” in Birger A. Pearson, *Gnosticism and Christianity in Roman and Coptic Egypt* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity; New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 40–81.

While caution is always warranted, the study above has shown that much can be learned from an ancient papyrus manuscript when it is placed within its social and literary contexts. For instance, the evidence preserved from both the Dishna Papers and the Nag Hammadi codices shows that these collections of manuscripts likely originated from two neighboring Coptic Christian communities with vastly different theological perspectives. Additionally, P⁷², taken in the greater context of both the Dishna and the Nag Hammadi discoveries, also provides evidence that the proto-orthodox community associated with it had a significant interest in the apostle Peter and his teachings, and that there were competing views of what constituted the authentic and authoritative Petrine tradition in Egypt during this time. A situation such as this fits well with details preserved in historical sources regarding the development of monasticism in Egypt in the third and fourth centuries, and the controversies surrounding Egyptian Gnosticism. P⁷² and the Miscellaneous Codex also provide us with evidence that this proto-orthodox community believed the authoritative Petrine tradition consisted of the epistles of 1–2 Peter and Jude, and that these letters were being copied and circulated together as a unit by as early as the third century. It also appears that 1–2 Peter and Jude served as key authoritative religious texts for this proto-orthodox community as these texts affirmed for them the boundaries of orthodoxy within the NT's Petrine tradition.