

Kalina Wojciechowska / Mariusz Rosik

A Structural Commentary on the So-Called *Antilegomena*

Volume 3: The Second Letter of Peter:
Proclaiming the Coming of the Lord

Part 1. Eschatological Scepticism (2 Pet 1-2)



Eastern and Central European Voices

Studies in Theology and Religion

Edited by

Rajmund Pietkiewicz and Krzysztof Pilarczyk (†)

In co-operation with

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Cyril Hišem (Slovakia), Mirosław Kiwka (Poland),
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Volume 3

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Part 1. Eschatological Scepticism (2 Pet 1–2)

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List of abbreviations

Bibliographic abbreviations

ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> , vol. 1–8, ed. A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, A. Cleveland Coxe, New York–Buffalo 1885–1886, revised and edited for New Advent by K. Knight
APOT	<i>The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English</i> , ed. Robert Henry Charles, vol. 1–2, Oxford 1913
CBQ	“Catholic Biblical Quarterly”
JETS	“Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society”
NIDNTT	<i>New International Dictionary on New Testament Theology</i> , ed. L. Coenen, E. Beyreuther, H. Bietenhard, vol. 1–4, Grand Rapids 1986
JBL	“Journal of Biblical Literature”
JETS	“Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society”
NIDNTT	<i>New International Dictionary on New Testament Theology</i> , ed. L. Coenen, E. Beyreuther, H. Bietenhard, vol. 1–4, Grand Rapids 1986
PG	Patrologia Graeca

Biblical texts and translations

ESV	English Standard Version
LXX	Septuagint
NA	<i>Novum Testamentum graece</i> , ed. E. Nestle, B. Aland
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
USCCB	New American Bible (available at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website)

Apocrypha

1 En	The First Book of Enoch (Ethiopian)
2 En	The Second Book of Enoch (Slavonic)

3 Macc	Third Book of Maccabees
4 Ezra	The Fourth Book of Ezra
4 Macc	Fourth Book of Maccabees
ApBaSyr/2 Ba	The Apocalypse of Baruch (Syriac)
ApPet	The Apocalypse of Peter
ApPaul	The Apocalypse of Paul
ActsPet	The Acts of Peter
AscIsa	The Ascension of Isaiah
EpAp	The Epistle of Apostles
GpPet	The Gospel of Peter
Jub	The Book of Jubilees
PssSol	Psalms of Solomon
SibOr	The Sibylline Oracles
TAsh	The Testament of Asher
TBenj	The Testament of Benjamin
TDan	The Testament of Dan
TIss	The Testament of Issachar
TJos	The Testament of Joseph
TJud	The Testament of Jude
TLev	The Testament of Levi
TMos	The Testament of Moses
TNaph	The Testament of Naphtali
TRub	The Testament of Ruben
TSim	The Testament of Simeon
TZeb	The Testament of Zebulun

Dead Sea Scrolls

1QapGen	<i>Genesis Apocryphon</i> (1Q20 ar)
1QH	<i>Hymns</i> (11Q5/11QPsa)
1QM	<i>War Scroll</i>
1QpHab	<i>Peshar on Habakkuk</i>
1QS	<i>Community Rule</i>
4Q265	<i>Miscellaneous Rules</i>
4Q280	<i>Blessings (Purity Rule)</i>
4Q287	<i>Blessings and curses</i>
4QpNah	<i>Peshar on Nahum</i> (4Q169)
4QTest	<i>Testimonia</i>
CD	<i>Damascus Document</i>

Ancient non-Christian writings

<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antiquitates Judaicae</i> by Josephus Flavius
<i>Bell. Iud.</i>	<i>De Bello Iudaico</i> by Josephus Flavius
<i>Con. Ap.</i>	<i>Contra Apionem</i> by Josephus Flavius
<i>De migrat.</i>	<i>De migratione Abrahami</i> by Philo of Alexandria
<i>De mutat. nom.</i>	<i>De mutatione nominum</i> by Philo of Alexandria
<i>De praem.</i>	<i>De praemiis et poenis</i> by Philo of Alexandria
<i>De somn.</i>	<i>De somniis</i> by Philo of Alexandria
<i>De spec. leg.</i>	<i>De specialibus legibus</i> by Philo of Alexandria
<i>De virt.</i>	<i>De virtutibus</i> by Philo of Alexandria
<i>De vita Mois.</i>	<i>De vita Moisis</i> by Philo of Alexandria
<i>Ep. mor.</i>	<i>Epistulae morales</i> by Seneca
<i>Epist. Hor.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i> by Horace
<i>Gen. Rabb.</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah (Midrash to The Book of Genesis)</i>
<i>Inst. orat.</i>	<i>Institutio oratoria</i> by Quintilian
<i>LAB</i>	<i>Liber antiquitates biblicae</i> by Pseudo-Philo
<i>Leg. alleg.</i>	<i>Legum allegoriarum</i> by Philo of Alexandria
<i>Mem.</i>	<i>Memorabilia</i> by Xenophon
<i>Quaest. Gen.</i>	<i>Quaestiones in Genesim</i> by Philo of Alexandria

Early Christian writings

<i>1 Clem.</i>	<i>First Epistle</i> by Clement of Rome
<i>2 Clem.</i>	<i>Second Epistle</i> by Clement of Rome
<i>Adv. Haer.</i>	<i>Adversus Haereses</i> by Irenaeus of Lyon
<i>Barn.</i>	<i>Epistle of Barnabas</i>
<i>Comm. Io.</i>	<i>Commentary on the Gospel of John</i> by Origen
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i> by Justin Martyr
<i>Diogn.</i>	<i>Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus</i>
<i>Epist. Jer.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i> by Jerome
<i>HE</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i> by Eusebius of Caesarea
<i>Hom. Num.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Numeros</i> by Origen
<i>HomPsClem</i>	<i>Pseudo-Clementine Homilies</i>
<i>IgnEph</i>	<i>Epistle to the Ephesians</i> by Ignatius of Antioch
<i>IgnRom</i>	<i>Epistle to the Romans</i> by Ignatius of Antioch
<i>MartPol</i>	<i>Martyrium Policarpi</i>
<i>Paedag.</i>	<i>Paedagogus</i> by Clement of Alexandria
<i>PE</i>	<i>Praeparatio Evangelica</i> by Eusebius of Caesarea

Grammar abbreviations

acc.	accusativus
ACI	accusativus cum infinitivo
act.	activum
aor.	aoristus
con.	coniunctivus
dat.	dativus
fut.	futurum
gen.	genetivus
imp.	imperativus
ind.	indicativus
inf.	infinitivus
masc.	masculinum
med.	medium
nom.	nominativus
neut.	neutru
opt.	optativus
part.	participium
pass.	passivum
perf.	perfectum
pl.	pluralis
praes.	praesens
sg.	singularis

Manuscript designations after *Novum Testamentum graece*, ed. Erwin Nestle, Barbara Aland, edn 28, Stuttgart 2012 [NA28].

Preface

In most publications, a commentary on the Second Letter of Peter is intended to be part of various commentaries on other general (Catholic) epistles (most often on the Letter of Jude and the First Letter of Peter). *Proclaiming the Coming of the Lord* is a commentary devoted exclusively to the Second Letter of Peter in an attempt to restore autonomy to this text.

While other authors comment on the text in a linear manner, focusing primarily on the ethical aspects of the letter, and warnings against false teachers, this structural commentary aims to accentuate the main theological thought and enable the reader to draw conclusions therefrom. Due to this solution, the author of the letter can be seen as a theologian concentrated on eschatological issues, the sources of which are to be found in the prophetic texts and narratives taken from the Jewish tradition. To interpret these texts and narratives, the author proposes a particular method, named in this commentary as eschatological hermeneutics. Eschatology, rather than ethics or parenesis, is thus brought to the fore by the author, who seeks to answer the question of why God seems to delay the execution of judgements, and why the waiting for the Parousia is prolonged.

The exposition of theological and hermeneutical issues with numerous intertextual references and their analyses, has considerably expanded the volume of the commentary on the Second Letter of Peter. Therefore, the authors and publishers decided to divide the English version into two volumes. The division was dictated by the very structure of the letter, in which two parts are clearly noticeable. The first part comprises chapters 1–2, and the second is a comment on chapter 3.

Throughout the letter, the author strongly emphasises the prophetic and apostolic origin of his eschatological teaching. He sees the inauguration of the end times, and the judgement and reign of Jesus, to whom God the Father has given royal and divine glory and honour, in the transfiguration scene. At the same time, he is convinced that the eschatological judicial and kingly power of Jesus was already announced by the prophets. One only needs to look properly at the prophetic texts, in which eschatological content is conveyed not only in an explicit, but also in an implicit way. The latter includes narratives drawn from the Jewish tradition, which aim to show the inevitability of judgement and two attitudes towards the announcement of judgement and destruction: a positive attitude that leads to salvation, and a negative attitude meaning annihilation. These two attitudes can not only be found among the protagonists of these narratives, and the author of the letter perceives them among Christians, his contemporaries, and predicts that they will also appear in the future.

Part (volume) 1 of the commentary – entitled *Eschatological Scepticism* – focuses on the negative attitude towards the announcement of judgement. It results from misinterpreting the prophetic and apostolic eschatological teaching, or even ignoring it. Eschatological scepticism is represented by the mocked false teachers and their followers. Contrary to their doctrine and philosophical argumentation, the author of the letter argues that God's delay is only apparent, while judgement and punishment are inevitable, although only God knows when they will be executed.

The reader of the English version of the commentary is thus given additional clues to the structure of each of the two parts. They allow the main theological theme – the certainty of the coming of the eschatological judgement, foreshadowed from the beginning by narratives belonging to Jewish tradition – to become even more explicit:

Prescript (2 Pet 1:1–2).

A. Faith (2 Pet 1:1c).

B. Knowledge (2 Pet 1:2d).

B'. Knowledge (2 Pet 1:3–4).

A². Faith (2 Pet 1:5–8).

C. Synthesis of faith and knowledge – baptismal catechesis (2 Pet 1:9–15).

a. negative example – forgetfulness (2 Pet 1:9);

b. positive example – soteriologically oriented eschatology (2 Pet 1:10–11);

a². a constant reminder (2 Pet 1:12–15);

D₁. Prophetic and apostolic doctrine (2 Pet 1:16–21):

- The inauguration of the end times and the authority of Jesus (2 Pet 1:16–19);

- prophetic eschatological announcements (2 Pet 1:20–21).

E₁. Interpretation of the prophetic and apostolic teaching (2 Pet 2:1–22):

a. false interpretation (2 Pet 2:1–5a.c):

I. characterisation of the eschatological sceptics (2 Pet 2:1–3a);

II. THE CERTAINTY OF JUDGEMENT (2 Pet 2:3b–4);

I'. Negative attitude towards judgement and annihilation (2 Pet 2:5a.c);

- β. interpretation proper (2 Pet 2:5b):
 - i. positive attitude towards judgement and annihilation; salvation;
- α'. false interpretation (2 Pet 2:6):
 - I. Negative attitude towards judgement and annihilation.
- β'. Interpretation proper (2 Pet 2:7–9a):
 - i. positive attitude towards judgement and annihilation; salvation.
- α''. False interpretation (2 Pet 2:9b–22):
 - I. The characteristics of eschatological sceptics.

Combining and reading together the elements marked as “I” will enable the reader to obtain the picture outlined by the author of 2 Peter of eschatological scepticism and the characteristics of those who preach it. At the outset, the pattern of further description is outlined: false teaching, the resulting conduct and the inevitability of punishment (2 Pet 2:1–3). The author of the letter points out that the eschatological sceptics had precursors among the false prophets (2 Pet 2:1a). Their teaching can be reduced to a questioning of God’s authority and sovereignty, especially in matters of judgement (2 Pet 2:1d), which is described as blasphemy. Questioning the authority and sovereignty of God leads to a sense of impunity and a false understanding of freedom (2 Pet 2:2). However, such conduct will certainly not go unpunished (2 Pet 2:3), and evidence of this is found in numerous narratives drawn from Jewish tradition, beginning with the description of the fate and imprisonment of the rebellious angels already waiting a very long time for the final judgement (2 Pet 2:4). The fate of those who did not believe the predictions of judgement and destruction (all mankind except Noah and his family, all the inhabitants of Sodom except Lot) is then recalled. These themes are developed in 2 Pet 2:9b–22. The author of the letter gives more details of the false, blasphemous teaching, which not only includes questioning of the certainty of judgement, but also attempts to take away God’s sovereignty and influence His decisions as to when that judgement is to take place (2 Pet 2:10–11). Ironically, and using a convention called *vituperatio*, the behaviour of false teachers is described as essentially resembling animal behaviour (2 Pet 2:12.22), and has an illusory sense of freedom which is in fact enslavement (2 Pet 2:19–20, 2 Pet 2:13b–18). The invocation of the knowledge of Jesus Christ in all this (2 Pet 2:20a) only exacerbates their ultimate predicament and seals the verdict (2 Pet 2:20c–21, 2 Pet 2:9b.13a). It can thus be seen that Peter’s main aim here is not only to discredit and ridicule eschatological scepticism, but above all to point out that judgement is bound to come, even though it may now seem that the eschatological predictions have lost their validity (2 Pet 2:3b).

In addition to the structural commentary on 2 Peter 1–2, volume one contains an extensive Introduction, which presents typical introductory elements such as

textual witnesses, canonicity, lexis, authorship, Peter's authority, and information not only on Peter's circle, but more broadly on Peter's discourse in contemporary biblical studies, which allows one to understand the similarities and differences between 1 and 2 Peter, the links with the Letter of Jude, literary genre, sources, and addressees. Moreover, much space has been devoted to structural issues. A structural interpretation of the letter has also been suggested, which connects all the elements A, B, C, D and E. Since most of elements D (characteristics and content of the prophetic and apostolic eschatological teaching) and E (proper and improper interpretation of the prophetic and apostolic teaching) are included in chapter 3 of volume 2 of this study, the authors and publishers recommend reading both volumes together.

1. Introduction

1.1 Textual evidence and canonicity

The oldest witness to the text of the Second Letter of Peter is a papyrus in the form of a codex, designated P⁷² and named Papyrus Bodmer after its discoverer. Martin Bodmer, a Swiss collector and researcher of rare manuscripts, found it in 1959. The papyrus was made in Egypt at the turn of the fourth century. It consists of 72 pages and, in addition to the Second Letter of Peter, it also contains the Letter of Jude and the First Letter of Peter, fragments of two psalms (Ps 33:3–22, 34:1–16), the eleventh Odes of Solomon, the apocryphon entitled *The Nativity of Mary*, Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians (*The Letter of the Corinthians to Saint Paul* and *The Third Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*), *The Homily on the Pascha* of Melito of Sardis and *The Apology* of Phileas.¹ This oldest known copy of 2 Peter was probably compiled for monks living according to the Rule of Pachomius. The Second Letter of Peter was placed in the papyrus immediately after the First Letter of Peter, which may indicate that the copyist treated them on a par. Their rank is evidenced by numerous marginal notes. It is unclear to what extent this rank contributed to the recognition of both letters as canonical, especially since P⁷² contains writings that ultimately did not enter any of the known Christian canons. Perhaps this reflects the tendency of Alexandrian Christianity to expand the catalogue of writings considered normative,² but it is also possible that these writings were added to one collection due to an entirely different reason, especially since, of the three criteria of canonicity most often applied by biblical scholars (apostolic origin, liturgical use, essential content consistent with the message of the Old Testament), hardly any of the writings that were included in P⁷² met the first condition: they were not handed down by any of the apostles or their direct disciples. Therefore, this compilation may have been dictated, for example, by liturgical or devotional reasons.³

It is worth asking, therefore, why 2 Peter was included in the group of such writings as those included in the Bodmer Papyri. Is there anything they share? Or is it rather a random collection of early works that were penned by Christian

1 T. Wassermann, *Papyrus 72 and the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex*, "New Testament Studies" 51 (2005), no. 1, p. 140; J.N. Birdsall, *The Text of Jude in P72*, "Journal of Theological Studies" 14 (1963), no. 2, p. 394–399.

2 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids 2013, p. 65.

3 T. Wassermann, *Papyrus 72 and the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex*, p. 154.

writers? One of the most striking features that unites all these writings is their authors' interest in eschatology and apologetics. Not only 2 Peter or Jude, but also the psalms mentioned above contain warnings of the coming judgement (Ps 32 deals with the forgiveness of guilt, Ps 33 with God being the ruler of the world). Similar motifs are found in the other writings in the papyrus, including apologetic accents, especially warnings against false teachers. This may indicate that the milieu where P⁷² was created cherished animated eschatological expectations and anticipated a defence of their own faith and religious convictions in the face of the spread of views that considerably differed from the official teaching of the Church. It should also be borne in mind that more recent research shows that P⁷² was created as part of another papyrus, from which it was later separated and incorporated into a collection presumably belonging to a monastic community.⁴

Moreover, it is worth noting that at least four scribes worked on the transcription and pagination of Papyrus P⁷².⁵ It comes as no surprise then that the copy of 2 Peter in this papyrus contains quite a few differences from other, revised later, copies of the text. The most noticeable mistakes include haplography, dittography, itacisms and omission of some words. The influence of the Coptic language is also apparent. The scribe transcribing 2 Peter was probably of Coptic origin, Greek was not his first language, which gives an explanation for his mistakes.⁶ Some changes, however, may have been dictated by theological considerations. A clear example is the very beginning of the letter: "Grace to you and peace may be multiplied through/in the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord" (2 Pet 1:2). The omission of the conjunction καί (and) in the phrase ἐν ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ Θεοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν may imply an intention to emphasise the divine dignity of Jesus.⁷

With the current state of research, it is certainly impossible to establish whether this was a text used by the monks only privately or whether it was used for liturgical purposes. Nevertheless, P⁷² proves that 2 Peter was known among Egyptian Christians in the late third and early fourth century.

At the beginning of the fourth century, two Coptic versions of 2 Peter also transpired, one in the Sahidic dialect and the other in the Bohairic dialect. This means that the writing must have been highly valued among Egyptian Christians, and

4 J.M. Robinson, *The Story of the Bodmer Papyri. From the First Monastery's Library in Upper Egypt to Geneva and Dublin*, Cambridge 2013, p. 15–35; F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra* (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny NT 18), Częstochowa 2018, p. 31.

5 T. Wassermann, *Papyrus 72 and the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex*, 138.

6 J.R. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, Leiden 2008, p. 258–282; P.D. Strickland, *The Curious Case of P⁷²: What an Ancient Manuscript Can Tell Us about the Letters of Peter and Jude*, JETS 60 (2017), no. 4, p. 784–785.

7 For more on these errors or deliberate alterations to the text of the letter, see T. Callan, *Reading the Earliest Copies of 2 Peter*, "Biblica" 93 (2012), no. 3, p. 430–432.

this may have been one of the reasons why it was included in the catalogue of canonical books. Other witnesses to the text of 2 Peter include the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus⁸ (both from the fourth century), as well as the Codex Alexandrinus and the Codex Ephraemi (both from the fifth century). From that period on, with the spread of the canon, the list of manuscripts containing 2 Peter increased considerably, both in Greek and translations into other languages. The oldest manuscripts form two textual groups: the first consists of P⁷², B, K, L, among others; the second consists of ⳨, A and C.⁹ The division, however, is not sharp, possibly due to the fact that in the early centuries the letter, apart from Egypt, did not enjoy significant authority among Christian writings, so the copyists could easily introduce changes.¹⁰

Since the earliest witness to the text of 2 Peter only appeared at the turn of the fourth century, it is not surprising that no earlier references to this writing can be found. John H. Elliott even argues that 2 Peter is the least attested NT writing among early Christian writers¹¹. It is possible that none of those writers used it directly, or if they did, they never mentioned it.¹² Motifs and phrases common with 2 Peter can be found in *The Shepherd* of Hermas and in *1 Clem.* and *2 Clem.*,¹³ in *The Epistle of Barnabas*, Polycarp and Ignatius of Antioch; no mention, however, was made of the source of the phrases or imagery.¹⁴ It is sometimes claimed that 2 Peter was quoted by Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho* 82, when, as 2 Pet 2:1 distinguished between the former activity of false prophets and the reappearance of false teachers: “And just as there were false prophets contemporaneous with your holy prophets, so are there now many false teachers among us, of whom our Lord forewarned us to beware”. Even less certain are the words “The day of the Lord is as a thousand years” (*Dial.* 81), since it is not clear whether this is a direct reference to Ps 90[89]:4 or an indirect one through 2 Pet 3:8. Similar doubts arise with *Adv. Haer.* V 23:2 and V 28:3 of Irenaeus of Lyons, where Irenaeus referred to a kind of chronometry like the author of 2 Peter: “one day is with the Lord as a thousand days”. It is therefore impossible to determine precisely whether Clement or Hermas actually drew on

8 The text of 2 Pet in P⁷² is closest to the version recorded in the Vatican Code.

9 See the critical apparatus for the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Stuttgart 1993, p. 608.

10 F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 147.

11 J.H. Elliott, *Second Letter of Peter*, [in:] *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, ed. D.N. Freedman, New York 1992, p. 283.

12 G. Marconi, *Lettera di Giuda. Seconda Lettera di Pietro. Introduzione, versione, commento*, Bologna 2005, p. 103.

13 These parallels are presented in detail, e. g. by R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (Word Biblical Commentary 50), Waco 1983, p. 284.

14 J.H. Elliott, *Second Epistle of Peter*, p. 284, 287. See also C.D. Osburn, *Second Letter of Peter*, [in:] *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. D.N. Freedman, Grand Rapids 2000, p. 1039.

2 Peter, or whether, as proponents of a very late dating of 2 Peter claim, the author of 2 Peter drew on the letters of Clement and *The Shepherd*, or – as seems most likely – the source of the common motifs and phrases is the pan-Christian tradition and the emerging sociolect.¹⁵ It must be remembered that ancient quotations are rarely exact, they are more like paraphrases or even allusions; the source texts are also altered and adapted to the needs of the current argumentation, a good example being, for example, the use of passages from the Letter of Jude by the author of 2 Peter himself.

The Muratorian Canon (c. 135 BC) lists The Apocalypse of Peter (c. 180 BC), but no mention of 2 Peter was made. Two extant copies of ApPet have survived to this day: one in Greek and the other (slightly longer) in Ethiopic. The unknown author of this text most likely used the apocalyptic passages of 2 Peter, especially those describing the activities of false prophets and teachers and the punishment for these activities.¹⁶ Here the similarity of motifs and vocabulary is even more striking than in the testimonies mentioned previously. It is already difficult to explain them merely by a common sociolect or even by a common – apocalyptic – literary convention. Some researchers assume, therefore, that the author of ApPet was familiar with 2 Peter, which may have been one of the more popular writings among Christian apocalyptic texts of that time.¹⁷ This would mean that already in the first half of the second century 2 Peter was, at least in some circles, fairly highly valued. This, in turn, would also translate into hypotheses as to the dating of the writing – since the letter was known around the year 135, it must have been written sufficiently earlier, perhaps at the turn of the second century, to warrant this popularity.¹⁸

Eusebius of Caesarea stated that 2 Peter was known to Clement of Alexandria (died ca. 215), who in *Hypotyposes* commented on all the books of the Old and New Testaments “not omitting the disputed books, – I refer to Jude and the other Catholic epistles, and Barnabas” (*HE VI 14:1*).¹⁹ This work of Clement is preserved in the Latin translation by Cassiodorus, which, unfortunately, does not contain a

15 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 284; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 473.

16 A different view is taken by J. Frey (*Der Brief des Judas und der zweite Brief des Petrus*, Leipzig 2015), who sees a dependence of the language of 2 Peter on the Greek text underlying the Ethiopic version of the Apocalypse of Peter. See also J. Frey, *Second Peter in New Perspective*, [in:] *2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter: Towards a New Perspective*, ed. J. Frey, M. den Dulk, J.G. van der Watt, Leiden–Boston 2019.

17 R. Bauckham, *2 Peter and Apocalypse of Peter*, [in:] *The Fate of the Dead: Studies in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, Leiden 1998, p. 290–303.

18 See below – Date and place of origin (1.4).

19 R.E. Picirilli, *Allusions to 2 Peter in the Apostolic Fathers*, “Journal of the Study of the New Testament” 33 (1988), p. 59–65; the author also provides a list of *loci communes* between 2 Peter and the writings of Ignatius, Polycarp and Hermas on pages 65–75; for a more extensive discussion of parallels

commentary on 2 Peter.²⁰ In another letter of Clement of Alexandria, *To Theodore* (insofar as it is authentic), there is a phrase that refers to Peter mentioning the slaves of corruption who promise freedom (2 Pet 2:19).²¹

In his commentary on the Gospel of John, Origen stated that Peter left one letter acknowledged by all, and whether he also left a second letter “is doubtful” (*Comm. Io.* 5:3).²² However, he did not specify the reservations about the second letter left by the apostle. It is evident, however, that Origen has a rather positive attitude towards 2 Peter, since he alluded to it several times in different circumstances, and even called it *scriptura* (*Hom. Num.* 6:676), as is evident from Latin translations of his works by Rufinus. Further references to 2 Peter appear in a letter (*Epistola* 75:6) by Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, to Cyprian, and in the work *On the Resurrection* by Methodius of Olympus. This means that in the Egyptian Church, the text of 2 Peter had been commented on since the beginning of the third century. Since the beginning of the fourth century onwards, it had been mentioned with increasing frequency in the writings of the Church Fathers, but neither Theodore of Mopsuestia nor John Chrysostom, who were associated with the Antioch school, were familiar with it. This school – competing with the Alexandrian, that is the Egyptian school – presumably did not yet recognise the canonicity of 2 Peter. Likewise, not all Alexandrians were inclined to acknowledge the canonicity of the letter. The rector of the Alexandrian catechetical school, Didymus the Blind, wrote in the fourth century in his explanation of the Second Letter of Peter that “in any case, one cannot pass over in silence the fact that this letter is inauthentic and, although it may be circulated, is not included in the canon”.²³ In addition to metatextual references in early Christian writings from the period between the second and fourth centuries, one can find phrases which may be quotations or paraphrases of 2 Peter. For example, Aristides seems to have referred to 2 Pet 1:11 in his *Apoloogy*; Theophilus of Antioch in his letter *To Autolycus* II 9 referred to 2 Pet 1:21; Hippolytus of Rome in his treatise *On Christ and Antichrist* 2 to 2 Pet 1:21.²⁴

Soon afterwards, references to 2 Peter appeared in the writings of Epiphanius of Salamis, Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus. The latter even called Peter

between 2 Peter and early Christian literature, see M.J. Gilmour, *The Significance of Parallels between 2 Peter and other Early Christian Literature*, Leiden 2002.

20 T. Skibiński, *Listy katolickie w starożytności chrześcijańskiej*, “Vox Patrum” 28 (2008), p. 940.

21 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 477.

22 M.J. Gilmour, *Reflections on the Authorship of 2 Peter*, “The Evangelical Quarterly” 73 (2002), no. 4, p. 291.

23 *Ojcowie Kościoła komentują Biblię. Nowy Testament*, vol. 9: *List św. Jakuba, I-II List św. Piotra, I-III List św. Jana, List św. Judy*, Polish transl. and ed. D. Sztuk, Ząbki 2014, p. 145.

24 For: G.H. Everett, *Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures. Using a Theme-Based Approach to Identify Literary Structures. The Letter of 2 Peter*, n.p. 2017, p. 15–16.

the head, by which he expressed his conviction of the apostle's leadership among the Twelve and in the early Church. Explaining the New Testament canon, he mentioned, in addition to the four gospels and Paul's fourteen letters, the seven universal letters, "of which one is of James the brother of God, and two are of Peter the head, and of John again the evangelist, three, and seventh is Jude the Zealot" (PG 38:845).²⁵ In *Carminum* 1 he added: "if there is some (other than) these seven, not (are they) among the genuine ones" (PG 37:474).²⁶ Doubts about the canonicity of 2 Peter was also shown by Gregory's cousin Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium. A letter attributed to him mentioned the doubts that some voiced over several universal letters: "Of the Catholic Epistles some maintain that we ought to receive seven, and others three only, one of James, and one of Peter, and one of John" (PG 37, 1597A–1598A).²⁷

Eusebius of Caesarea would write that 1 Peter was acknowledged universally as genuine, while word has it that 2 Peter was only included in the New Testaments because many Christians found it valuable (*HE* III 3:1). Although at this point the Church historian had not yet expressed his own opinion, elsewhere in *The Church History* he wrote that 2 Peter belongs to the five disputed books, though acknowledged by many as authentic (*HE* III 3:4, III 25:3). He listed James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 John and 3 John, calling them *Antilegomena*: "Among the disputed writings (τῶν δ' ἀντιλεγομένων), which are nevertheless recognized by many, are extant the so-called epistle of James and that of Jude, also the Second Letter of Peter (Πέτρου δευτέρα ἐπιστολή), and those that are called the second and third of John [...]" (*HE* III 25:3; cf. *HE* VI 13:6, VI 14:1).

In 367, Athanasius the Great provided the first catalogue of inspired books. In Easter Letter 39, he presented a list of seven Catholic letters in the order in which they were later included in the Christian canon, without expressing any doubt about their inspired character. The synods of Hippo (393), Carthage (397 and 419) approved the same canon. From that time onwards, the Western Church no longer voiced doubts about the canonicity of 2 Peter. Somewhat later, in 692 at the II Council in Trullo, the Eastern Churches emulated that ruling. It is worth mentioning that it was Jerome who greatly contributed to the acknowledgement of the canonicity of 2 Peter, as he decided to add this writing to the Vulgate. He acknowledged that "the apostles James, Peter, John, and Jude, have published seven epistles" (*Epist. Jer.* 53:9). In *De Viris Illustribus* 1, he stated that Peter "wrote two epistles which are called Catholic, the second of which, on account of its difference from the first in style, is considered by many not to be by him [Peter]".²⁸ In his letter

25 For: G.H. Everett, *Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures*, p. 10.

26 For: *Ibid.*, p. 10.

27 For: *Ibid.*, p. 10–11.

28 Jerome, *Letter 53*; Jerome and Gennadius, *Lives of Illustrious Men*.

to Hedibia, the bishop of Hippo dispels these doubts: “Therefore Titus served as an interpreter, as Saint Mark used to serve Saint Peter, with whom he wrote his Gospel. Also we see that the two epistles attributed to Saint Peter have different styles and turn phrases differently, by which it is discerned that it was sometimes necessary for him to use different interpreters” (*Epist. Jer.* 120:11).²⁹ Jerome believed that as Paul’s letters, differing in style and vocabulary, were not excluded from the canon, neither should those by Peter. The differences between 1 and 2 Peter can be explained by the differences in the translators’ styles. In antiquity, it was the stylistic issues that were the source of the most serious doubts about the authenticity and therefore the canonicity of 2 Peter.

The canonicity of 2 Peter was advocated by the Council of Florence in 1441; a catalogue of normative writings for the Church was then published in the document *Decretum pro Iacobitis*.³⁰ Doubts about the canonicity and apostolicity of the letter revived during the Reformation, although the disputes on the subject were less heated as with the other writings from the Eusebius’ *Antilegomena*. On the Catholic side, 2 Peter was considered less authoritative than other NT writings by Cardinal Cajetan (Thomas de Vio); he uttered the same opinion of James, 2–3 John and Jude.³¹ To the defence of the Petrine authorship and the authority of the letter rushed Martin Luther. In his commentary on the letter of 1523–1524, explaining the *superscriptio* (1:1), where the sender introduces himself as “Simon Peter, a servant and Apostle of Jesus Christ”, he wrote “Such is the subscription and the superscription of this Epistle, that we may know who writes it” (I [V.1]). Explaining the text of 2 Pet 3:15–16 containing references to Paul’s letters, the Reformer recalled the doubts that had arisen about Peter as the author. He admitted that the letter “was written long after St. Paul’s Epistles. And this is one of the passages [3:15–16] which might be adduced to maintain that this Epistle is not St. Peter’s” (III [V.15, 16]). The second questioned passage is the sentence in 3:9 that the Lord “wills not that any one should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (III [V.8–10]). This statement is, according to Luther, “some little below the Apostolic spirit” (III [V.15, 16]), but it must nevertheless be regarded as credible and coming from the apostle, since it concerns love and not faith. Writing about love justifies, as it were, a lowering of the “Apostolic spirit”, that is, the apostolicity of the writing itself, since love “humbles itself toward its neighbor” (III [V.15, 16]). It must be added that for Luther the measure of the apostolicity is the preaching and proclamation of Christ.

29 Id., *Letter 120. To Hedibia*.

30 T. Skibiński, *Listy katolickie w starożytności chrześcijańskiej*, p. 938.

31 M.H. de Lang, *The Reformation Canon and the Development of Biblical Scholars*, “The Bible Translator” 67 (2016), no. 2, p. 187.

All the genuine sacred books agree in this, that all of them preach Christ and deal with Him. That is the true test, by which to judge all books, when we see whether they deal with Christ or not, since all the Scriptures show us Christ (Rom 3:21), and St. Paul will know nothing but Christ (1 Cor 15:2). What does not teach Christ is not apostolic, [...] what preaches Christ would be apostolic [...].³²

In general, however, the Reformer did not raise doubts about the authenticity, canonicity and apostolicity of the letter. Its content confirms and gives credence to Paul's message, this Protestant "canon within the canon",³³ which for the father of the Reformation provided an additional argument for the normativity of Peter's letter, which clarified the question of faith from the practical side. In the preface to 2 Peter, Luther summarised the message of the letter and emphasised that the letter was directed "against those who think that Christian faith can be without works. Therefore he exhorts them to test themselves by good works and become sure of their faith, – as one knows trees by their fruit".³⁴ Surprisingly, Luther never referred to the ancient discussion on the Second Letter of Peter. It is difficult to suppose that he was not familiar with it, since he mentioned disputes about the authorship or canonicity of the Letter of James, Jude, Hebrews or Revelation.

Ancient disputes about 2 Peter are however mentioned in the introductions to Reformed translations of the New Testament, such as the Dutch translation of the Bible called *Statenvertaling* published in Leiden in 1637:

As for the books of the New Testament which are in the Bible, there were, however, certain teachers who doubted whether the Letter to the Hebrews, the Letter of James, the Second Letter of Peter, the Second and Third Letters of John, the Letter of Jude and the Revelation of John were canonical books. But the ancient Christian Churches in general never raised doubts about it, nor did they doubt the word contained in them; these books were recognised and venerated as divine and canonical.³⁵

In the introduction to 2 Peter, one can read that,

as with the first letter of Peter, it is uncertain whether Peter himself wrote this letter, or whether someone else borrowed the apostle's authoritative name. [...] It is very similar to

32 M. Luther, *Preface to the Epistles of Saint James and Saint Jude 1545 (1522)*.

33 R.W. Wall, *The Canonical Function of 2 Peter*, "Biblical Interpretation" 9 (2001), no. 1, p. 65.

34 M. Luther, *Preface to the Second Epistle of Saint Peter*.

35 M. Koktysz, *Elementy parenetyczne Listów Piotra i Judy. Studium egzegetyczno-porównawcze*, unpublished master's thesis under the supervision of Kalina Wojciechowska, Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw, 2016, p. 19.

the letter of Judas, which is why it is thought that this letter was probably written in the second century.³⁶

Earlier, John Calvin vigorously defended the apostolicity of the letter, however, being very cautious about its true authorship in his *Commentary on 2 Peter*: “it has nothing unworthy of Peter, as it shews everywhere the power and the grace of an apostolic spirit”.³⁷

Eventually, both the Protestant and Catholic side retained the Second Letter of Peter among the writings of the New Testament. The Council of Trent in 1546, in the document *Decretum de libris sacris et de traditionibus recipiendis*, approved its canonicity.

Finally, it should be noted that the oldest canons have a different order of Catholic letters. The Eastern Churches rely on Paul’s words in the Letter to the Galatians:

for the one who worked in Peter for an apostolate to the circumcised worked also in me for the Gentiles, and when they recognized the grace bestowed upon me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas their right hands in partnership, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised (Gal 2:8–9).

Since Paul listed the “pillars” of the Church in this order: James, Peter, John, so were the letters: James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude. The Western Churches emphasised the role of Peter among the Twelve and the role of his successors in Rome, hence the adopted order was 1 Peter, 2 Peter, followed by the letters of John, James and Jude (councils of Carthage), John, Jude and James (Augustine), or James, Jude, John (Rufinus). Since Jerome favoured the Eastern tradition, once the Vulgate was adopted, the Eastern order was accepted by the entire Western Church.³⁸

It is evident from the presented juxtaposition that Peter’s letters have always been placed before John’s letters. In contemporary studies on the canonicity, attention is paid to this order in terms of not only history, but also methodology (broadly understood “canonical approach”).³⁹ Linguistic analyses within the canonical approach make it possible to recognise the common vocabulary of 2 Peter

36 “Net als bij de eerste brief van Petrus is het onzeker of Petrus deze brief zelf heeft geschreven, of dat iemand anders de gezaghebbende naam van de apostel heeft geleend. [...] Het lijkt sterk op de brief van Judas, reden waarom gedacht wordt dat deze brief wellicht pas in de tweede eeuw geschreven werd”, https://www.statenvertaling.net/bijbel/2_petrus.html [accessed: 3.07.2023].

37 J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Second Epistle of Peter*, trans. J. Owen, [in:] *Commentaries on the Catholic Letters*, Edinburgh 1855, p. 361.

38 F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 150–151.

39 See below – G.H. Everett’s structure based on the canonical approach.

and the letters of John.⁴⁰ This translates into similar themes in these letters and the way they are presented: warnings against false teachers, attention to the incompleteness of their teaching (questioning eschatology in 2 Peter, denying the incarnation in the Letters of John), and finally calling for a resumption of apostolic teaching and tradition by referring to the eyewitnesses of Jesus' earthly mission: Apostle Peter and Apostle John, who proclaim what they had seen, heard and experienced.⁴¹

1.2 Vocabulary and style

In most modern commentaries on particular biblical books, after discussing the textual witnesses (and possibly the canonicity), the problem of authorship comes to the fore. In the case of 2 Peter we will follow a different approach because the determination of authorship is largely dependent on the style and vocabulary of the letter⁴² and the comparison with the lexis and style of 1 Peter,⁴³ which is attributed

40 For a detailed analysis, see D. Nienhuis, *2 Peter, the Johannine Epistles, and the Authority of "Eyewitness" Apostolic Tradition*, [in:] *2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter*, ed. J. Frey, M. den Dulk, J.G. van der Watt, Leiden–Boston 2019, p. 150–156.

41 Conclusions can also be drawn from these parallels regarding the dating of 2 Peter and the reasons for its creation. The author of 2 Peter is believed to have been familiar with John's letters, and this means that Peter's writing must/will have originated in the second century, most likely after the year 110. At that time, the collection of Paul's writings (cf. 2 Pet 3:15–16) and 1 Peter was used and considered normative by most Christian communities. In order to link the Pauline collection and the Johannine collection, which represented completely different traditions and trends, a "bridging text" was needed. Originally, 2 Peter could fulfil/would have fulfilled such a role: on the one hand, it affirmed the authority of the Pauline letters; on the other, it distanced itself from false teachers who, following Paul, called themselves apostles, although their teaching had nothing to do with the Gospel and ignored the necessity to root the Gospel in the mission and message of the earthly Jesus. In view of this, it became crucial to recall the very sources of the apostolic teaching, coming from eyewitnesses and companions of the earthly Jesus. The choice of an authority to whom such a bridging text could be attributed was not accidental. In 1 John 1:1–3 there are words similar to John and Peter's declaration from Acts 4:20: "It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard". Since in 1 John the paraphrase of the apostolic declaration was attributed to John, the choice of the other apostle who followed this declaration in his teaching was obvious; cf. D. Nienhuis, *2 Peter, the Johannine Epistles*, p. 147–159; D. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone: The Formation of the Catholic Epistle Collection and the Christian Canon*, Waco 2007; D. Farkasfalvy, *The Ecclesial Setting of Pseudepigraphy in Second Peter and its Role in the Formation of the Canon*, "Second Century" 5 (1985), p. 3–29; D. Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament*, Oxford 2000. On the role of eyewitnesses in antiquity see also R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: the Gospel as Eyewitness Testimony*, Grand Rapids 2006.

42 R.W. Wall, *The Canonical Function of 2 Peter*, p. 68.

43 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:1.

to the same author. As mentioned above – it was the stylistic issues that already in antiquity became the most serious source of doubt about the authenticity of 2 Peter.

The comparative word statistics seem extremely interesting. The First Letter of Peter uses 543 words, while the Second Letter of Peter uses 399 words, of which only 153 are common to both writings. This means that more than 60 per cent of 2 Peter contains a unique vocabulary.⁴⁴ Sometimes the same ideas are expressed in different terms. An example is the Parousia, or the second coming of Christ. In 1 Peter the term ‘revelation’ ἀποκάλυψις (1 Pet 1:7.13, 4:13 the term ‘coming’ παρουσία (2 Pet 1:16, 3:4.13). Generally speaking, the language of 2 Peter is more sophisticated and refined than that of 1 Peter. Some biblical scholars describe it as exquisite,⁴⁵ others as “pretentiously elaborate”.⁴⁶ Undoubtedly, the style of 2 Peter is reminiscent of the Asiatic style,⁴⁷ and thus much more reminiscent of some Hellenistic writings with elaborate verbal ornamentation⁴⁸ than the austere, more restrained style of 1 Peter. These striking stylistic differences cannot be explained solely by the different subject matter of the two letters or by a different literary convention. One has to perceive here completely different linguistic tastes and patterns, which makes the common authorship of the two letters open to question.

The most distinctive feature of the language of 2 Peter, which sets the letter apart from other NT writings, is the use of a unique vocabulary. Even where a more common, everyday lexis could be employed, the author uses phrases that are rare and typical of literary language, which proves his erudition, especially in Greek philosophical literature.⁴⁹ There are as many as 57 *hapax legomena* or words used a few times; interestingly, only in 2 Pet 25 of them are shared with the Septuagint. Some of these *hapax legomena* very rarely appear even in Greek literature, others are not used at all in Hellenistic Jewish literature; a part of them appear in the writings of the Church Fathers, perhaps under the influence of 2 Peter. Three of the words used by the author of the letter are not familiar to any author writing in

44 M.J. Kruger, *The Authenticity of 2 Peter*, JETS 42 (1999), no. 4, p. 656.

45 P. Stancari, *A partire da Gerusalemme. Lettera di Giacomo, Lettera di Giuda e Seconda lettera di Pietro. Una lettura spirituale*, Roma 2014, p. 141.

46 J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, London 1982, p. 228.

47 B. Reicke (*The Epistles of James, Peter and Jude* [The Anchor Bible 37], New York 1964, p. 146–147) judges this style very harshly as bizarre, sometimes based on absurdity, and therefore comparable to the ornate Baroque style; see also R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 137; D.F. Watson, *Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter* (SBL Dissertation Series 104), Atlanta 1988, p. 145–146.

48 T. Callan, *The Style of the Second Letter of Peter*, “Biblica” 84 (2003), no. 2, p. 205.

49 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 136.