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# **Perceiving the Mystery of the Merciful Son of God**

An Analysis of the Purpose of the Apocalypse of Peter

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A Thesis Submitted to

The University of Edinburgh, New College

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Doctor of Philosophy

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## Declaration

I, Eric Beck, hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by me and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric J Beck', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Eric J Beck  
Ph.D. Candidate



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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the primary purpose of the Apocalypse of Peter. While most scholars assume the intent of the text is to use its grotesque imagery of punishments in hell to serve as a warning to its readers against sinning, no thorough exegetical analysis of the purpose of the Apocalypse of Peter has yet been undertaken to verify this claim. This thesis is, therefore, the first sustained analysis of the primary purpose of the document. It begins by reviewing previous scholarship on the text and discussing terminological and methodological concerns. Chapter three then surveys ten ancient afterlife torment texts in order to demonstrate the diverse ways the genre was utilised and the importance of the context surrounding the hellish descriptions to the interpretation of these texts. Prior to an examination of the primary purpose of the Apocalypse of Peter, chapter four presents and discusses a new, composite translation of the text that is the first to compare all the available manuscripts on a verse-by-verse basis. Chapters five and six present the exegetical analysis of the purpose of the text first by looking at the context surrounding the tour of hell and then at the tour itself. In these chapters, it is argued that the primary purpose of the Apocalypse of Peter is to move its readers to have compassion on the wicked by integrating divine justice and mercy. The study concludes by examining the possible impact the proposed interpretation of the text may have on various readers.



## Transliterations and Abbreviations

Transliterations of Gə‘əz Ethiopic follow Priess, Maija. *Lexicon of Gə‘əz Verbs for Students*. Moran Etho 37. Kerala, India: St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, 2015.

All abbreviations are taken from *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Below are abbreviations not found in the Handbook or slightly modified.

Akh Apoc Pet	Greek text of the Apocalypse of Peter extant in <i>P.Cair.</i> 10759 (The Akhmīm Fragment)
Apoc Paul	The Apocalypse of Paul, referred to in the <i>SBLHS</i> as the Vision of Paul (Vis. Paul)
Apoc Pet	The earliest recoverable form of the Apocalypse of Peter as presented in this thesis
ASE	<i>Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi</i>
ECA	Early Christian Apocrypha
Eth Apoc Pet	Ethiopic text of the Apocalypse of Peter presented with critical apparatus in Buchholz, Dennis D. <i>Your Eyes Will Be Opened: A Study in the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter</i> . SBLDS 97. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
NGS	New Gospel Studies
ROC	<i>Revue de l'Orient chrétien</i>
SECA	Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha
VOHD	Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland



## Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis seeks to make a contribution to the study of a largely neglected text: The Apocalypse of Peter (Apoc Pet).<sup>1</sup> What little academic study this text has received has mostly focused on the provenance of the text and its literary sources, while treating it as primarily a historical artefact. The current study attempts to bring a new perspective to the study of the Apoc Pet by treating the text primarily as a theological artefact and analysing the content of the text in order to ascertain its primary pedagogical purpose. The validity of this approach arises from the understanding that the text's status as Scripture in some early Christian communities, as well as the pedagogical function of afterlife torment texts in the ancient world, demonstrate that early in the life of the text its readers likely believed it had a theological message relevant to their lives.

Little work exists that analyses the text in order to ascertain its primary purpose. Most scholars instead assume that the fear and revulsion evoked in some readers due to the graphic depictions of hellish torments reveal that the text has a monitory purpose, that is serving as a warning, with little or no reference to any other part of the text.<sup>2</sup> The assurance with which this assumption is held within scholarship is epitomised in comments like that of Bart Ehrman, who says in his introduction to the Apoc Pet, "The ultimate goal of this first-hand description of hellish and heavenly

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<sup>1</sup> Multiple texts exist under the title Apocalypse of Peter. The text to which this study refers is the second-century text which survives in two Ethiopic manuscripts and three Greek fragments. This is to be distinguished from the text of the same name found at Nag Hammadi (NHC VII,3), sometimes called the Gnostic or Coptic Apocalypse of Peter, as well as the text sometimes referred to as the Arabic Apocalypse of Peter or The Book of the Rolls.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Harry O. Maier, "Staging the Gaze: Early Christian Apocalypses and Narrative Self-Representation," *HTR* 90 (1997): 136–138.

realities is reasonably clear; the way to escape eternal torment is to avoid sin.”<sup>3</sup> Others, taking a similar approach of interpreting the text in the position of a particular readership, read the text through the eyes of a hypothetical author and audience. This has led to interpreting the Apoc Pet as encouraging *Schadenfreude* by teaching that the wicked will receive punishment for their misdeeds even if only in the afterlife.<sup>4</sup> Both of these understandings of the text are valid from the proposed readers’ perspective, but they typically only take into account the depictions of the torments in hell and how a reader might respond to them with little regard to the rest of the text. What is currently lacking is a holistic understanding of the primary purpose of the Apoc Pet. For this reason, the current scholarly assumptions about the primary purpose of the text need to be readdressed and either affirmed with supporting contextual evidence or replaced with an alternate interpretation of the text. When the text is studied closely and holistically, a new understanding of its primary purpose emerges. Rather than primarily a monitory or consolatory text, this study argues that the primary purpose of the Apoc of Pet is to use the integration of divine justice and mercy in order to encourage its readers to show compassion to the wicked.

#### A. The History of the Apocalypse of Peter

Prior to end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, little was known about the Apoc Pet beyond its existence in the early church. Lines 71–72 of the Muratorian canon claim, “We receive

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<sup>3</sup> Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books That Did Not Make It into the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 280.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Robertson Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 33 n. 2; Michael J. Gilmour, “Delighting in the Sufferings of Others: Early Christian Schadenfreude and the Function of the Apocalypse of Peter,” *BBR* 16 (2006): 129–139.

only the apocalypses of John and Peter, though some of us are not willing that the latter be read in church.”<sup>5</sup> Eusebius mentions the Apoc Pet twice in regard to canon. He first says, “On the other hand, in the case of the ‘Acts’ attributed to him [Peter], the ‘Gospel’ that bears his name, the ‘Preaching’ called his, and the so-called ‘Revelation’, we have no reason at all to include these among the traditional Catholic Scriptures, for neither in the early days nor in our own has any Church writer made use of their testimony” (*Hist. eccl.* 3.3).<sup>6</sup> Then in his own New Testament canon list in *Hist. eccl.* 3.25, he classifies the Apoc Pet as a spurious book. In addition to these references to the apocalypse itself, a few early Christian writers did indeed cite the Apoc Pet, contrary to Eusebius’ claim. The most notable citations are Clement of Alexandria’s references to the text in *Eclogae propheticae* 41 and 48–49. In *Ecl.* 41 in particular, he refers to the Apoc Pet as γραφή. These along with a few other references to the text made up the totality of knowledge of the Apoc Pet for many years.<sup>7</sup>

### 1. *The Discovery of the Text*

All this changed in the winter of 1886/87 when a team of French archaeologists discovered a codex in Akhmīm, Egypt which contained fragmentary copies of the Gospel of Peter, the Apoc Pet, the Greek Book of Enoch, and the Martyrdom of St

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<sup>5</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origins, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2009), 307.

<sup>6</sup> All translations of *Ecclesiastical History* are from Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, ed. Andrew Louth, trans. G. A. Williamson (New York: Penguin Books, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> For a more complete discussion on the early reception of the Apoc Pet, see Dennis D. Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened: A Study in the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter*, SBLDS 97 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 20–81; Attila Jakab, “The Reception of the Apocalypse of Peter in Ancient Christianity,” in *The Apocalypse of Peter*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and István Czachesz, SECA 7 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 174–186.

Julian.<sup>8</sup> Dennis Buchholz dates the copy of the Apoc Pet found at Akhmīm (Akh Apoc Pet) anywhere between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, while Christian Maurer limits the range to the 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>9</sup> In 1910, Sylvain Grébaut published the Ethiopic text of manuscript d’Abbadie 51 in Paris. One of the texts within this manuscript, known as The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead, contains within it a version of the Apoc Pet.<sup>10</sup> That same year, a Greek fragment which closely matches the Ethiopic text was published: *Bodl. MS Gr. th. f. 4 (P)* or the Bodleian fragment.<sup>11</sup> In 1924, a second Greek fragment also closely matching the Ethiopic was published: *P.Vindob.G 39756* or the Rainer fragment.<sup>12</sup> These two fragments are from the same manuscript dating to the fifth century.<sup>13</sup> The fifth and final copy of the text currently known today is an Ethiopic text in the monastery of Saint Gabriel on the island of Kebrān in Lake Tānā in Ethiopia, which was photographed in 1968 by Ernst Hammerschmidt.<sup>14</sup> Like the d’Abbadie text, the text of the Apoc Pet at Lake Tānā is embedded within The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead.

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<sup>8</sup> Urbain Bouriant, “Fragments du texte grec du livre d’Enoch et de quelques écrits attribués à Saint-Pierre,” in *Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission archéologique française au Caire*, t. 9, fasc. 1 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1892), 91–147; Paul Foster, *The Gospel of Peter: Introduction, Critical Edition and Commentary*, TENTS 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 43–57.

<sup>9</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 83; Hugo Duensing and Christian Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” in *New Testament Apocrypha*, eds. Wilhelm Schneemelcher and Robert McL. Wilson (London: Lutterworth, 1965), 2:663.

<sup>10</sup> Sylvain Grébaut, “Littérature éthiopienne pseudo-clémentine,” *ROC* 15 (1910): 198–214, 307–323, 425–439.

<sup>11</sup> M. R. James, “Additional Notes on the Apocalypse of Peter,” *JTS* 12 (1910): 157.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Wessely, “Les plus anciens monuments du christianisme écrits sur papyrus II,” *PO* 18 (1924): 482–483.

<sup>13</sup> M. R. James, “The Rainer Fragment of the Apocalypse of Peter,” *JTS* 32 (1931): 278; Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas, *Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse: Die griechischen Fragmente mit deutscher und englischer Übersetzung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 121–122.

<sup>14</sup> Ernst Hammerschmidt, *Äthiopische Handschriften vom Tānāsee 1: Reisebericht und Beschreibung der Handschriften in dem Kloster des Heiligen Gabriel auf der Insel Kebrān*, VOHD 20.1 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1973), 166.

To this day, only these five manuscripts of the Apoc Pet are known to be extant. The three Greek manuscripts are fragmentary, and the two Ethiopic manuscripts are embedded within a larger work. The Akhmīm and Ethiopic manuscripts preserve unique and significantly edited recensions of the text. Although the Bodleian and Rainer fragments are often considered part of the same recension as the Ethiopic manuscripts, they actually bear witness to a third recension that is the most reliable in recovering the oldest version of the text. In addition to giving full descriptions of the discovery and content of all the manuscripts,<sup>15</sup> Buchholz has created a new Ethiopic text by comparing the two Ethiopic manuscripts and the Bodleian and Rainer fragments.<sup>16</sup> When this study refers to the Ethiopic Apocalypse of Peter (Eth Apoc Pet), it is Buchholz's edition of the text to which it refers, although at times the manuscript evidence in the critical apparatus is followed instead of Buchholz's editorial emendations. More often, this study will simply refer to the Apoc Pet. By this is meant the earliest recoverable version of the text as it is reconstructed in chapter four of the present study.

## *2. Dominant Research in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

Buchholz aptly describes that initial research on the Akh Apoc Pet generally fell into one of four categories: 1) the relationship between the Gospel of Peter and the Apoc Pet; 2) the relationship between 2 Peter and the Apoc Pet; 3) The Apoc Pet as using either Jewish or Greek sources; and 4) the reception of the Apoc Pet in the early church.<sup>17</sup> Following the 1910 publication of the Ethiopic text and the subsequent Greek

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<sup>15</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 119–155.

<sup>16</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 162–243.

<sup>17</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 88.

fragments, two more categories emerged: 1) the relationship between the Ethiopic text and the Akh Apoc Pet and 2) the relationship between the transfiguration account in Apoc Pet 15–17 and the canonical accounts.<sup>18</sup> Previous scholars have described the major points and proponents of each category in detail up the 1980s, so they need not be recounted here.<sup>19</sup> What is significant about all these categories, except for that concerned with the relationship between the Eth Apoc Pet and the Akh Apoc Pet, is that they are all primarily concerned with what came before or after the text rather than what the text says in and of itself. While such questions are essential for a comprehensive understanding of any text, this project hopes to move beyond such historical questions and focus on the text as a document worth studying for its own message.

Research on the Apoc Pet in the final two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was dominated by two scholars: Dennis Buchholz and Richard Bauckham.<sup>20</sup> Buchholz completed his PhD dissertation in 1984 and published it in 1988.<sup>21</sup> His main contribution to the study of the text was a new edition with a critical apparatus and notes of the Eth Apoc Pet based upon all the available manuscripts except for the Akhmīm fragment. Buchholz’s goal was “to present the earliest Ethiopic text which the material at our disposal allows.”<sup>22</sup> For some scholars, like Bauckham, Buchholz’s “literal” translation of the text has become the preferred English translation. He also

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<sup>18</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 107.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter: An Account of Research,” *ANRW* II.25.6 (1988): 4712–4750; Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 82–118.

<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that although this thesis will contain multiple critiques of both Buchholz and Bauckham, their contributions to the study of the Apoc Pet cannot be overstated. Bauckham in particular has published many seminal studies on the Apoc Pet and other afterlife torment texts that are indispensable to the study of these documents.

<sup>21</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*.

<sup>22</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 119.

included a “free” translation, but this has not seen much scholarly use. Buchholz’s translations, however, never became the widely accepted standard among scholars because his literal translation at times awkwardly retains the Eth Apoc Pet’s eccentricities and the free translation often distorts the wording of the Ethiopic in favour of Buchholz’s interpretation of the text. He was, however, the first to introduce verse numbers to the widely accepted chapter divisions implemented by Heinrich Weinel.<sup>23</sup> Buchholz’s verse numbers have gained wider use than his translations as they facilitate a more precise discussion on the text.

Two arguments in particular made by both Buchholz and Bauckham have driven much of the discussion on the Apoc Pet. The first concerns the provenance of the text. Both scholars believe the date and place of the creation of the Apoc Pet can be located in Palestine between 132–135 CE.<sup>24</sup> Such specificity derives from an interpretation that links the false messiah in Apoc Pet 2:7–12 with Shimon Bar Kokhba. Weinel was the first to suggest such an interpretation and provenance of the text, but the arguments as explicated by Bauckham and Buchholz have left the greatest impact on scholarship.<sup>25</sup> The relevant text reads as follows:

Did you not perceive that the fig tree is the house of Israel? And indeed, I have told you, when its branches bud in the end, false messiahs will come. And he will promise, ‘I am the Christ who has come into the world.’ And when they see his evil deeds, they will turn away. And they will reject him who is called ‘the glory of our ancestors’, who crucified the first Christ and erred exceedingly. But this liar is not the Christ. And when they resist him, he will wage war with the sword.

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<sup>23</sup> Heinrich Weinel, “Offenbarung des Petrus,” in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*, 2nd ed., ed. Edgar Hennecke (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1924), 314–327.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Bauckham, “The Two Fig Tree Parables in the Apocalypse of Peter,” *JBL* 104 (1985): 287; Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter: An Account of Research,” 4738; Richard Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter: A Jewish Christian Apocalypse from the Time of Bar Kokhba,” in *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, NovTSup 93 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 176; Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 408–412.

<sup>25</sup> Weinel, “Offenbarung des Petrus,” 317.

And there will be many martyrs. Then at that time when the branches of the fig tree, this alone is the house of Israel, have budded, there will be many martyrs by his hand. And they will die and they will be martyrs. Indeed, Enoch and Elijah will be sent in order to instruct them that this is the deceiver who will come into the world and perform signs and wonders to deceive it.<sup>26</sup>

Although the text begins by speaking of multiple false messiahs, the subject quickly changes to a singular false christ. Buchholz interprets this change from multiple false messiahs to only one as signifying that, “The description of the historical event begins here.”<sup>27</sup> Likewise, Bauckham believes the author moves from using his source material, the false messiahs in Matt 24, to describing his own times, thus changing from the plural to the singular.<sup>28</sup> If this passage is meant to describe events contemporaneous with the writing of the text, as they argue, then the Apoc Pet would have been written, according to their interpretation of the above passage, during a time where a false messiah would have performed miracles (v. 12) and made martyrs (v. 11) of Christians who at first denied Jesus (v. 9) and followed him (v. 8) but later revoke their support (v. 10). That the text contains an expectation of the appearance of Enoch and Elijah is, in Bauckham and Buchholz’s view, evidence that this false messiah had not yet been thwarted at the time of its writing.<sup>29</sup>

Due to the direct references to the Apoc Pet in Clement of Alexandria (ca. 200–215 CE) and the Muratorian canon (ca. 180–200 CE), as well as the possible indirect references in Book 2 of the Sibylline Oracles (ca. 150–250 CE) and the *Epistula Apostolorum* (ca. 150–200 CE), the *terminus ad quem* for the writing of the text lies

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<sup>26</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all translations of the Apoc Pet are my own.

<sup>27</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 285.

<sup>28</sup> Bauckham, “The Two Fig Tree Parables,” 285.

<sup>29</sup> Bauckham, “The Two Fig Tree Parables,” 287; Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 408–412.

somewhere in the second half of the second century CE.<sup>30</sup> As for the *terminus a quo*, some claim Apoc Pet 3 shows familiarity with 4 Ezra, which would mean the text was written sometime after 100 CE.<sup>31</sup> While a link between 4 Ezra and Apoc Pet is possible, it is also possible that they both make use of common tradition. The more probable *terminus a quo* is 70 CE, as the Apoc Pet was likely not written prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple due to its emphasis on the one, heavenly tabernacle (Apoc Pet 16:9). According to Bauckham, the only known “Jewish messianic pretender” between 70 CE and 160 CE who persecuted Christians was Bar Kokhba.<sup>32</sup> As his interpretation assumes the author wrote the text before the revolt ended, the date of composition must be between 132–135 CE. Likewise, in Bauckham and Buchholz’s opinions, the content and dating of the text would further require a specific location of composition: Palestine. As Bauckham says, “It is almost impossible, on our interpretation, to imagine its being written outside the immediate context of Bar Kokhba’s persecution of Christians.”<sup>33</sup>

The second issue upon which both Bauckham and Buchholz agree is the relationship between the Akhmīm fragment and the other extant manuscripts. Like the Bar Kokhba hypothesis, prioritisation of the Ethiopic text over the Akhmīm fragment was not original to either Bauckham or Buchholz, but they were both major proponents

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<sup>30</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 20–29, 43–48; Jakob, “The Reception of the Apocalypse of Peter,” 175–177; Henry David Schmidt, “The Peter Writings: Their Redactors and Their Relationships” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1972), 173–179.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Bauckham, “The Conflict of Justice and Mercy: Attitudes to the Damned in Apocalyptic Literature,” in *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, NovTSup 93 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 144; Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 664; J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 595.

<sup>32</sup> Bauckham, “The Two Fig Tree Parables,” 286.

<sup>33</sup> Bauckham, “The Two Fig Tree Parables,” 287.

of it. M. R. James was the first to support the superiority of the Ethiopic text soon after its publication.<sup>34</sup> The primary arguments in support of Ethiopic priority are as follows:

1. The Ethiopic is longer and more closely adheres to the length recorded in Codex Claromontanus and the Stichometry of Nicephorus.
2. The Ethiopic text contains nearly all of the early quotations of the Apoc Pet, while the Akhmīm text only contains one.
3. The Bodleian and Rainer fragments, as well as the second Sibylline Oracle, confirm the general reliability of the Ethiopic text in content and its more original use of the future tense within the tour of hell over the past tense used in the Akhmīm text.<sup>35</sup>

While these and other arguments have indeed shown that the Ethiopic text largely represents a more original reading of the Apoc Pet, no detailed comparative study has been undertaken comparing the minutia of these two texts. Nevertheless, Bauckham has felt confident enough in the superiority of the Ethiopic to make strong claims against the Akhmīm text: “In any case, although it may sometimes help us to clear up an obscurity in the Ethiopic version of the Apocalypse of Peter, it must be used with great caution in studying the Apocalypse of Peter. Priority must be given to the Ethiopic version.”<sup>36</sup> Likewise convinced of Ethiopic superiority, Buchholz makes an even stronger statement against the validity of the Akhmīm text for the study of the Apoc Pet: “What is important for our purposes is that there is in it nothing which is likely to be more reliable than the Ethiopic text.”<sup>37</sup> These claims have until now gone

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<sup>34</sup> M. R. James, “A New Text of the Apocalypse of Peter,” *JTS* 12 (1911): 573–583; M. R. James, “The Recovery of the Apocalypse of Peter,” *CQR* 80 (1915): 1–36.

<sup>35</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 162–164; Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 419; Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 665–667.

<sup>36</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 164–165. See also, Richard Bauckham, “Non-Canonical Apocalypses and Prophetic Works,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 130.

<sup>37</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 424.

largely unchallenged in scholarship despite the lack of any detailed comparative analysis of the texts.

### 3. Current Trends in Research

While Bauckham and Buchholz were the most influential voices in the 1980s and 1990s, scholarship on the Apoc Pet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century continually challenges their conclusions. Many of the questions currently asked in the study of the text remain the same as those posed in the past, but the ability for Bauckham and Buchholz to act as the consensus voices no longer remains. Instead, with increasing consistency, new scholarship diminishes the plausibility of previous arguments in favour of alternative perspectives.

The first significant challenge to the scholarly consensus came in the 1998 PhD dissertation of Robert Helmer.<sup>38</sup> In his dissertation, Helmer argues against the notion that the Apoc Pet used Matthew's gospel as a source.<sup>39</sup> He believes previous scholarship has not adequately taken into consideration other possible explanations for the seeming connection between Matthew and the Apoc Pet, and has instead assumed *a priori* that the latter used the former as a source.<sup>40</sup> This assumption has led scholars to posit an elaborate "cut and paste" writing style by the author.<sup>41</sup> He gives as a prime example Buchholz's treatment of Apoc Pet 1:6, in which Buchholz claims the singular

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<sup>38</sup> Robert C. Helmer, "'That We May Know and Understand': Gospel Tradition in the Apocalypse of Peter" (PhD diss., Marquette University, 1998).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Bauckham, "The Two Fig Tree Parables"; Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter: An Account of Research," 4723–4724; Édouard Massaux, *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature before Saint Irenaeus*, trans. Norman J. Belval and Suzanne Hecht, NGS 5/2 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1992), 98–111.

<sup>40</sup> Helmer, "That We May Know and Understand," 22–23.

<sup>41</sup> Helmer, "That We May Know and Understand," 49–50.

use of “cloud” was taken from Luke 21:27, the “of heaven” from Matt 24:30, and the use of “great” as a modifier of “power” from Mark 13:26.<sup>42</sup> Rather than requiring the author of the Apoc Pet to have one or more gospel texts in front of him while writing to explain such diverse parallels, Helmer believes a more probable scenario is that the author was familiar with the tradition behind the synoptic material.<sup>43</sup>

He agrees with scholars, such as Bauckham, Buchholz, and Édouard Massaux, who see significant parallels between Matt 24 and Apoc Pet 1, but he further finds important connections between Apoc Pet 1 and Matt 28. His points of contact are as follows: 1) the mountainous, post-resurrection setting, 2) the disciples’ worship (προσκυνέω/*sägädä*) of Jesus upon approaching him, 3) the focus on future believers, 4) the disciples’ roles as teachers of the message of Jesus, 5) the role of teaching in causing others to observe (τηρέω/*aqäbä*), and 6) the reference to doubt (διστάζω/*näfäqä*).<sup>44</sup> Rather than contend that these additional points of contact between Matt 28 and Apoc Pet 1 indicate that the author of the Apoc Pet conflated Matt 24 and 28, Helmer believes the gospel writer separated what was originally a “narrative whole” in one of his sources into two different places in his narrative. Therefore, the Apoc Pet, in Helmer’s view, better reflects the source tradition behind Matt 24 and 28, and is thus reliant on this Matthean tradition rather than the Gospel itself.<sup>45</sup> Helmer’s dissertation has received little notice in scholarship, likely due to its lack of publication. Nevertheless, he makes a compelling case against the claim that the Apoc Pet shows direct dependence upon the Gospel of Matthew.

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<sup>42</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 274.

<sup>43</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 50.

<sup>44</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 49–73.

<sup>45</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 155.

A second point of contention Helmer's dissertation raises is against the claim that the provenance of the Apoc Pet was Palestine during the Bar Kokhba revolt. Rather than interpreting the depiction of a single false messiah in Apoc Pet 2 as a reference to Bar Kokhba, Helmer believes it is merely a common motif of apocalyptic tradition originating from Daniel 7, and thus not a reference to a historical individual.<sup>46</sup> Like his claims regarding the gospel source material in Apoc Pet 1, Helmer has received little recognition for his arguments against the Bar Kokhba hypothesis. Those typically recognised for first challenging Bauckham and Buchholz's view on this issue are Jan Bremmer, Peter van Minnen, and Eibert Tigchelaar in the 2003 edited volume, *The Apocalypse of Peter*.<sup>47</sup>

Bremmer, in his chapter of this volume, never directly references the Bar Kokhba hypothesis. After analysing the Greek/Orphic influences in the Apoc Pet, he concludes that the Apoc Pet shows signs of both Greek and Jewish influence. He ends his chapter hypothesising that the Orphic influence "may be one more pointer to an Egyptian origin for the *Apocalypse of Peter*."<sup>48</sup> In two publications a few years later, Bremmer further confirms his non-committal stance on both the Bar Kokhba hypothesis as well as belief in Egyptian provenance when he says, "We simply do not know."<sup>49</sup> Peter van Minnen also expresses his own scepticism when he claims the Bar Kokhba hypothesis is "way too precise" for the scant evidence. Instead, he suggests a

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<sup>46</sup> Helmer, "That We May Know and Understand," 119–124.

<sup>47</sup> Jan N. Bremmer and István Czachesz, eds., *The Apocalypse of Peter*, SECA 7 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003).

<sup>48</sup> Jan N. Bremmer, "The Apocalypse of Peter: Greek or Jewish?," in *The Apocalypse of Peter*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and István Czachesz, SECA 7 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 14.

<sup>49</sup> Jan N. Bremmer, "Christian Hell: From the Apocalypse of Peter to the Apocalypse of Paul," *Numen* 56 (2009): 300; Jan N. Bremmer, "Orphic, Roman, Jewish and Christian Tours of Hell: Observations on the Apocalypse of Peter," in *Other Worlds and Their Relation to This World*, ed. Tobias Nicklas et al., JSJSup 143 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 309.

provenance in Rome due to the reference to Peter's martyrdom in the "city that rules the west" (Apoc Pet 14:4) and the text's appearance in the Muratorian canon.<sup>50</sup>

Unlike Bremmer and van Minnen, who only address the provenance of the Apoc Pet in passing, Tigchelaar devotes his entire chapter to reconsidering the Bar Kokhba hypothesis.<sup>51</sup> He analyses seven arguments in favour of the Bar Kokhba hypothesis and finds none of them convincing. First, regarding the change from multiple false messiahs to one, Tigchelaar urges cautious scepticism when studying the Eth Apoc Pet, as the text is corrupt and in a language that "does not always sharply distinguish between singular and plural forms."<sup>52</sup> Second, while both Eusebius (*Chron.*) and Justin Martyr (*1 Apol.* 31) record that Bar Kokhba killed or punished Christians, neither indicate that many died (Apoc Pet 2:10).<sup>53</sup> Third, the terms "liar" and "deceiver" were traditional terms used for false prophets, and thus "liar" is not necessarily a pun on Bar Kosiba.<sup>54</sup> Fourth, the notion that a false messiah would perform "signs and wonders" (Apoc Pet 2:12) is also traditional and does not necessarily refer to a specific historical person.<sup>55</sup> Fifth, Apoc Pet 2:10–12 is general enough that it could refer to other messianic figures, such as Lucias (115–117 CE).<sup>56</sup> Sixth, the tour of hell (Apoc Pet 7–12) was likely drawn from a pre-existent source

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<sup>50</sup> Peter van Minnen, "The Greek Apocalypse of Peter," in *The Apocalypse of Peter*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and István Czachesz, SECA 7 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 29–30.

<sup>51</sup> Eibert Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba? Considering the Date and Provenance of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter," in *The Apocalypse of Peter*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and István Czachesz, SECA 7 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 63–77.

<sup>52</sup> Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?," 65–66.

<sup>53</sup> Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?," 66–68.

<sup>54</sup> Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?," 68–69. This is contrary to Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 190.

<sup>55</sup> Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?," 69–70.

<sup>56</sup> Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?," 70–71.

with 9:2, 9:3, and possibly 9:4 added to the source material to incorporate those who persecuted Christians. This could indicate a *Sitz im Leben* of martyrdom and persecution.<sup>57</sup> Finally, Jesus' rebuke of Peter and emphasis on the one, heavenly tabernacle (Apoc Pet 16:8–9) likely refers to the eschatological location of the righteous and not to Bar Kokhba's plans to rebuild the temple.<sup>58</sup> This survey leads Tigchelaar to conclude, "In short: the identification of the liar with Bar Kokhba is possible and tempting, but the arguments are not conclusive."<sup>59</sup> He further advises "that the Bar Kokhba hypothesis should not serve as a hermeneutical key that veils other possible explanations of sections of the composition."<sup>60</sup> Just like Bremmer and van Minnen, Tigchelaar challenges the Bar Kokhba hypothesis without fully rejecting it in favour of an alternate hypothesis. Nevertheless, these critiques of the theory have given scholars subsequent confidence to abandon it completely, primarily in favour of an Alexandrian provenance.<sup>61</sup>

Since the discovery of the first Ethiopic manuscript, the consensus among scholars has been that the Eth Apoc Pet better represents an older form of the text than the Akh Apoc Pet. Bauckham and Buchholz further support and solidify this view in their work, and it now remains largely unquestioned in Apoc Pet scholarship. Both go a step further in their work, however, by including the notion of the insufficiency of the Akh Apoc Pet along with the priority of the Eth Apoc Pet by their own disregard of the Akhmīm text. This has led to neglect of the Akh Apoc Pet in much of

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<sup>57</sup> Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?," 71–73.

<sup>58</sup> Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?," 73–74.

<sup>59</sup> Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?," 74.

<sup>60</sup> Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?," 77.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Tobias Nicklas, "Christliche Apokryphen als Spiegel der Vielfalt frühchristlichen Lehens: Schlaglichter, Beispiele und methodische Probleme," *ASE* 23 (2006): 33–39.

scholarship. This neglect is exemplified in a 1997 French translation of the Apoc Pet in which the Akh Apoc Pet is not included and is discussed by Bauckham in a note on the Greek text as though it is so heavily edited that it cannot be considered a text of the Apoc Pet.<sup>62</sup>

Thomas Kraus and Tobias Nicklas counteract this neglect by including the Akh Apoc Pet in their 2004 study of the Greek fragments of the Apoc Pet.<sup>63</sup> While they still agree that the Akh Apoc Pet is a shortened and edited form of the Apoc Pet and that textual interpretation of the Apoc Pet must rely on the Eth Apoc Pet, their inclusion of the Akh Apoc Pet successfully brought the text back into the discussion.<sup>64</sup> They also include in their book pictures of the three Greek manuscripts so that discussions could once again continue regarding the difficulty in reconstructing the text. Nicklas further encourages engagement with the Akh Apoc Pet in an essay published in 2008.<sup>65</sup> While he agrees with Bauckham that the Akh Apoc Pet does not aid in understanding the original Apoc Pet, he argues, “It can still be seen as an important witness to the development of the text of the *Revelation of Peter*.”<sup>66</sup> In the essay itself, Nicklas attempts to study the text as a unique Petrine apocryphon. While no consensus exists in scholarship as to how to treat the Akh Apoc Pet, Kraus and Nicklas have at least brought it back from the neglect it previously received.

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<sup>62</sup> Paolo Marrassini and Richard Bauckham, “Apocalypse de Pierre,” in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, ed. François Bovon and Pierre Geoltrain (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 745–774.

<sup>63</sup> Kraus and Nicklas, *Das Petrus-evangelium und die Petrusapokalypse*, 79–138.

<sup>64</sup> Kraus and Nicklas, *Das Petrus-evangelium und die Petrusapokalypse*, 130.

<sup>65</sup> Tobias Nicklas, “‘Our Righteous Brethren’: Reflections on the Description of the Righteous Ones According to the Greek Revelation of Peter (Akhm. 2),” in *Empsychoi Logoi – Religious Innovations in Antiquity: Studies in Honour of Pieter Willem van Der Horst*, ed. Alberdina Houtman, Albert de Jong, and Magda Misset-van de Weg (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 329–346.

<sup>66</sup> Nicklas, “Our Righteous Brethren,” 330.

A final significant challenge brought against the scholarly consensus concerns the relationship of the Apoc Pet to 2 Peter. While the relationship of these two texts was one of the initial research questions after the discovery of the Akh Apoc Pet, as outlined above, the discovery of the Eth Apoc Pet stifled most discussions on this topic. Seeking to correct this lacuna in scholarship, Bauckham analyses 26 parallels between the Apoc Pet and 2 Peter in an attempt to discern the connection between the two texts.<sup>67</sup> Of the 26 correspondences, he finds nine inconsequential in determining a relationship between the texts, three likely unoriginal readings of the Apoc Pet, seven possibly reflecting a common Petrine tradition, and eight confirming that the Apoc Pet used 2 Peter as a source.<sup>68</sup> Bauckham's findings confirm what much of scholarship assumed prior to his examination of the parallels, but Wolfgang Grünstäudl has subsequently challenged his analysis of the texts.<sup>69</sup>

Grünstäudl raises four points of challenge against Bauckham's conclusion. First, Bauckham claims the account of the transfiguration in Apoc Pet 15–17 is dependent upon Matt 17:1–8, while the transfiguration account in 2 Pet 1:16–18 is “probably independent of the Synoptic tradition.”<sup>70</sup> He also believes that the “secondary use” of the transfiguration in the Apoc Pet necessitates its dependence upon 2 Peter.<sup>71</sup> Grünstäudl instead argues that the transfiguration in 2 Peter is not

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<sup>67</sup> Richard Bauckham, “2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter,” in *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, NovTSup 93 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 290–303.

<sup>68</sup> Bauckham, “2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter,” 302–303. Bauckham includes some correspondences in multiple categories and leaves one out of his concluding remarks entirely.

<sup>69</sup> Wolfgang Grünstäudl, *Petrus Alexandrinus: Studien zum historischen und theologischen Ort des zweiten Petrusbriefes*, WUNT II 353 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 97–144.

<sup>70</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC 50 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 205–210; Bauckham, “2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter,” 302.

<sup>71</sup> Bauckham, “2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter,” 303.

independent of the synoptic tradition, as previously suggested by Robert Miller.<sup>72</sup> Likewise, the “secondary use” of the transfiguration in the Apoc Pet, in Grünstäudl’s view, is not sufficient for proving a direction of dependence. Not only does the brevity of the transfiguration account in 2 Peter make proving a secondary use in the Apoc Pet against 2 Peter difficult, but the transfiguration account in 2 Peter itself has a secondary use over the synoptic tradition, upon which both Petrine works are dependent to some extent. Grünstäudl instead hypothesises that the similarities between the transfiguration accounts in Matthew, 2 Peter, and Apoc Pet, as well as the differences the two Petrine works share with the Matthean account, suggest that 2 Peter harmonises the accounts from Matthew and Apoc Pet.<sup>73</sup>

The second point of correlation which Grünstäudl re-evaluates is the prophecies of Peter’s death recorded in both texts. Grünstäudl believes the texts of 2 Pet 1:4, 10–14 and Apoc Pet 14, from the Rainer fragment, contain significant enough parallels to posit literary dependence. He argues that the eschatological importance of Peter’s death in Apoc Pet 14 likely arose shortly after the martyrdom of Peter and thus cannot have developed from 2 Peter. The direction of dependence could go the other direction, however, if 2 Peter’s use of Petrine pseudonymity to defend the Parousia is viewed as a further explanation of the eschatological expectation in Apoc Pet 14.<sup>74</sup>

Thirdly, Grünstäudl questions Bauckham’s claim that the cosmic conflagration of 2 Pet 3:5–13 used a lost apocalypse as a source rather than the Apoc Pet.<sup>75</sup> The

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<sup>72</sup> Grünstäudl, *Petrus Alexandrinus*, 115–118; Robert J. Miller, “Is There Independent Attestation for the Transfiguration in 2 Peter,” *NTS* 42 (1996): 620–625.

<sup>73</sup> Grünstäudl, *Petrus Alexandrinus*, 118–123.

<sup>74</sup> Grünstäudl, *Petrus Alexandrinus*, 123–130.

<sup>75</sup> Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 300.

similarities between the cosmic conflagrations in the two texts lead Grünstäudl to conclude the exact opposite: 2 Peter used the Apoc Pet as its source for the cosmic conflagration.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, Grünstäudl raises a point that had yet to be discussed in regard to the relationship between the two texts. If the Apoc Pet used 2 Peter as a source, why does it not contain any hint of Jude? For Grünstäudl, it is unlikely that the author of the Apoc Pet would have specifically avoided those parts of 2 Peter which derived from Jude. Instead, the lack of connections with Jude in the Apoc Pet further supports his argument that 2 Peter used the Apoc Pet as a source along with Jude.<sup>77</sup> He thus concludes that the weight of all the evidence invalidates Bauckham's claim that the Apoc Pet used 2 Peter as a source and instead claims that 2 Peter is dependent upon the Apoc Pet.

Grünstäudl's theory has gained some acceptance in scholarship, notably adopted and expanded upon by Jörg Frey.<sup>78</sup> However, some scholars, such as Paul Foster, find their arguments unconvincing.<sup>79</sup> Foster claims that the textual parallels do not sufficiently prove literary dependence, as many consist of only a single word and only in the possibly corrupt Eth Apoc Pet. He also believes their inferential arguments are fallacious. For example, he thinks the lack of any connections between Jude and the Apoc Pet is precisely what one would expect if the Apoc Pet used 2 Peter as a

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<sup>76</sup> Grünstäudl, *Petrus Alexandrinus*, 130–137.

<sup>77</sup> Grünstäudl, *Petrus Alexandrinus*, 137–141.

<sup>78</sup> Jörg Frey, *Der Brief des Judas und der zweite Brief des Petrus*, THKNT 15/II (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015), 170–173; Jörg Frey, "Second Peter, the Apocalypse of Peter, and the 'Petrine Discourse': Towards a New Historical Perspective," Paper Presented at the Radboud Prestige Lectures in New Testament (Nijmegen, 2016).

<sup>79</sup> Paul Foster, "Does the Apocalypse of Peter Help to Determine the Date of 2 Peter?," forthcoming.

source, not the other way around. In the end, Foster's arguments encouraging agnosticism are well taken and in some cases will be further confirmed in the coming chapters.

While the questions asked of the Apoc Pet largely remained the same from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many of the answers have changed. It is now difficult to speak about a consensus regarding the provenance of the Apoc Pet and its literary relationship to other texts. Also, certain aspects of the text that were previously dismissed, such as Akh Apoc Pet, are once again included in the discussion. Yet even though study of the text has increased in the new century, Bauckham's lament that the Apoc Pet "is probably the most neglected of all Christian works written before 150 CE" is still an apt description of the state of scholarship.<sup>80</sup>

#### *4. The Purpose of the Apocalypse of Peter*

While the present thesis is the first monograph-length study on the primary purpose of the Apoc Pet, it is not the first attempt in scholarship to discern the intent of the text. Previous attempts have ranged from passing remarks to entire articles devoted to the topic. Before moving into the arguments of this study, it is necessary to survey the previous answers given to the question at hand. As each position's individual arguments will be more fully analysed in the relevant sections in chapters five and six, a brief outline of each position without comment on particular points will suffice for now.

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<sup>80</sup> Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 160.

Most scholars who believe the intent of the text is monitory tend to give little evidence in support of their claim. Some, such as Ehrman, merely claim the monitory purpose is “reasonably clear” without any support whatsoever.<sup>81</sup> Bauckham and Buchholz claim the main theme of the text is explicitly stated in Apoc Pet 1:8 when Jesus says he will “recompense all people according to their deeds,” but they do not give any indication that they attribute a particular pedagogical function to this theme.<sup>82</sup> Bauckham sees the further theme of the disbelief in punishment in the afterlife by the wicked (Apoc Pet 7:8, 11; 13:4) as sufficient proof that the text was meant to warn people away from sin.<sup>83</sup> To date, only Helmer has given a robust defence of a monitory reading of the text.

While Helmer’s dissertation primarily focuses on the gospel tradition behind the Apoc Pet, he does address the purpose of the text throughout the study. He agrees with Bauckham and Buchholz that Apoc Pet 1:8 reveals the main theme of the text.<sup>84</sup> Unlike them, however, he does explicitly claim this verse reveals the pedagogical purpose of the text. He says, “The signs of the return of Jesus as the judge who will repay sinners according to their deeds are given so as to elicit from the audience correct conduct and belief that will not result in eternal punishment but rather in eternal reward.”<sup>85</sup> He defends this interpretation of the text with three further arguments. First, the parable of the fig tree in Apoc Pet 1:4–6 serves to admonish the readers that, with appropriate behaviour, they can be saved from being “uprooted”.<sup>86</sup> Second, the graphic

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<sup>81</sup> Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, 280.

<sup>82</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 180; Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 276.

<sup>83</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 226–230.

<sup>84</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 80.

<sup>85</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 90–91.

<sup>86</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 113–114.

eschatological images of Apoc Pet 3–14 serve as warnings against sinning.<sup>87</sup> Third, the descriptions of the transfiguration, the garden of the righteous, the book of Jesus Christ, and the book of life in the final chapters reveal the reward the righteous can expect for continued ethical conduct.<sup>88</sup>

While Helmer’s analysis of the Apoc Pet successfully draws out the hortatory nature of the text as encouraging ethical conduct, he never explains what constitutes ethical conduct for the Apoc Pet. The only section he discusses which explicitly links particular actions to ethical exhortation is the tour of hell, which only describes unethical actions in his view. This is also the only section of the text for which he does not offer a translation or exegetical discussion. Thus, his claim about the monitory nature of the exhortation ultimately rests in the same *a priori* assumption of Bauckham, Buchholz, and Ehrman: the graphic nature of the tour of hell is meant to warn the readers and guide them to ethical conduct.

Rather than a monitory text meant to keep people from sinning, some scholars read the Apoc Pet as a text meant to console its readers during a time of persecution and injustice. Michael Gilmour has given the most detailed defence of this interpretation by arguing that it is meant to encourage *Schadenfreude* in its readers.<sup>89</sup> In defining *Schadenfreude*, Gilmour refers to the work of John Portmann, in particular his four “principal sources: 1) low self-esteem; 2) loyalty and commitments to justice; 3) the comical; and 4) malice.”<sup>90</sup> Of these four, Gilmour believes the most appropriate

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<sup>87</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 129.

<sup>88</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 137–152.

<sup>89</sup> Gilmour, “Delighting in the Sufferings of Others.”

<sup>90</sup> John Portman, *When Bad Things Happen to Other People* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 31–44.

source for *Schadenfreude* in the readers of the Apoc Pet is a loyalty and commitment to justice.<sup>91</sup> When interpreting the text itself, he begins by claiming a “virtual consensus” regarding the Bar Kokhba hypothesis and that this positions the text as a response to persecution.<sup>92</sup> He then outlines four arguments within the text that he believes encourage readers to embrace *Schadenfreude* when contemplating the punishment of the wicked in hell. First, three torments in the tour of hell, murder, abortion, and infanticide (Apoc Pet 7:9–8:9), describe the victims watching the punishment of those who killed them as an acceptable practice. Second, these witnesses proclaim the righteousness of the punishments. Third, both Jesus (Apoc Pet 3:7) and the wicked themselves (Apoc Pet 13:6) also verbally confirm the justness of the punishments. Finally, Jesus rebukes Peter twice (Apoc Pet 3:5–6; 16:8), which Gilmour argues is meant to undermine Petrine authority in the text. The first rebuke is particularly significant because it is a rebuke of Peter’s compassion, in Gilmour’s view, thus the permission to feel *Schadenfreude* rather than compassion when viewing the torments of the wicked is put into the very mouth of Jesus.<sup>93</sup>

Gilmour’s article fails to convince both because he misinterprets the text, as will be shown in this thesis, and because he bases his interpretation on recreating a hypothetical audience during the Bar Kokhba revolt. The consensus that he claims regarding the Bar Kokhba hypothesis no longer exists, nor did it even at the time he wrote the article. As such, his interpretations of the text must be reanalysed in light of arguments against reading the text as set during the Bar Kokhba revolt. When the texts

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<sup>91</sup> Gilmour, “Delighting in the Sufferings of Others,” 133–134.

<sup>92</sup> Gilmour, “Delighting in the Sufferings of Others,” 132.

<sup>93</sup> Gilmour, “Delighting in the Sufferings of Others,” 135–138.

are removed from the hypothetical readership Gilmour has created, significant flaws in his interpretations are revealed.

A final attempt at discerning the purpose of the text is seen in Lautaro Lanzillotta's study on the underlying concept of justice in the Apoc Pet.<sup>94</sup> Lanzillotta derives his argument from the responses of those within the text upon viewing the suffering of the wicked. He sees two different responses: 1) a rejection of the punishments derived from compassion and 2) an approval of the punishments. The rejection of the punishments occurs in chapter three when Jesus shows the disciples the vision in his hand. Lanzillotta perceives three different compassionate responses in this chapter. The first is from the disciples, not including Peter, who see the vision and weep, but do nothing; this he deems "defective". The second is that of Peter's compassion that drives him to protest to Jesus; this he deems "excessive". The third is, in his estimation, the appropriate response of Jesus who is only compassionate when the punishment is underserved.<sup>95</sup> Within the tour itself, Lanzillotta suggests that those who witness the torments express approval of the punishments, whether in passive observance or verbal confirmation.<sup>96</sup> While many view these two responses as conflicting, Lanzillotta considers them complementary. The theme of compassion opens the tour of hell in chapter three and closes it in chapter fourteen, according to the Rainer fragment.<sup>97</sup> The approval of the punishments within the tour, in Lanzillotta's view, do not diminish the emphasis on compassion, but instead function

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<sup>94</sup> Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, "Does Punishment Reward the Righteous? The Justice Pattern Underlying the Apocalypse of Peter," in *The Apocalypse of Peter*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and István Czachesz, SECA 7 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 127–157.

<sup>95</sup> Lanzillotta, "Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?," 138–140.

<sup>96</sup> Lanzillotta, "Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?," 140–141.

<sup>97</sup> Lanzillotta, "Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?," 146–147.

as necessary elements of justice: the admission of guilt legitimises the justice of the punishments.<sup>98</sup>

This understanding of the various responses to the punishment of the wicked leads Lanzillotta to give two possible interpretations of the purpose of the text. The first claims that the text is meant to teach that punishment is a necessity for atonement for wrongdoing. This interpretation follows from the view that Jesus' compassion only arises if the punishment is undeserved. While this is similar to a monitory reading of the text, it differs from the common interpretation in its view that the punishment of the wicked is a positive, corrective measure rather than a negative warning of eternal damnation. The second interpretation arises from Peter's compassion and teaches the replacement of suffering in the application of justice with love of neighbour. According to this interpretation of the text, the Apoc Pet may have been an attempt to undo the dualistic view of the righteous versus the wicked in favour of a unified view of humankind. Both these interpretations focus on the compassion in the text and the post-mortem salvation offered in the Rainer fragment.<sup>99</sup>

In basing his possible interpretations for the purpose of the Apoc Pet on the responses of the characters within the text itself, Lanzillotta has thus far offered the most likely answer to the question at hand. Unfortunately, some of his arguments are based on misunderstandings of the text, deriving particularly from misleading translations. He also does not take into account the rest of the narrative outside of chapters 3–14. As such, while his answers are the most appealing to date, only a holistic study of the text can confirm their viability.

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<sup>98</sup> Lanzillotta, "Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?," 149–150.

<sup>99</sup> Lanzillotta, "Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?," 154–156.

## B. Statement of Purpose

The goal of this present study, then, is to offer the first holistic study of the Apoc Pet which uncovers the primary purpose of the text. While this is a holistic study of the text's purpose, it does not aim to offer a comprehensive commentary on every aspect of the document. Parts of the text which do not directly pertain to its primary purpose will not be discussed in detail. This analysis will bring a new perspective to the study of the text by moving beyond the historical-critical concerns that have dominated most current and past scholarship. Instead, it will approach the text as a religious document, communicating a message that either the author or early readers considered theologically important.<sup>100</sup> The validity of this approach is substantiated by those in the early church that viewed the text as Scripture. If some early Christians read the text as Scripture, it follows that they likewise believed it contained a message of theological importance. This study will also advance the study of the Apoc Pet by offering a new translation. Previous translations have misrepresented various aspects of the text, which has led to misinterpretation. Also, no translation thus far has adequately compared the Akh Apoc Pet and the Eth Apoc Pet in order to recreate a more original reading. This study will attempt to do so while still largely adhering to the proven Ethiopic priority.

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<sup>100</sup> The use of the term "author" is fraught with difficulty and undesirable implications. The text could have been composed by one author or many. It also could be more appropriate to refer to the person or persons that composed the text with the terms "editor", "redactor", or the like. All that is known for sure is that by necessity some person or persons at some point in history wrote a first manuscript of this text. Whether it was his, her, or their own composition or a compilation of previous traditions, whether oral or written, which are now lost, is not known. This study will primarily refer to the text as an entity itself, but occasionally for ease and diversity of language, it will refer to the "author" of the text. The use of such terminology is not meant to imply anything in particular about the composition of the text nor give the implication that the mind and intentions of the theoretical author are able to be known with certainty.

The main claim of this research is that the primary purpose of the Apoc Pet is to encourage the righteous to show compassion to the wicked. This is not to say the text does not contain a monitory or consolatory message. Rather, this study argues that such readings are either secondary or natural by-products of afterlife torment texts and not the primary intent of the author. As will be seen, a close reading of the text discourages monitory and consolatory interpretations at various places in favour of those that focus on compassion. The message of compassion in the text will also be shown to function irrespective of the various hypotheses regarding the provenance of the text. The message of the Apoc Pet is intended to be broadly applicable and should not be used to necessitate a particular *Sitz im Leben* for the text.

### C. Overview

This study is divided into seven chapters. Following the literature review in this chapter, chapters 2 and 3 explain the approach and rationale of the current study in relation to previous scholarship on the text. Chapter 2 defines key terms and discusses how and why this project does and does not engage with different methodologies. Chapter 3 surveys ten Greek, Jewish, and Christian afterlife torment texts that all have a possible date of composition within the first three centuries CE. The intent of this survey is to show how the narrative and dialogical context surrounding these texts is vital to their interpretation, and that not all such texts convey a monitory purpose when read in this way. After establishing the validity of the current question and approach, the next three chapters will offer a detailed exegesis of the Apoc Pet with the intent of unveiling its primary purpose. Chapter 4 offers a new translation and edition of the Apoc Pet which uses all the available Greek and Ethiopic manuscripts to present the

earliest recoverable form of the text. The chapter includes a discussion on the strategies used in translating the text, the composite translation itself, and detailed notes discussing each instance where a Greek recension was followed instead of the Eth Apoc Pet. Chapter 5 focuses primarily on the exegesis of Apoc Pet 1–3 with an eye on how these chapters prepare readers for the tour of hell. This chapter will discuss the narrative setting and audience of the text as well as its emphasis on mercy leading up to the eschatological vision of Apoc Pet 4–14. Chapter 6 consists of the exegesis of the tour of hell of Apoc Pet 7–14. The chapter will examine the justice pattern at use in the text, the various responses to punishment conveyed in the text, and how the post-mortem salvation for the wicked in Apoc Pet 14 influences the purpose of the text. The study will then end in chapter 7 with a summary of the research and a discussion on how the text's primary purpose, that of integrating God's justice and mercy in order to encourage its readers to have compassion on the wicked, might impact different readers.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

In beginning this study, it is first necessary to discuss some important terminological issues involved in the study of the Apoc Pet. In order to locate this project within the range of previous scholarship on the text, this chapter will also discuss several methodologies utilised in the study of the Apoc Pet and to what extent they are utilised here.

### A. Clarification of Terminology

This project treats various texts that may be grouped as part of a broad genre which will here be called afterlife torment texts. Generally, three different terms are used to describe texts within this genre, each of which describe a particular subset of afterlife torment texts: *nekyia*, *katabasis*/descent, and tour of hell. The first term widely used for these texts was *nekyia*: “The term νέκυια originally meant the rite used to conjure up the spirits of the dead, but it came to be applied to book 11 of the *Odyssey* and by extension to any encounter with the dead.”<sup>101</sup> While the term has broadened in its meaning to include both texts that summon the dead (e.g. Homer’s *Odyssey*) and those that travel to the realm of the dead (e.g. Lucian’s *Menippus*), *nekyia* texts still commonly contain a necromantic ritual or a direct encounter with the dead. However, not all afterlife torment texts include these features (e.g. Apocalypse of Peter). The second sub-group may be described as *katabasis* texts. The term *katabasis* or descent is also commonly used to describe some of these texts, as they often describe a downward journey to the underworld (e.g. Greek Apocalypse of Ezra). Alberto

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<sup>101</sup> Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1983), 41.

Bernabé defines a *katabasis* as “a tale of the journey to the subterranean world of the dead led by an extraordinary character while alive who has a determined purpose and is keen on returning.”<sup>102</sup> Recognising that not all afterlife torment texts contain a downward journey (e.g. Testament of Isaac), Bauckham acknowledges the overly specific nature of such terminology in a discussion on descents to the underworld in multiple cultures when he says, “it will not be possible to avoid referring sometimes to other kinds of journeys to the world of the dead when they are closely related to descents to the underworld.”<sup>103</sup> Thirdly, the term commonly used for Jewish and Christian afterlife torment texts is tour of hell. The notable features of a tour of hell is that a guide describes the punishments in the afterlife using demonstrative explanations (e.g. Latin Vision of Ezra).<sup>104</sup> As with the previous terms, tour of hell is overly restrictive, because not all afterlife torment texts use the demonstrative explanations implied by the term (e.g. Lucian’s *A True Story*), and not every abode of the dead should be referred to as hell (e.g. Plutarch’s *On the Daimonion of Socrates*).

The terms *nekyia*, *katabasis*/descent, and tour of hell all apply to different and, at times, overlapping texts that share common features. Rather than recognising common features, scholarship has largely focused on what makes each of the three subcategories unique. This focus, particularly in the study of the Apoc Pet, has caused significant debate on the cultural traditions behind particular texts. Albrecht Dieterich wrote one of the first major publications on the Apoc Pet (at the time only the Akh

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<sup>102</sup> Alberto Bernabé, “What Is a Katábasis? The Descent to the Netherworld in Greece and the Ancient Near East,” trans. Veronica Walker, *Les Études Classiques* 83 (2015): 17.

<sup>103</sup> Richard Bauckham, “Descents to the Underworld,” in *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, NovTSup 93 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 9.

<sup>104</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 41–67.

Apoc Pet was known) in which he argued that the text was a Christian version of the Orphic *nekylia* tradition.<sup>105</sup> Martha Himmelfarb challenged Dieterich's claims, instead arguing that the Apoc Pet is a part of the Jewish apocalyptic tour of hell tradition.<sup>106</sup> The positions espoused by Dieterich and Himmelfarb for many years encouraged scholarship to separate texts into different genres based primarily on their cultural affinities. Thankfully, multiple scholars now question this tendency to separate texts based solely upon their cultural provenance and recognise that different cultures, and therefore texts, often borrowed ideas from each other.<sup>107</sup> Acknowledging the multicultural nature of texts that describe torments in the afterlife also necessitates an awareness of the similarities between these texts and the broader genre to which they all belong.

As suggested above, this broad, culturally indistinct genre is perhaps best described as afterlife torment texts, although this is not without its own inadequacies. Afterlife torment texts all generally share three common features. First, they all describe the abode of the dead. Some examples exist where the living are sent to the location described in the text for punishment prior to death, such as when Cinyras and his accomplices are sent to the place of the wicked while still alive in Lucian's *A True Story*. However, even in texts that have these minor exceptions, the locations described are understood as the abode of the dead and not the living. This feature distinguishes these text from various law codes that describe the punishment of particular crimes

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<sup>105</sup> Albrecht Dieterich, *Nekylia: Beiträge zur Erklärung der Neuentdeckten Petrusapokalypse* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1893).

<sup>106</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*.

<sup>107</sup> C.f. Bauckham, "Descents to the Underworld," 35–36; Richard Bauckham, "Early Jewish Visions of Hell," in *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, NovTSup 93 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 71–72; Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 208–209; Bremmer, "The Apocalypse of Peter: Greek or Jewish?"

(e.g. Code of Hammurabi). Second, each text conveys some form of life after death. The life described in the text is not always identical to human existence before death (e.g. Plutarch's *On the Delays of Divine Vengeance*), but each text within this genre describes some form of sentience after death. This feature ties these texts together with a shared belief in an afterlife as opposed to those texts that teach that death is the final end (e.g. Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*). Third, each text describes the dead as in some form of torment. The torment can range from mere hints at a horrible fate for some of the dead (e.g. Plutarch's *On the Daimonion of Socrates*) to descriptions of specific, grotesque punishments for the wicked (e.g. Apocalypse of Paul), but every text contains some aspect that is generally considered distressing. This final feature distinguishes between texts that describe the afterlife as an undesirable state from those that describe a desirable afterlife, often called paradise, although a text within this genre may include both (e.g. Apocalypse of Zephaniah).

The following chapter will survey various afterlife torment texts to demonstrate the multivalence of the genre as well as the importance of narrative and dialogical contexts for discerning the purpose of these works. When specifically discussing the Apoc Pet elsewhere in the thesis, the subcategory 'tour of hell' will still be used as a means of highlighting the narrative form of Apoc Pet 7–13 as a guided tour with demonstrative explanations as well as the early Christian context of the document. Apart from these two features that are largely unique to tours of hell, the Apoc Pet is appropriately understood within the broad genre of afterlife torment texts.

## B. The Genre of Apocalypse

The very name of the text suggests that the Apoc Pet likely belongs to the genre of apocalypse. However, the implications of such a designation need to be addressed. For the purposes of this thesis, the common, although not universally accepted, definition of the genre of apocalypse in *Semeia* 14 may be used. According to that definition, apocalypse is “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworld being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”<sup>108</sup> While this definition has received criticism, the Apoc Pet is nevertheless a typical example of an apocalypse as here defined.<sup>109</sup> The text is a narrative of Jesus speaking with his disciples and revealing the future destination of the righteous and the wicked. More important than the issue of form, however, is that of function.

The definition of apocalypse given in *Semeia* 14 makes no mention of the function of the genre. However, the following statement regarding the function of an apocalypse was added to the definition in *Semeia* 36: “intended to interpret present, earthly circumstance in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behaviour of the audience by means of divine authority.”<sup>110</sup> One should be wary of a simple correlation between form and function

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<sup>108</sup> John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 5.

<sup>109</sup> For an overview of some of the critiques of this definition, see John J. Collins, “What Is Apocalyptic Literature?,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1–5.

<sup>110</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins, “Introduction: Early Christian Apocalypticism,” *Semeia* 36 (1986): 7.

and recognise that any genre may be used for multiple purposes, even if one function is more common than others.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, this broad description of the function of apocalypses, like the common description of form, once again seems to apply to the Apoc Pet. It is therefore important to discuss the general rhetorical function of apocalypses as it pertains to the Apoc Pet.

Greg Carey's use of the three rhetorical categories of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* as heuristic devices for understanding the function of early Christian apocalypses applies well to this task, particularly as he refers to the Apoc Pet multiple times.<sup>112</sup> First of all, it is important to disclose that Carey assumes that early Christian apocalypses were written in order to persuade their readers.<sup>113</sup> This assumption is shared by the current thesis regarding the Apoc Pet. The Apoc Pet was likely not written for pure entertainment value. Rather, it aims to convince its readers of something. The likelihood that the Apoc Pet intends to persuade its readers is supported by the text's status as Scripture in some early Christian communities. Assuming early Christian apocalypses have a pedagogical purpose, it is next important to discuss how they go about achieving their goals.

The first important aspect of early Christian apocalypses is their *ethos*, or the credibility and authority of their author. Multiple methods are used to promote the *ethos* of early Christian apocalypses. Some texts use primary apocalyptic discourse, which "appeals to the speaker's direct reception of revelation."<sup>114</sup> This is the case with

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<sup>111</sup> Collins, "What Is Apocalyptic Literature?," 5–6.

<sup>112</sup> Greg Carey, "Early Christian Apocalyptic Rhetoric," in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 218–234.

<sup>113</sup> Carey, "Early Christian Apocalyptic Rhetoric," 220.

<sup>114</sup> Carey, "Early Christian Apocalyptic Rhetoric," 222.

the Apoc Pet, as it uses pseudonymous Petrine authorship in order to claim to recount a direct revelation from Jesus. Even when claiming authority in their first-hand knowledge of revelation, however, some early Christian apocalypses take care to also humanise their author, cf. Paul in 2 Cor 12:7–10 and Hermas in Herm. 3.3.<sup>115</sup> This again holds true for Apoc Pet, particular when Jesus rebukes Peter in 3:5–6 and 16:8–9. In recognising the weaknesses of their authors, whether genuine or pseudonymous, early Christian apocalypses invite their readers to not only acknowledge their authority but also to identify with them in “their humanity, their piety, and their struggles.”<sup>116</sup>

The second important rhetorical function of early Christian apocalypses is the ability to emotionally move the audience, known as *pathos*. Carey uses the Apoc Pet as a prime example of this, explaining how the text’s grotesque punishments can instil fear in readers who might commit some of the sins described or comfort for the persecuted readers by encouraging them that their tormentors will receive justice in hell.<sup>117</sup> While he acknowledges that apocalypses can elicit multiple emotions from their readers, he perhaps oversimplifies the possible range of emotions by his use of the rhetoric of identification and counteridentification: “Identification and counteridentification have to do with values, with emulating those who practice one set of values and recoiling from those who pursue others.”<sup>118</sup> Some early Christian apocalypses, like the Apoc Pet, encourage empathy for those who have different values rather than recoil from them. This will be shown to prompt a different emotional

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<sup>115</sup> Carey, “Early Christian Apocalyptic Rhetoric,” 227.

<sup>116</sup> Carey, “Early Christian Apocalyptic Rhetoric,” 228.

<sup>117</sup> Carey, “Early Christian Apocalyptic Rhetoric,” 228–229.

<sup>118</sup> Carey, “Early Christian Apocalyptic Rhetoric,” 229.

response from the readers than those Carey suggests are utilised in early Christian apocalypses.

Thirdly, early Christian apocalypses use the rhetorical category of *logos*, or appeals to reason and argumentation, in order to persuade their readers. As Carey describes it, “Perhaps the most fascinating dimension of apocalyptic discourse lies in a practically inexhaustible set of persuasive resources.”<sup>119</sup> The Apoc Pet itself makes use of no less than three methods of persuasion common among the early Christian apocalypses. First, the text simply makes assertions. Some assertions in the text contain no interpretation, cf. 1:4–8, but the assertions concerning how sins are punished in the tour of hell are all followed with interpretive exposition in order to clarify for which sin each punishment is devised. Second, the text uses symbolic metaphor. This is particularly seen in the dual use of the fig tree parable in Apoc Pet 2. Finally, the entire text uses narrative rhetoric. This final method of persuasion is of particular interest to the study at hand, as it is “the use of plot and characterization to shape the audience perception” that is perhaps most overlooked by scholars when discussing the primary purpose of the text.<sup>120</sup>

Carey claims that “apocalyptic discourse provided early Christians with a rich set of resources for imagining the world, shaping opinion, and influencing behaviour.”<sup>121</sup> According to the common definition of the genre of apocalypse, the Apoc Pet is a typical example of an apocalypse in both form and function. Nevertheless, scholars have done little to expose the richness of this text. As will be

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<sup>119</sup> Carey, “Early Christian Apocalyptic Rhetoric,” 230.

<sup>120</sup> Carey, “Early Christian Apocalyptic Rhetoric,” 230.

<sup>121</sup> Carey, “Early Christian Apocalyptic Rhetoric,” 232.

seen, the ways in which the Apoc Pet shapes opinion and influences behaviour are entirely apocalyptic in nature but much different than commonly assumed.

### C. Historical Criticism and Provenance

Most of the discussions regarding the provenance of the Apoc Pet were covered in the literature review of the last chapter, so there is no need to rehearse them again here. In the end, no current hypothesis regarding the original date and place of the writing of the text is sufficiently persuasive. When compared to each other, a provenance of Alexandria seems more likely than either Palestine during the Bar Kokhba revolt or Rome. However, even the evidence for Alexandrian provenance is not entirely convincing when viewed in isolation from the other suggestions. Therefore, this thesis will take no stance regarding the specific provenance of the text. This lack of commitment to any one position is upheld for two reasons: to avoid circular reasoning and to acknowledge the universal application of a text recognised as Scripture early in its life.

While discussions on provenance in no way necessitate circular reasoning, the examinations in scholarship on the Apoc Pet regarding this issue tend toward circular argumentation. For example, Bauckham exemplifies this tendency when discussing Apoc Pet 16:7–9.<sup>122</sup> The passage under discussion reads as follows:

And I said to him, “My Lord, do you want me to make three tabernacles here, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah?” And he said to me in anger, “Satan is attacking you and has veiled your understanding, and the affairs of this world are overcoming you. Now your eyes are uncovered and your ears are open that (there is) one tabernacle, which was not made by people’s hands, (but) which was made by my heavenly father for me and for the elect.” And when we saw (it) we were rejoicing.

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<sup>122</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 190–194.

Jesus severely rebukes Peter for his desire to build three tabernacles, and Bauckham rightly questions why the rebuke is so harsh. His answer is that Peter associates himself with the false messiah of Apoc Pet 2 by wanting to build earthly tabernacles rather than recognising the existence of the heavenly tabernacle. He then argues that since Bar Kokhba wanted to rebuild the temple, the Apoc Pet must here intend to criticise Bar Kokhba's desire to rebuild the temple.<sup>123</sup> This is a circular argument. Only in Apoc Pet 16 does the text refer to tabernacles, so one must first agree with the Bar Kokhba hypothesis to see a connection between Peter's request to build three tabernacles and the false messiah, understood as Bar Kokhba, in Apoc Pet 2. However, rather than recognise that his interpretation relies on the Bar Kokhba hypothesis, Bauckham uses it as evidence of a provenance in Palestine during the Bar Kokhba revolt. More likely, as Tigchelaar explains, "The emphasis on the one tabernacle 'for me and for my elect' makes here more sense as a reference to the future abode of the elect, then as a veiled warning against Bar Kokhba's aspirations."<sup>124</sup>

The debate on provenance is also not key to the literary analysis undertaken in this thesis in an attempt to acknowledge the broad appeal of the Apoc Pet in the early church. Again, discussions on provenance do not require one to interpret a text as only relevant to a particular audience within history, but, as evident above with Bauckham's interpretation of Apoc Pet 16:7–9, its use in the study of the Apoc Pet has tended to result in readings of the text that assume it was meant to speak to only one specific moment in history. However, the early status of the Apoc Pet as Scripture suggests that many of its first readers found it religiously relevant in some way, and the use of

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<sup>123</sup> Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 192–194.

<sup>124</sup> Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?," 74.

the text in some churches even into the fifth century further emphasises its relevancy beyond its original historical context. This suggests that the Apoc Pet contains a message that is able to transcend a particular historical milieu. That is not to say that the text should be divorced entirely from its original historical setting; the Apoc Pet was certainly written in and for a particular historical context. The specifics of this context, however, are largely unknown and perhaps irrecoverable. It should nevertheless be possible to discern the primary purpose of the text without recourse to a specific provenance.

The points raised here in favour of not making the hypothesised provenance of the Apoc Pet a primary interpretive tool in this study do not suggest that such hypotheses are invalid or unhelpful, only that they have not thus far produced optimum results in the study of the Apoc Pet. If more were known with certainty about the time and place of its origin, such information would prove vital to the interpretation of the text. The few historical details that are verifiable, like its second century origin and awareness of persecution, are indispensable for interpretation. In recognition of this, the goal of this thesis is that, even though the provenance of the text is not utilised for interpretation in this study, the conclusions drawn here concerning the primary purpose of the text will sufficiently account for the historical details that can be known and thus conform to any of the currently proposed hypotheses on the provenance of the text.

#### D. Source Criticism and Intertextuality

As discussed in the literature review of the last chapter, scholarship has also extensively studied the relationship between the Apoc Pet and other early Christian

texts. Similar to the various historical critical hypotheses, the majority of the source critical arguments surrounding the Apoc Pet remain largely unresolved. No significant consensus exists whether Apoc Pet used 2 Peter as a source, 2 Peter used Apoc Pet as a source, or whether any direct relationship between the two texts actually exists at all.<sup>125</sup> While most scholars do believe Apoc Pet used Matthew as a source, Helmer's thesis, which is largely neglected due to never being published, sufficiently challenges this view to the extent that one should perhaps refer to Matthean tradition rather than the Gospel itself as the text's source. This is all further complicated when one acknowledges that much of the evidence used for determining the sources of the text could have been editorial redactions during the transmission of the Apoc Pet rather than part of the original text.

It is important to acknowledge the uncertainty of source critical discussions on the Apoc Pet. Overconfidence in identifying source material has the potential to result in delegitimising the text as its own, unique document. This is particularly evident in Bauckham's treatment of the punishments in hell in Apoc Pet 7–12. He says,

The literary relationships among these so-called 'tours of hell' are debatable and complex, but there can be no doubt that, here as elsewhere, the Apocalypse of Peter takes over traditional material. The other tours of hell show us the kind of material which was the Apocalypse of Peter's source for 7–12. By this means we can be confident that most of the categories of sinners which the Apocalypse of Peter depicts in hell were traditional. By and large, the author did not decide which sins to mention in his account of hell: he took them over from apocalyptic tradition.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Bauckham, "2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter," 290–303; Foster, "Does the Apocalypse of Peter Help to Determine the Date of 2 Peter?"; Grünstäudl, *Petrus Alexandrinus*, 97–144; Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Early Christian Apocalypses," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 72.

<sup>126</sup> Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 184.

Bauckham's claims here are largely unfounded. No tour of hell shares the same list of sins as those found in the Apoc Pet, even if one disregards those in 9:1–4 which Bauckham views as unique. In fact, few, if any, tours of hell share the same list of sins with any other tour. Without better correspondence between different tours of hell Bauckham's appeal to traditional material from which the Apoc Pet slavishly draws lacks sufficient evidence. There is no proof that a prototypical tradition existed from which any author of a tour of hell simply copied. Therefore, rather than assuming the tour of hell in the Apoc Pet is largely derivative, all the evidence points to it being distinct, at least to some extent, from all other such texts.

It is important to recognise the originality of the Apoc Pet, for it is in its originality that it has the potential to convey a unique message. Source criticism can help highlight the uniqueness of the text by exposing where it follows its source material and where it deviates from it. However, one must be cautious to not assume the text is overly derivative, particularly when the source material is traditional or hypothetical. This same caution is needed when analysing the broader intertextuality of the work. The Apoc Pet shares many themes and images with other Jewish and Christian texts, but it does not necessarily use those themes and images in the same way. This is particularly apparent in the discussion below on the extent of post-mortem salvation in Apoc Pet 14. Comparing and contrasting how different texts use similar themes and images is helpful, but it is not the primary goal of this thesis. As such, this thesis will use source criticism and intertextuality, but it will do so with a large degree of scepticism and only when such methods aid in the interpretation of the text.

## E. Rhetorical Criticism

Although historical and source criticism were utilised early in the study of the Apoc Pet, the application of rhetorical criticism to the text is a more recent development. The main proponent of this method in the study of the Apoc Pet is Meghan Henning. Her 2014 monograph gives a thorough analysis of how the rhetoric of hell was used in Jewish, Christian, Greek, and Roman texts.<sup>127</sup> In addition to this, she has also published an article specifically on the rhetorical function of hell in the Apoc Pet and Apoc Paul as well as appeared on a podcast interview on the same topic.<sup>128</sup> Her work is indispensable for the interpretation of texts such as the Apoc Pet.

One of Henning's main points of comparison for understanding the rhetorical function of hell in early Christian texts is Greek and Roman cultural education, or *paideia*. *Paideia* was the basic education in Greek and Roman culture and was held in high regard in the early Church for its emphasis on cultural and ethical training.<sup>129</sup> The main pedagogical tool used in *paideia* on which Henning focuses was *ekphrasis*. She draws her understanding of *ekphrasis* from the work of Ruth Webb, who defines it as "the use of language to try and make an audience imagine a scene."<sup>130</sup> Henning explains that although *ekphrasis* was used in a variety of ways, its function was

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<sup>127</sup> Meghan Henning, *Educating Early Christians through the Rhetoric of Hell: "Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth" as Paideia in Matthew and the Early Church*, WUNT II 382 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

<sup>128</sup> Meghan Henning, "Eternal Punishment as Paideia: The Ekphrasis of Hell in the Apocalypse of Peter and the Apocalypse of Paul," *BR* 58 (2013): 29–48; Meghan Henning, "Meghan Henning – Educating Early Christians Through the Rhetoric of Hell," interview by Bradley Jersak, OnScript, Podcast Audio, 9 March 2016, <http://onscript.study/podcast/meghan-henning-educating-early-christians-through-the-rhetoric-of-hell/>.

<sup>129</sup> Henning, *Educating Early Christians*, 44–53; Henning, "Eternal Punishment as Paideia," 29.

<sup>130</sup> Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 3.

predominately to evoke emotion in the audience in order to persuade them through the use of *enargeia*, or vividness.<sup>131</sup> After thoroughly explaining these concepts, Henning proceeds to analyse the use of *ekphrasis* in various Greek and Latin texts that describe the afterlife, particularly those known to be used in *paideia* such as Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. She concludes that that texts were integral in the ethical education of *paideia*, as they had a strong emotional impact on their audience and were thus able to convince them to act according to the prescribed moral values of the text.<sup>132</sup>

Particularly important to the study at hand, "One of the analogies used to describe *ekphrasis* is that of a 'journey' or *periēgēsis* in which the speaker is a tour guide, leading the audience around the site that is being described."<sup>133</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that Henning discovers *ekphrasis* at work in early Christian tours of hell. Like their Greek and Latin counterparts, Christian tours of hell use vivid imagery to place the scene before the eyes of their audience for didactic purposes.<sup>134</sup> In the case of the Apoc Pet, Henning believes the imagery is used to convey the text's primary pedagogical purpose of instilling a righteous ethic in its readers by discouraging them from sinning.<sup>135</sup> As a result of all her work on the topic, Henning joins Helmer as some of the first to give a detailed argument in favour of a monitory reading of the Apoc Pet. However, while she has sufficiently proven that tours of hell are primarily didactic texts that use vivid imagery to influence their readers, her argument for a monitory

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<sup>131</sup> Henning, *Educating Early Christians*, 54–64; Henning, "Eternal Punishment as Paideia," 33–38.

<sup>132</sup> Henning, *Educating Early Christians*, 65–84; Henning, "Eternal Punishment as Paideia," 38–41.

<sup>133</sup> Henning, *Educating Early Christians*, 56; Henning, "Eternal Punishment as Paideia," 36.

<sup>134</sup> Henning, *Educating Early Christians*, 202–216; Henning, "Eternal Punishment as Paideia," 41–47.

<sup>135</sup> Henning, "Meghan Henning."

reading of the Apoc Pet does not adequately take into account the context surrounding the tour of hell. This thesis will therefore build upon Henning's work by analysing the various ways the Apoc Pet attempts to move its audience toward its pedagogical aims with an emphasis on the text as a whole and not just the tour of hell.

## F. Conclusions

The Apoc Pet could be labelled according to multiple genre classifications. The ones described in this chapter are afterlife torment text, with the subcategory of tour of hell, and apocalypse. The nature of the work as an afterlife torment text indicates that the text describes the abode of the dead as a place of suffering for the wicked after death. As an apocalypse, the Apoc Pet is a narrative in which Jesus reveals to his disciples an eschatological vision concerning the eventual fate of the wicked. While both these genre descriptors capture different aspects of the form of the text, they overlap concerning the text's function. As both an afterlife torment text and an apocalypse, the Apoc Pet intends to influence its readers toward a particular behaviour. Due to the status of the text as Scripture within early Christianity, it is also possible to assume that the behaviour advocated in the text has theological implications. The task of this thesis is, therefore, to discern what behaviour the text intends its readers to adopt.

The method used for this task is best described as a close reading of the text, because no single methodology dominates the exegesis of the text. Of those methodologies previously utilised in the study of the Apoc Pet, historical criticism based upon the provenance of the text will be used the least. This is primarily due to limited knowledge regarding the text's provenance. Source criticism will also receive minimal use in the thesis for the same reason. The precise sources utilised in the

creation of the text are largely unknown. While the text of what is now the Gospel of Matthew was known in some way to the author of the Apoc Pet, Helmer has sufficiently argued that the exact form of this text known to the author may have differed for what is known today.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, it is difficult to know when the Apoc Pet used a text as a source or when a popular passage of text was inserted into the work during the transmission process. Intertextual analysis will play a role in the exegesis of the text, but only with caution. The main goal of this thesis is to allow the Apoc Pet to speak as its own unique text. Therefore, one possible pitfall of intertextual analysis that must be avoided is that a text may lose its unique voice in order to fit within a homogenised group of texts. The primary basis for the exegesis of the Apoc Pet is the work of Meghan Henning on the rhetorical function of hell. It should be noted, however, that this thesis does not offer a rhetorical analysis of the Apoc Pet. It attempts to follow the narrative argument of the text, but it does so without moving beyond Henning's conclusions regarding the role of *ekphrasis* in afterlife torment texts.

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<sup>136</sup> Helmer, "That We May Know and Understand."



### Chapter 3: Afterlife Torment Texts in Context

One of the primary contentions of this thesis is that afterlife torment texts need not always convey a monitory purpose. Henning's discussion has aided this argument by describing the way these texts use the rhetorical tool of *ekphrasis* to move their audience to a particular response. Notwithstanding this positive contribution, she perpetuates the assumption of many scholars that tours of hell are always monitory texts. This is most notable when she says, "Through the rhetorical device of *ekphrasis*, the early Christian reader is transformed into a 'tourist' and a 'spectator' who witnesses the gruesome horrors of hell firsthand. This view of hell is intended to 'move the reader' to repent and behave ethically in this life to avoid a disgusting and painful fate in the next life."<sup>137</sup> This is one possible intention of an afterlife torment text, but it is by no means the only one.

The oversight in much of scholarship to discern a variety of intentions in afterlife torment texts predominately lies in a neglect of the surrounding context of each individual work. Scholars tend to discuss afterlife torment texts as though they exist in isolation from other narrative elements. On the contrary, almost no afterlife torment text exists divorced from a wider narrative or dialogical framework. They are almost always part of a larger whole. The narrative or dialogical context surrounding an afterlife torment text plays a vital role in understanding its pedagogical purpose. However, a wide exegetical analysis is often absent from discussions regarding the purpose of afterlife torment texts. This chapter will survey ten separate afterlife

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<sup>137</sup> Henning, "Eternal Punishment as Paideia," 47–48.

torment texts to show how different narrative and dialogical elements impact the purpose of such texts leading to a variety of pedagogical aims.

It must be stressed that the purpose of this chapter is to present a brief survey of each text in order to compare how overall narrative context impacts meaning. Therefore, the goal is merely to show how the surrounding narrative and dialogical context of afterlife torment texts may influence their purpose, not to reveal the full details of the purpose of each text in question. As the primary text under consideration for this thesis is the Apocalypse of Peter, the texts chosen for this survey all share a cultural and temporal proximity to that text. Each text has a possible date range that includes at least one of the first three centuries CE, even if they were likely written before or after that time. Also, the survey only includes Greek, Jewish, and Christian texts, as they likely share the most in common culturally with the Apocalypse of Peter. Also, texts which are entirely fragmentary with no narrative or dialogical context currently extant are not included in this survey, i.e. the Isaiah and Elijah Fragments. The chosen texts are meant to be representative, not exhaustive.

#### A. Apocalypse of Zephaniah

The Apocalypse of Zephaniah offers an important test case for the importance of context in the interpretation of afterlife torment texts in that the context is mostly, although not entirely, missing from the extant manuscripts. Due to the text's references to Susanna, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and a citation of it by Clement of Alexandria in *Stromateis* 5.11.77, O. S. Wintermute dates the Apocalypse of Zephaniah from the first century BCE to the second century CE, although he

speculates that it was perhaps written prior to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE.<sup>138</sup> The text is only extant in Clement's citation, a Sahidic fragment, and an Akhmimic fragment, all of which may bear witness to different recensions of the text or different texts altogether.<sup>139</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, Clement's citation of the text may be disregarded, because it only recounts a vision of heaven. Due to the dispute as to whether the two Coptic fragments constitute the same text, they will be treated as separate recensions here. In so doing, the importance of context for afterlife torment texts will be emphasised further.

The Sahidic fragment is the shorter of the two and plausibly dates to the fifth century.<sup>140</sup> Due to its brevity, it is possible to reproduce it here in its entirety.

[I s]aw a s[ou]l which five thousand angels punished [?] [an]d gua[r]ded. They took [it] to the East and they brought it to the West. They beat its ... they gave it a hundred ... lashes for each one daily. I was afraid and I cast myself up[o]n my face so that my joints dissolved. The angel helped me. He said to me, "Be strong, O one who will triumph, and prevail so that you will triumph over the accuser and you will come up from Hades." And after I arose I said, "Who is this whom they are punishing?" He said to me, "This is [a] soul which was found in its lawlessness." And before it attained to repenting it was [vi]sited, and taken out of its body. Truly, I, Zephaniah, saw these things in my vision.

And the angel of the Lord went with me. I saw a great broad place, thousands of thousands surrounded [it] on its left side and myriads of myriads on its right [side]. The form of [each] one was different. Their hair was loose like that belonging to women. [Their] teeth were like the teeth of ...<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> O. S. Wintermute, "Apocalypse of Zephaniah," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:500–501.

<sup>139</sup> For some of the various perspectives on this issue, see Richard Bauckham, "The Apocalypses in the New Pseudepigrapha," *JSNT* 26 (1986): 100–103; Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 14–15; Wintermute, "Apocalypse of Zephaniah," 499–500.

<sup>140</sup> Wintermute, "Apocalypse of Zephaniah," 499.

<sup>141</sup> Wintermute, "Apocalypse of Zephaniah," 508–509.

One of the most notable aspects of this fragment is its use of the singular object. It appears to describe only one soul in punishment, yet the majority of afterlife torment texts, including the Akhmimic Apocalypse of Zephaniah, describe each punishment as occurring to multiple people. It is possible that this one soul acts as a representative example of what will happen to other souls, such as the punishments in the Apocalypse of Paul of a presbyter, a bishop, a deacon, and a reader, but it is also possible that this soul belongs to a particular individual who the author believes deserves a unique punishment, such as the punishment of Herod in the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra. The Sahidic text is ambiguous regarding any identification of this soul. All that is known is that when this person died, he or she had not repented of his or her “lawlessness.” This ambiguity may suggest the soul acts as a general representative example of what happens to the wicked after death, but this is by no means certain as a great deal of the ambiguity is due to the fragmentary nature of the text.

Another unique aspect of the Sahidic text is its explicit reference to a lack of repentance before death when describing the soul in punishment. When describing individual punishments, most tours of hell leave out the concept of repentance entirely or only implicitly indicate that those in punishment had not repented prior to death. This text’s explicit reference to the soul’s lack of repentance prior to death, if the soul is a representative example, may indicate an attempt by the text to impart on its reader the importance of repentance. This is even more likely when considering how Wintermute concludes the speech of the angel prior to the statement concerning repentance. In so doing, he places the reference to repentance in the voice of the narrator. As a narrator’s aside, the sentence speaks directly to the reader. If this sentence were part of the angel’s description of the soul, which is more likely, it would

be spoken directly to Zephaniah and, therefore, only indirectly to the reader. This is a minor point, but nevertheless has an impact on the importance of the reference to a lack of repentance in this text.

The reference to a single soul in a fragmentary document leaves a great deal of uncertainty in the interpretation of this afterlife torment text. It is entirely possible, and perhaps likely, that the soul is meant to function as a representative example of all those who die before repenting of their lawlessness. If so, the explicit reference to the soul's lack of repentance may reveal a monitory purpose in the text. However, it is also possible that this soul is meant to refer to a real person, thus likely not serving as a warning to others but a condemnation of that specific individual. Without further context, no definitive conclusion may be drawn.

The Akhmimic text of the Apocalypse of Zephaniah is both longer and older than the Sahidic text, perhaps dating to the fourth century.<sup>142</sup> However, even though the Akhmimic text is longer it still may only represent a quarter of the Apocalypse of Zephaniah.<sup>143</sup> The portion of the text that survives in the Akhmimic fragment is almost exclusively concerned with the fate of the dead, both the righteous and the wicked, including a short reference to burial at the beginning.<sup>144</sup> The text describes, in narrative form, how angels watch over the living, recording their deeds. After death, a person's deeds are then read out, and the righteous and wicked deeds are "weighed in a balance" in order to see whether the person is deemed to be righteous or wicked. The text

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<sup>142</sup> Wintermute, "Apocalypse of Zephaniah," 499.

<sup>143</sup> C Schmidt, "Der Kolophon des Ms. Orient. 7594 des Britischen Museums; eine Untersuchung zur Elias-Apokalypse," SPAW (1925): 312–321.

<sup>144</sup> Bauckham, "Early Jewish Visions of Hell," 80. Bauckham does not distinguish between the portions of the Apocalypse of Zephaniah that are currently extant and the missing sections.

concludes with a description of the paradise of the righteous and the torment of the wicked.

As is common in Jewish and Christian afterlife torment texts, the Apocalypse of Zephaniah includes multiple intercessions on behalf of the wicked.<sup>145</sup> In the beginning of the narrative, Zephaniah, although he is never so named in the text, appeals to God's compassion: "And I saw all the souls of men as they existed in punishment. And I cried out to the Lord Almighty, ['O Go]d, if you remain with the [sa]ints, you (certainly) have compassion on behalf of the world [and] the souls which are in [this] punishment'" (Apoc. Zeph. 2:8–9).<sup>146</sup> Likewise, near the end of the text, a multitude of people, including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are described as coming out daily and beseeching God, saying, "We pray to you on account of those who are in all these torments so that you might have mercy on all of them" (Apoc. Zeph. 11:2). The impact of such petitions varies between afterlife torment texts, but some, such as those in the Apoc Pet, are so successful that they are a major part of the purpose of the text. In the case of the petitions in the Apocalypse of Zephaniah, if God does respond, the response is no longer extant in the text. This leaves the impact of these petitions on the purpose of the text unknown.

Like the Sahidic fragment, the Akhmimic fragment also includes an explicit reference to repentance. After being shown the various torments of the wicked in Apoc. Zeph. 10, Zephaniah brings in the topic of repentance with a question to his angelic guide. "And I said to him, 'Then do they not have repentance here?' He said, 'Yes.' I said, 'How long?' He said to me, 'Until the day when the Lord will judge.'"

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<sup>145</sup> Bauckham, "The Conflict of Justice and Mercy," 136–142.

<sup>146</sup> All translations of the Akhmimic Apocalypse of Zephaniah are from Wintermute, "Apocalypse of Zephaniah," 509–515.

Unlike the Sahidic fragment, the issue regarding repentance in the Akhmimic fragment is whether repentance is possible for the wicked after death. The answer given by the angel is that it is possible after death but must happen before the final judgment. This concept of post-mortem repentance eliminates the necessity for repentance in life, thus removing, or at least diminishing, the possibility that the text is able to have a monitory purpose. Unfortunately, the text breaks off before describing the day of judgment, so it is impossible to say whether it envisions that any of the wicked will repent in time. As such, like the intercessions of the righteous, it is difficult to ascertain the full impact of this theology on the purpose of the text.

When discussing the Apocalypse of Zephaniah, Bauckham claims, “This apocalypse, like so many descents to the underworld, serves the purpose of revealing what people can expect after death and warning them to be prepared.”<sup>147</sup> He offers no evidence to support this claim as it relates to the Apocalypse of Zephaniah, and, as shown here, his interpretation of the text is questionable. The ambiguity of the Sahidic fragment allows for such a reading, but it by no means necessitates it. The merciful pleas of the righteous on behalf of the wicked as well as the allowance for repentance after death in the Akhmimic fragment problematise a monitory reading, but the fragmentary nature of the text does not easily allow for an alternative interpretation. This suggests that when an afterlife torment text is lacking its literary context, its purpose is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain.

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<sup>147</sup> Bauckham, “Descents to the Underworld,” 37.

## B. Plutarch's *Moralia*

The writings of Plutarch perhaps offer the best self-contained argument for the importance of literary context in the interpretation of afterlife torment texts, because, as Philip Hardie explains, “Plutarch uses the myths of the Underworld to a variety of ends determined by particular contexts.”<sup>148</sup> Of Plutarch's three eschatological myths in the *Moralia*, only two qualify as afterlife torment texts. The myth in *On the Face in the Moon* (*De facie in orbe lunae*) 940f–945d describes the afterlife bliss on the moon of those who are good, *χρηστοί*, but does not mention the wicked beyond the statement that “To this point rises no one who is evil or unclean” (*Fac.* 942f).<sup>149</sup> The two other eschatological myths in this collection are a part of the afterlife torment texts genre, and each essay in which they are contained utilises these myths in different ways.

### 1. *On the Delays of Divine Vengeance*

Plutarch wrote *On the Delays of Divine Vengeance* (*De sera numinis vindicta*) before 107 CE and after the eruption of Vesuvius 79 CE. If the ‘good’ emperor in 566E is a reference to Titus, the *terminus post quem* could be moved a few years to 81 CE.<sup>150</sup> The text describes a dialogue between Plutarch, Patrocleas, Timon, and Olympichus following the departure of Epicurus. The argument Epicurus raised before leaving, which the four proceed to discuss, is “The delay and procrastination of the Deity in

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<sup>148</sup> Philip R. Hardie, “Plutarch and the Interpretation of Myth,” *ANRW* II.33.6 (1992): 4775.

<sup>149</sup> All translations of *De facie in orbe lunae* are from Plutarch, *Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon*, trans. Harold Cherniss and W. C. Helmbold, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

<sup>150</sup> C. P. Jones, “Towards a Chronology of Plutarch's Works,” *JRS* 56 (1966): 71.

punishing the wicked” (*Sera* 548C).<sup>151</sup> The text consists of two parts: the argument and the myth. The myth, which starts at 563B, recounts the story of Thespesius who has a near death experience and witnesses the torment of the wicked in the afterlife before waking up near his own grave.

Prior to actually recounting the story of Thespesius, Plutarch hints at its relevance to the discussion, but refrains from telling it, lest his interlocutors take it for a myth. They protest, wanting to hear it regardless, and Plutarch concedes, but wants to finish his “account of the probabilities” before relying on myth, “if myth it is” (*Sera* 561C). By describing the relevance of the myth to the discussion at hand, Plutarch explicitly conveys the intended purpose of the afterlife torment text.

But the rewards and penalties (as the case may be) for its past life that the soul receives in the other world, in its separate existence, are for us, the living, as if they did not exist—they are disbelieved and escape us—; whereas the rewards and penalties that reach such souls through children and descendants are rendered visible to the inhabitants of this world and thus deter and discourage many of the wicked. That no punishment, we may presume, is more shameful or galling than to see one’s progeny suffer on one’s own account, and that the soul of an impious and lawless man who should behold after death not statues or honours subverted, but children or friends or his own kindred involved in terrible calamities through his own fault and paying the price, could never be induced, for all the honours rendered to Zeus, once more to become unjust and licentious, is shown by an account I recently heard; but I fear you would take it for a myth (*Sera* 561A–B).

In this passage, Plutarch’s understanding of punishment in the afterlife is that it is enacted through the offender’s descendants. Through this method, he believes that the living will see the punishment and be deterred and that the punishment of the wicked

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<sup>151</sup> All translations of *De sera numinis vindicta* are from Plutarch, *On the Delays of the Divine Vengeance*, trans. Phillip H De Lacy and Benedict Einarson, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

is the most severe possible.<sup>152</sup> Thus, before even conveying the myth, Plutarch reveals to his audience that the myth of Thespesius is meant to serve as a warning to them against acting wrongly.

In addition to explicitly stating the monitory purpose of his myth, Rainer Hirsch-Luipold explains that Plutarch “weaves this intended ethical impact into the background narrative of the myth” itself.<sup>153</sup> Plutarch begins the myth by explaining how Thespesius was at one time a truly shameful man, but, following a three-day coma from a fall, he suddenly became a truly honest, pious, and faithful person. Many people asked him what brought about such a change in heart, and he answers by recounting his visit to the afterlife and the torments he saw inflicted upon the wicked. Thespesius therefore becomes a model for the reader to emulate. Just as he changed his ways upon seeing the punishment of the wicked in the afterlife, so too should the wicked readers change their ways after hearing his myth. This shows that Plutarch used both dialogue and narrative to convey his intended purpose for the afterlife torment text in *On the Delays of Divine Vengeance*.

## 2. *On the Daimonion of Socrates*

No internal clues exist in *On the Daimonion of Socrates* (*De genio Socratis*) to aid in dating the text, so it must be generally dated to sometime during Plutarch’s writing career (c. 68–116 CE).<sup>154</sup> The text is meant to educate its audience, particularly

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<sup>152</sup> Phillip H De Lacy and Benedict Einarson, trans., *Plutarch’s Moralia*, LCL. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 7:177.

<sup>153</sup> Rainer Hirsch-Luipold, “Religion and Myth,” in *A Companion to Plutarch*, ed. and trans. Mark Beck (Chichester: Wiley, 2014), 173.

<sup>154</sup> Jones, “Towards a Chronology of Plutarch’s Works,” 70.

younger readers, through its combination of philosophy and “fabulous narrative”.<sup>155</sup> The afterlife torment text appears in the middle of *On the Daimonion of Socrates* and seemingly has no connection to the narrative of the liberation of Thebes that runs throughout the work. Instead, its relevance in the text is entirely connected with the discussion regarding the *daimonion* of Socrates.<sup>156</sup>

The myth, as told by Simmias in the narrative, tells the story of Timarchus, who performed a ritual that allowed him to view the afterlife. Simmias was initially hesitant to use this myth in defence of his argument, but Theocritus, like Plutarch’s interlocutors in *On the Delays of Divine Vengeance*, forces him to tell it (*Gen. Socr.* 589F). By way of connecting the myth to his argument, Simmias reveals its purpose at the beginning of his story. He does so by explaining why Timarchus performed the ritual, and, importantly when considering the use of *ekphrasis* in the text, his emotional state following his vision.

Timarchus, then, in his desire to learn the nature of Socrates’ sign (δαίμόνιον), acted like the high-spirited young initiate in philosophy he was: consulting no one but Cebes and me, he descended into the crypt of Trophonius, first performing the rites that are customary at the oracle. He remained underground two nights and a day, and most people had already given up hope, and his family were lamenting him for dead, when he came up in the morning with a radiant countenance. He did obeisance to the god, and as soon as he had escaped the crowd, began to tell us of many wonders seen and heard (*Gen. Socr.* 590A–B).<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> D. A. Russell, “Introduction,” in *On the Daimonion of Socrates: Human Liberation, Divine Guidance and Philosophy*, ed. Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, SAPERE 26 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 3.

<sup>156</sup> Werner Deuse, “Plutarch’s Eschatological Myths,” in *On the Daimonion of Socrates: Human Liberation, Divine Guidance and Philosophy*, ed. Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, SAPERE 26 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 170.

<sup>157</sup> All translations of *De genio Socratis* are from Plutarch, *On the Sign of Socrates*, trans. Phillip H De Lacy and Benedict Einarson, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

This passage reveals that the purpose of Timarchus' myth is to reveal the nature of the *daimonion* of Socrates. Although Timarchus does not gain knowledge of specifically Socrates' *daimonion*, his guide, a *daimon* of the moon, reveals to him general knowledge about *daimones*.<sup>158</sup> This leaves to the reader the interpretation of the myth as it pertains to Socrates' *daimonion*.<sup>159</sup>

The other important aspect to the above passage is the description of Timarchus' emotional state upon returning from his vision. He is exceedingly happy about his acquisition of knowledge, rather than saddened at the plight of those souls languishing in Hades. That is not to say that he does not react negatively during the tour. When he first hears the cries of the animals, men, women, and children in Hades, it "startled him not a little" (491A).<sup>160</sup> Nevertheless, it was not the horrors of Hades that impacted Timarchus, but the brilliance of the *daimones*. This suggests the torments of the souls in Hades serve more to emphasize the greatness of people like Socrates rather than the terribleness of those being punished.

In *On the Daimonion of Socrates*, Plutarch uses an afterlife torment text to further elucidate the discussion on the *daimonion* of Socrates. Werner Deuse summarises this relationship between the myth and the larger dialogue as follows: "Simmius' attempt to explain the *daimonion* of Socrates as a phenomenon of direct contact between the *nous* of a *daimon* with the *nous* of Socrates corresponds with the defining role that the freedom of the *nous* from soul and body and the definition of the

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<sup>158</sup> Hirsch-Luipold, "Religion and Myth," 172.

<sup>159</sup> Deuse, "Plutarch's Eschatological Myths," 170.

<sup>160</sup> Another translation renders this phrase, "he was greatly disturbed." Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, ed., *On the Daimonion of Socrates: Human Liberation, Divine Guidance and Philosophy*, SAPERE 26 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 61.

nous as *daimon* have in the myth.”<sup>161</sup> In this way, the myth and the narrative surrounding it are inextricably linked, and it is impossible to truly understand the purpose of the myth without understanding the dialogue in which it occurs.

### C. Testament of Isaac

According to W. F. Stinespring, the Testament of Isaac likely originates from Egypt in the second century CE.<sup>162</sup> The text is only extant today in Arabic, Coptic, and Ethiopic manuscripts, all with Christian intrusions in the text emphasising the deaths of Abraham and Isaac as observed in the Coptic Church. As this Christianising of the text is not complete, it is likely that the Testament of Isaac was originally a Jewish text prior to its assimilation in the Early Church.

When looking at the context surrounding the afterlife torment section of the Testament of Isaac, the text seems to convey two distinct purposes. The opening of the testament prepares the reader for the dual message of the text:

He (Isaac) said, "Hear, my brethren and my beloved ones, this speaker's instruction and this curative medicine. Because the way of God goes on forever, hear not only with chaste bodily ears, but also with the depth of the heart and with true faith without any doubt, as it is written, 'Behold, you have heard a firm word as to what a man should become. If he has heard it with a pure heart, God will give him compassion when he asks for something from him.' And it also is written, 'There is no profit for someone to ask God for what human beings solicit on earth.' And if God has given us mastery on the earth, then how much the advantage of the one who has been firm in the faith in the word of God, and has held fast without doubt and with an upright heart to the knowledge of the commandments of God and the stories of his saints; for he will be the inheritor of the kingdom of God. For behold, God is compassionate and merciful, the one who has received unto himself thieves and tax collectors in past times because of the sincerity of their

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<sup>161</sup> Deuse, "Plutarch's Eschatological Myths," 171.

<sup>162</sup> W. F. Stinespring, "Testament of Isaac," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:903–904.

faith that comes from God. And God, moreover, is with the ages to come. (T. Isaac 1:5–8)<sup>163</sup>

Isaac begins his testament with an appeal to his audience to hear his instruction, which he calls curative medicine, with chaste bodily ears, depth of heart, and true faith. In so doing, they will receive compassion from God when they ask something from him. He further expounds on this by explaining that those who “without doubt and with an upright heart” maintain the commandments of God will inherit his kingdom. This is so, Isaac explains, because God is merciful. The two strands working together in this opening argument are simultaneous appeals to righteous living and the mercy of God. It appears as though, in the Testament of Isaac, neither of these are sufficient on their own.

After opening with these concepts together, the text proceeds to deal with each one individually. Following the narrative of the angel Michael informing Isaac of his upcoming death, and Isaac subsequently informing Jacob (T. Isaac 2–3), Isaac begins in chapter 4 to instruct the crowd around him how to live righteous lives. His instruction is primarily an extensive list of things to do and not to do, as well as a detailed account of how one is to approach the altar when presenting an offering to God. The list ends with specific sins which are to be avoided and the closing statement, “These things and what is like them you shall guard against, in order that each one of you may be saved from the wrath which will be manifested from heaven” (T. Isaac 4:54). After hearing this instruction, the crowd responds, “Truly everything which this venerable man has said is worthy of attention” (T. Isaac 5:1). Isaac responds no further to them, but instead falls asleep and is taken to the heavens where he is shown the

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<sup>163</sup> All translations of the Testament of Isaac are from Stinespring, “Testament of Isaac,” 905–911.

punishment of the wicked after death. After being shown various specific punishments, Isaac is told to look upon all the torments of the wicked, but he laments that he cannot because there are too many for him to take in at once (T. Isaac 5:30–31). Isaac then asks his angelic guide how long the wicked are made to endure punishment, to which the angel responds, “Until the God of mercy becomes merciful and has mercy on them” (T. Isaac 5:32).

Isaac is then taken to see Abraham. The next chapter consists primarily of Abraham discussing with God what is required of a person in order to receive mercy. The discussion starts with God saying to Abraham, “Every man who shall call his son by the name of my beloved Isaac, or shall write his own testament, shall have a blessing which shall not come to an end, and my blessing upon his house shall not cease. Or if anyone will give a poor man something to eat on the day of the festival of my beloved Isaac then I will give him to you in my kingdom” (T. Isaac 6:10–11). Abraham then begins to plead on behalf of those who are not able to fulfil this requirement, begging that they be allowed more leniency. Ultimately, God concedes, granting that “all who took pains to write their testaments and covenants and life stories and showed mercy if only (by giving) a cup of cold water, and believed with all their hearts” will be blessed in their lives and be granted entrance into God’s kingdom (T. Isaac 6:21–22). This emphasis on mercy for those who show mercy is then emphasised again a few chapters later in the Testament’s benediction, “Blessed is everyone who manifests mercy on the day of the father of fathers, our father Abraham and our father Isaac, for each of them shall have a dwelling in the kingdom of heaven, because our Lord has made with them his true covenant forever” (T. Isaac 8:5).

The Testament of Isaac utilises its description of afterlife torment as a way to divide the text into two sections and emphasise its two didactic goals. Prior to the tour, the text focuses on righteous living. Isaac exhorts his audience on the proper way to live, and his vision of the wicked in punishment instils within the reader the importance of living according to Isaac's instruction. After the tour, the text emphasises the importance of mercy. In order to receive mercy from God, people must merely show mercy, perhaps even only on days memorialising Abraham and Isaac. The description of the punishment of the wicked emphasises why receiving mercy from God is important, but unlike the exhortation toward righteous living, the particular sins mentioned in the tour are no longer treated as individual warnings. The only thing that matters is mercy, and the details of what sins each person committed are no longer relevant. The juxtaposition between the emphasis on righteous living in the first part of the text and the emphasis on mercy in the second deserves further treatment and analysis, but for the purposes of the current survey it is enough to show the dual use of the afterlife torment text within the Testament of Isaac.

#### D. Lucian's *Menippus*

According to A. M. Harmon, Lucian's satirical work *Menippus*, also called *Necyomantia* or *Descent into Hades*, was perhaps written c.161–162 CE.<sup>164</sup> He derives this date from interpreting the description of dead soldiers "through some war or other" in *Men.* 10 as a reference to the Parthian war, but this is by no means certain.<sup>165</sup> As with all of Lucian's works, the text is undoubtedly a second-century document.

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<sup>164</sup> A. M. Harmon, trans., *Lucian*, LCL. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), 4:71.

<sup>165</sup> All translations of *Menippus* are from Lucian, *Menippus, or The Descent into Hades*, trans. A. M. Harmon, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925).

*Menippus* recounts the journey of Menippus into Hades to discover the right way to live from Tiresias. As the narrative revolves around a journey to Hades, a major focal point of the text is its description of the torments in the afterlife. Interestingly, the stated purpose of the narrative and the function of the afterlife torment section, do not seem to coincide.

Menippus first tells his friend that the purpose of his journey to Hades was to “obtain, from the spirit of Theban Teiresias (*sic*), counsel” (*Men.* 1), but his friend seems unimpressed by this motivation and is far more perturbed by Menippus’ use of verse in speaking to him. Eventually, Menippus asks for an update on life in the world, to which his friend responds that nothing has changed and people going on “stealing, lying under oath, extorting usury, and weighing pennies.” Upon hearing this, Menippus laments, “Poor wretches! They do not know what decisions have been made of late in the lower world, and what ordinances have been enacted against the rich; by Cerberus, they cannot possibly evade them!” (*Men.* 2). Menippus’ lament piques his friend’s interest far more than his actual reason for traveling to Hades, and thus he begs Menippus to recall his story.

After describing how he managed to get himself into Hades, Menippus recounts the various things he saw, consistently singling out the rich for more extreme punishment than the poor. This keeps the thread of his lament firmly in the mind of the reader as he continues his tale. When he finally arrives at the point in the narrative regarding the ordinance passed against the rich, after some prompting by his friend, he recounts the following motion:

Whereas many lawless deeds are done in life by the rich, who plunder and oppress and in every way humiliate the poor, be it resolved by the senate and people, that when they die their bodies be punished like those of the other malefactors, but their souls be sent back up into life

and enter into donkeys until they shall have passed two hundred and fifty thousand years in the said condition, transmigrating from donkey to donkey, bearing burdens, and being driven by the poor; and that thereafter it be permitted them to die (*Men.* 20).

This motion brings home the message that the rich may fair better in this life than the poor, but the tables will turn in the afterlife. The extreme torment of the rich in Hades, culminating in the passing of a motion to ensure they receive more punishment than the poor, seemingly indicates the intention of this text is to teach against the acquisition of wealth and power. However, the satirical nature of the text as well as the stated reason for Menippus' journey to Hades brings out a different purpose for the text.

Harmon believes the emphasis on the rich and powerful derives from Lucian's source material, the real Menippus' *Nekyia*.<sup>166</sup> This source text was likely a satire against the rich and powerful which Lucian co-opted to make his own point. That point comes shortly after Menippus describes the motion against the wealthy that was passed in Hades. After hearing the motion, he finally approaches Tiresias to ask what sort of life is best. At first, Tiresias refuses to answer, but after some pleading by Menippus, Tiresias says,

The life of the common sort is best, and you will act more wisely if you stop speculating about heavenly bodies and discussing final causes and first causes, spit your scorn at those clever syllogisms, and counting all that sort of thing nonsense, make it always your sole object to put the present to good use and to hasten on your way, laughing a great deal and taking nothing seriously (*Men.* 21).

Rather than juxtaposing the "common sort" against the rich and powerful, Tiresias compares the common person to the philosopher. Therefore, he claims it is philosophical speculation that is to be avoided, not wealth. This necessarily brings a different perspective on the torments in the afterlife. Although it was the wealthy who

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<sup>166</sup> Harmon, *Lucian*, 4:71.

received the harshest punishment, it is the philosopher who receives condemnation as the antithesis of the best life. Therefore, the lesson drawn from the torments in hell, that the things valued on earth (i.e. riches and power) are arbitrary and an illusion of perspective, is turned into a broader lesson not intended to be taken as a straightforward condemnation of the wealthy. Instead, Tiresias applies this lesson to philosophers and comes to the conclusion that one should laugh a great deal and take nothing seriously.<sup>167</sup>

#### E. Lucian's *True Histories*

It is not possible to narrow down when precisely during his life in the second century CE Lucian wrote *True Histories* (*Vera Historia*). *True Histories* is a parody of many other works, most of which are now lost. The book begins with the metaphor of an athlete who considers relaxation as a vital part of training. Lucian links this metaphor with the importance of relaxation for those who undertake serious study. However, he believes it is important to not simply read a book that offers nothing but amusement. Instead, a valuable book for relaxation offers both amusement and “a little food for thought that the Muses would not altogether spurn” (*Ver. hist.* 1.2).<sup>168</sup> As Lucian understands it, *True Histories* is just this sort of work due to its use of parody.

Lucian describes his book as “a more or less comical parody of one or another of the poets, historians and philosophers of old, who have written much that smacks of miracles and fables” (*Ver. hist.* 1.2). He decides not to cite those he is parodying in

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<sup>167</sup> R. B. Branham, “The Wisdom of Lucian’s Tiresias,” *JHS* 109 (1989): 160.

<sup>168</sup> All translations of *True Histories* are from Lucian, *A True Story*, trans. A. M. Harmon, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913).

the text itself, because he believes his readers will recognise them without his aid. This assumption reveals that his intended audience was sophisticated and well read.<sup>169</sup> He does, however, give a few examples of writers he considers untrustworthy and who he parodies in the text. After voicing his surprise that such liars could think they would not get caught in their untruths, Lucian says, “Therefore, as I myself, thanks to my vanity, was eager to hand something down to posterity, that I might not be the only one excluded from the privileges of poetic license, and as I had nothing true to tell, not having had any adventures of significance, I took to lying” (*Ver. hist.* 1.4).

Lucian’s lies, he claims, are nevertheless more honest than the writings by those he named previously, because he at least is telling one truth by admitted he is lying. He ensures the reader fully understands this point when he says, “Be it understood, then, that I am writing about things which I have neither seen nor had to do with nor learned from others – which, in fact, do not exist at all and, in the nature of things, cannot exist” (*Ver. hist.* 1.4). Lucian’s reasons for saying this are twofold. First, he seemingly believes he can escape the condemnation of others if he admits to his falsehoods upfront. Second, particularly in his final phrase, he is attacking Ctesias via a parody of his claims in his *Indica*.<sup>170</sup> Lucian has already given Ctesias as an example of a lying historian earlier in his introduction, and here, before the narrative even begins, he starts his parodic attack on the author.

This attack on Ctesias continues in the narrative when Lucian arrives at the isles of the wicked. After describing various torments he witnesses on these islands, Lucian concludes his afterlife torment text by saying, “The guides told the life of each,

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<sup>169</sup> Aristoula Georgiadou and David H. J. Larmour, “Lucian and Historiography: ‘De Historia Conscribenda’ and ‘Vera Historiae,’” *ANRW* II.34.2 (1994): 1484.

<sup>170</sup> Georgiadou and Larmour, “Lucian and Historiography,” 1486–1487.

and the crimes for which they were being punished; and the severest punishment of all fell to those who told lies while in life and those who had written what was not true, among whom were Ctesias of Cnidos, Herodotus and many more” (*Ver. hist.* 2.31). By giving those who wrote falsehood the most severe punishment in the afterlife and mentioning Ctesias and Herodotus by name, Lucian continues his attack on lying historians in this section of the narrative. Such a vicious attack may give the audience the impression that Lucian is attempting to warn them from lying, but that is not his intention.

Immediately after he explains that the worst punishment in the afterlife is reserved for liars, Lucian says, “On seeing them, I had good hopes for the future, for I have never told a lie that I know of” (*Ver. hist.* 2.31). While this statement may be true for the narrator, it is openly false for the author.<sup>171</sup> Of course, Lucian is both narrator and author, which means the statement is both true and false simultaneously. This paradoxical statement brings the reader back to the introduction where Lucian reveals his purpose for writing this book and claims the only truth within it is that he is a liar. The introduction, and the title of the book, suggest that “Lucian’s main concern in this work is the relationship between truth and lies.”<sup>172</sup> Lucian disapproves of lying historians, so it comes as no surprise that he punishes them the most in his afterlife torment text. He also ensures in his introduction that from the perspective of the narrator he cannot be accused of lying himself because he was honest about his lies. At the same time, he still openly claimed in the introduction to be a liar, so his statement that he felt secure in his truthfulness after seeing the punishment of liars is

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<sup>171</sup> Aristoula Georgiadou and David H. J. Larmour, *Lucian’s Science Fiction Novel True Histories*, Mnemosyne: Bibliotheca Classica Batava Supplementum 179 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 58, 216.

<sup>172</sup> Georgiadou and Larmour, *Lucian’s Science Fiction Novel True Histories*, 1.

itself a falsehood. Likewise, Lucian made equally sure that his readers knew from the introduction that nothing he recounts in his narrative is true, nor can it be true. Therefore, the notion that there will be punishment for liars in the afterlife should be understood as an impossibility. All this results in a masterful amalgamation of truth and lies to the point that discerning which is which becomes all but impossible.

Lucian has set out in *True Histories* to have fun and to give his audience something to think about. This blending of truth and lies, reality and fantasy, mundane and extraordinary is precisely that. It both shows his audience how to identify falsehood, but also how to lie well. As both author and narrator, Lucian takes up antithetical positions. The narrator is always truthful, but the author is only truthful in that he admits to his pervading falsehood. This tension is only heightened in the narrative as it becomes increasingly difficult to keep any distinction between the narrator and the author firmly in the reader's mind.<sup>173</sup> This is what is at play in the afterlife torment text of this book. Readers are not meant to fear the torments on the isle of the wicked, they are meant to recognise the lies of Lucian and take note of how convincingly he tells them, all the while having a bit of fun.

#### F. Greek Apocalypse of Ezra

Little is known regarding the origins of the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra. As M. E. Stone says, "The dependence of the writing on (presumably the Greek version) of 4 Ezra and its Christian character indicate a date sometime in the first millennium. If James is correct and this is the writing referred to in the Canon of Nicephorus (c. A.D. 850),

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<sup>173</sup> Georgiadou and Larmour, *Lucian's Science Fiction Novel True Histories*, 3.

then a date sometime between A.D. 150 and 850 is probable. Its provenance cannot be discerned.”<sup>174</sup> Although little work has been done on the purpose of this text, it contains a monitory agenda that is reinforced throughout the narrative. Many times in the text, Ezra pleads to God on behalf of the wicked in punishment. These pleas quickly turn into impassioned arguments between Ezra and God. The first such argument is as follows:

And Ezra said, “Have pity upon the works of your hands merciful and greatly pitying one. Condemn me rather than the souls of the sinners, for it is better to punish one soul and not to bring the whole world to destruction.” And God said, I shall give rest to the righteous in Paradise and I am merciful.” And Ezra said, “Lord, why do you show favor to the righteous? For as a hired man completes his time of service and goes away, and again a slave serves his masters in order to receive his wage, thus the righteous man receives his reward in the heavens. But, have mercy upon the sinners for we know that you are merciful.” And God said, “I have no way to be merciful to them.” And Ezra said, “(Be merciful) because they cannot sustain your anger.” And God said, “(I am wrathful) because such (are the deserts) of such (men) as these” (Gk. Apoc. Ezra 1:10–18).<sup>175</sup>

The argument between Ezra and God continues both before and after the tour of hell in chapters 4–5 with Ezra continually affirming that he will never stop arguing the case of the wicked (2:7–9, 30–32; 4:1, 4–5; 6:18–21), and God countering each of Ezra’s arguments with affirmations that the wicked will receive punishment (2:9–10, 21–22, 24–25, 5:17–19) and that Ezra is not worthy to argue his case (2:32; 4:2–3; 6:19–20).

Beyond the tour of hell, the entire Greek Apocalypse of Ezra is structured as “a series of conversations in which Ezra appeals to the deity to be merciful to

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<sup>174</sup> M. E. Stone, “Greek Apocalypse of Ezra,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:563. Stone’s reference to the views of James is from M. R. James, “Introduction,” in *The Fourth Book of Ezra*, ed. R. L. Bensly, TS 3.2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), lxxxvii.

<sup>175</sup> All citations of the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra are from Stone, “Greek Apocalypse of Ezra,” 571–579.

sinners.”<sup>176</sup> God’s refusal to acquiesce to Ezra’s pleas instils within the readers that there will be no mercy for the wicked and only righteous living will save them from punishment in the afterlife. This suggestion to the readers is driven home in Ezra’s final prayer before giving his soul to God in death, “Those who do not believe this book will be burned like Sodom and Gomorrah” (Gk. Apoc. Ezra 7:13). The Greek Apocalypse of Ezra stops just short of explicitly encouraging repentance in its readers; nevertheless, its threats leave no doubt of its intentions to act as a warning against sinful behaviour.

#### G. Latin Vision of Ezra

The date of the Latin Vision of Ezra is difficult to ascertain. The earliest manuscript likely dates to the tenth or eleventh century CE.<sup>177</sup> J. R. Mueller and G. A. Robbins believe the original Greek version of this text would have been written a few centuries prior to the translation of the text into Latin and, therefore, argue that the text was likely written no later than the seventh century CE.<sup>178</sup> The text is related to the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra and perhaps shared with it a source that was based upon 4 Ezra and rose to popularity prior to the composition of the Apocalypse of Paul.<sup>179</sup> The reliance of the Latin Vision of Ezra on 4 Ezra roughly fixes its *terminus a quo* to 100

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<sup>176</sup> Karen DeCrescenzo Lavery, “Abraham’s Dialogue with God over the Destruction of Sodom: Chapters in the History of the Interpretation of Genesis 18” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2007), 55.

<sup>177</sup> Richard Bauckham, “The Latin Vision of Ezra,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, eds. Richard Bauckham, James Davila, and Alexander Panayotov (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 1:505.

<sup>178</sup> J. R. Mueller and G. A. Robbins, “Vision of Ezra,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:583.

<sup>179</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 167.

CE. However, following a convoluted discussion regarding the possible relationships of various tours of hell in early Christianity, Bauckham claims that if the text was originally a Christian document it was likely written no earlier than the second half of the fourth century.<sup>180</sup> While a date range more specific than the second to tenth century CE is problematic, Mueller and Robbins are correct when they say that the Latin Vision of Ezra shares the same *Zeitgeist* as other New Testament apocrypha written in the third and fourth centuries CE.<sup>181</sup>

One of the ways in which the Latin Vision of Ezra is related to the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra is in how it portrays Ezra as petitioning God on behalf of the wicked. During the tour of hell, Ezra says, “Lord, spare the sinners,” seven times (Vis. Ezra 11, 18, 22, 33, 42, 47, 55).<sup>182</sup> Not one of these times does Ezra receive a reply to his request. However, after being taken to the seventh heaven, Ezra pleads one last time and finally receives a response from God.

And I said, “Lord, spare the sinners.” And he said, “Ezra, I will give to you according to your works. But [the sinners] receive according to their works.” And I said, “Lord the animals who feed on grass you have made better than humans, since they do not render you praise, they die and they do not have sin, whereas we are wretched when alive and tortured when dead.” And the Lord said to me, “Ezra, I made the man and the woman in my own image, and commanded them not to sin, and they sinned, and for this reason they are in torments. And there are others who asked me but did not carry out my commands, and similarly they are not elect in my kingdom. [And I said,] “Lord, what have the righteous done, that they do not receive condemnation?” The Lord said, “The servant who has served his master well receives his freedom; so it is with the righteous in the kingdom of heaven. [And I said,] “Since you are righteous, since you are almighty, since you are merciful, <spare> (sinners).” [And the Lord said,] “Ezra, there are <those whose evil deeds will reproach> them on the last day” (Vis. Ezra 61–68).

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<sup>180</sup> Bauckham, “Latin Vision of Ezra,” 505–510.

<sup>181</sup> Mueller and Robbins, “Vision of Ezra,” 583.

<sup>182</sup> Translations of the Latin Vision of Ezra are from Bauckham, “Latin Vision of Ezra,” 515–528.

This line of argumentation is the same as that found in the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra, thus suggesting through their relationship that the texts likely contain the same message. However, although Ezra's initial pleas fail to acquire mercy for the wicked in both texts, his attempt to substitute himself in place of the wicked is met with a different response in the Latin Vision of Ezra than it is in the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra. "And Ezra said, 'If you created both the sinners and me, it is better for me to perish than for the whole world (to perish).' And the Lord replied, 'The sinners from the ninth hour of the Sabbath until the second day of the week are at rest, but on the other days they do penance because of their sins (?)'" (Vis. Ezra 89–90). Unlike the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra, the Latin Vision of Ezra does include some modicum of mercy for the wicked. This does not necessarily eliminate the possibility of a monitory purpose for the Latin Vision of Ezra, but it does soften the threatening nature of the text when compared to its Greek counterpart.

The more drastic difference in the Latin text appears in the final section where Ezra gives up his soul. As in the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra, before Ezra gives up his soul in the Latin Vision of Ezra, he makes some requests regarding those who come into contact with his book. First, Ezra says to the angel Michael, "I beseech you that whoever buys my book or has it copied, for every denarius he gives in payment for my book, may he have as many golden books by way of profit, as well as consolation and eternal life" (Vis. Ezra 95). Although Michael grants this request, Ezra still refuses to give up his soul. Once the Lord comes to retrieve Ezra's soul, Ezra makes another request regarding his book, "Lord, hear my prayer and let my cry come to you. Lord God almighty, I beseech you: The one who [preserves my book and] makes a memorial of my passion – may no sin cast him down but all (his sins) be remitted"

(Vis. Ezra 108). Once again, the Lord grants Ezra's request, and, with only a bit more coaxing, Ezra finally gives up his soul.

Whereas the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra emphasises its threatening message of damnation to its readers, the Latin Vision of Ezra offers salvation to those who simply buy, copy, or preserve, his book and make a memorial of his passion. According to Bauckham, "This refers to a liturgical act of remembrance (cf. v. 117). Ezra's 'passion' may allude to v. 89 where Ezra's willingness to suffer himself in place of the world becomes the basis for the respite for sinners in hell that God grants him."<sup>183</sup> While the previous differences between the Latin Vision of Ezra and the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra have served to only soften the monitory nature of the text, these petitions, and their subsequent acceptance by Michael and God, distort the monitory nature of the text. Readers are now left with two options for avoiding torment in the afterlife. They can either act righteously by not committing the sins punished in the text, or they can buy a copy of the Latin Vision of Ezra. As long as they purchase the book, they need not fear reprisal for their sins. In this way, the Latin Vision of Ezra still serves as a warning against receiving punishment in the afterlife, but it does not necessarily serve as a warning against sinning. Thus, the Latin Vision of Ezra is still a monitory text, but it does not serve as a warning in the way that most scholars might assume.

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<sup>183</sup> Bauckham, "Latin Vision of Ezra," 527 n. c.

## H. The Acts of Thomas

The Acts of Thomas is a pseudonymous text that most likely originates from Edessa in the 220s or 230s CE.<sup>184</sup> The story consists of 14 acts recounting the ministry of the Apostle Judas Thomas, also called Didymus, in India. It begins with the apostles in Jerusalem casting lots to apportion the world among themselves for ministry and ends with the martyrdom of Thomas in India. Act six tells the story of a young man who killed the woman he loved when she refused to live a chaste life with him. The man becomes crippled when attempting to partake in the Eucharist because of his sin, so Thomas heals him and goes with him to raise the woman from the dead. When she awakes, she describes the various punishments she witnessed in hell (Acts Thom. 55–57).

The description of the punishments in hell are similar to other Christian tours of hell with their use of hanging, fire, and darkness. Some even believe the Acts of Thomas shows direct dependence on the Apoc Pet in constructing its list of sins and punishments.<sup>185</sup> Others have disputed such direct literary dependence, instead arguing that the Acts of Thomas depends upon Jewish sources or traditions.<sup>186</sup> Regardless of possible literary dependence, the text is a part of the tour of hell tradition as described by Himmelfarb, due to its use of the demonstrative explanation, as well as the features described above.<sup>187</sup> When concluding her description of the punishments in hell, the

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<sup>184</sup> Jan N. Bremmer, “The Acts of Thomas: Place, Date and Women,” in *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer, SECA 6 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 74–79.

<sup>185</sup> G Bornkamm, *Mythos und Legende in den apokryphen Thomas-Akten*, FRLANT 31 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933), 46–48; M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1953), 390 n. 1.

<sup>186</sup> A. F. J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, 2nd Revised., NovTSup CVIII (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 136–137.

<sup>187</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*.

woman says, “I was received by you and stand before you now; I earnestly beseech you therefore that I not go back to those places of punishment that I saw” (Acts Thom. 57:11).<sup>188</sup> Following this, Thomas exhorts the crowd around them to repent:

The apostle said, “You have heard what this woman has related; and these are not the only punishments—there are others worse than these. As for you, if you don’t return to the God I proclaim, and refrain from your former deeds and the activities you performed without knowledge, you will end up in these punishments. Believe, then, in Christ Jesus. He will forgive you the sins done before this time, will purify you from all your bodily desires that remain on earth, and will heal you from the failings that follow, accompany you, and are found before you.” (Acts Thom. 58:1–3)

Thomas continues for a few more verses instructing the crowd in how they should and should not act. This leads to the entire crowd repenting and living righteously. The woman’s plea at the end of the tour, Thomas’s exhortation to repentance, and the crowd’s positive response give the narrative a monitory purpose both for those within the story and the reader of the text. Not only does Thomas warn that failure to turn to God will result in the punishments just recounted, but also that even worse punishments exist. Such scare tactics leave no doubt that the tour of hell in the Acts of Thomas functions with a monitory purpose.

### I. Apocalypse of Paul

In its extant form, the Apocalypse of Paul dates from the late fourth to early fifth century CE due to its reference to the consulate of Theodosius Augustus and Cynegius. However, the original composition of the text may have been as early as the third

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<sup>188</sup> Translations of the Acts of Thomas are from Harold W. Attridge, *The Acts of Thomas*, ed. Julian V. Hills, ECA 3 (Salem, OR: Polebridge, 2010).

century CE.<sup>189</sup> The Apocalypse of Paul enjoyed great popularity throughout the early church and into the Middle Ages and was perhaps the most influential Christian tour of hell prior to Dante's *Inferno*, which itself is influenced by this text.<sup>190</sup> The narrative of the text is an expansive retelling of Paul's vision of heaven in 2 Cor 12, which now includes a vision of hell as well.

The text indicates from the beginning its monitory purpose when the Lord tells Paul to relate this message:

Speak to the people, "How long will you transgress, and heap sin upon sin, and tempt the Lord who made you? You are the sons of God, doing the works of the devil in the faith of Christ, on account of the impediments of the world. Remember therefore and know that, while every creature serves God, the human race alone sins. It reigns over every creature and sins more than all nature" (Apoc Paul 3).<sup>191</sup>

This is then followed by requests from the sun, moon, stars, sea, and earth to punish humanity for their sin. Each time God replies, "I know all these things, for my eye sees and my ear hears, but my patience bears with them until they be converted and repent. But if they do not return to me I will judge them all" (Apoc Paul 4, 5, 6).<sup>192</sup> These opening sections set a particular tone and purpose for the text: repent or suffer the consequences. This purpose is restated at the end of the text, in the Syriac version, "Then send, and disclose this revelation that men may read it, and turn to the way of truth, that they also may not come to these bitter torments."

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<sup>189</sup> Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, 288; Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 616; Theodore Silverstein and Anthony Hilhorst, eds., *Apocalypse of Paul: A New Critical Edition of Three Long Latin Versions*, Cahiers d'orientalisme 21 (Geneva: Cramer, 1997), 11.

<sup>190</sup> Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 616; Anthony Hilhorst, "The Apocalypse of Paul: Previous History and Afterlife," in *The Visio Pauli and the Gnostic Apocalypse of Paul*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and István Czachesz, SECA 9 (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 19–20.

<sup>191</sup> All translations of the Apocalypse of Paul are from Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 620–644.

<sup>192</sup> God's response to the earth is only slightly different, "I know all things, and there is none who can hide himself from his sin. Moreover I know their impieties, but my holiness endures them until they be converted and repent. But if they do not return to me I will judge them" (Apoc Paul 6).

Interestingly, even with its monitory purpose, the Apocalypse of Paul still contains a request for mercy for the wicked as is common in afterlife torment texts. In Apoc Paul 43, Paul and the angels plead with God to have pity on the wicked and give them refreshment. God appears in Apoc Paul 44 and grants this request by giving rest to the wicked on Sunday. This rest, while eagerly welcomed by the wicked, is only granted for Paul's sake and is not a result of God having mercy on the wicked: "For this is the judgement of God who had no mercy. But you received this great grace of a day and a night's refreshment on the Lord's Day for the sake of Paul the well-beloved of God who descended to you" (Apoc Paul 44). Even though the Apocalypse of Paul contains a traditional request for mercy, it is careful to reinforce that there is no mercy for the wicked in the afterlife. This further emphasises the text's monitory purpose, particularly when compared to how other afterlife torment texts deal with such requests for mercy.

## J. Conclusions

This survey analysed multiple Greek, Jewish, and Christian afterlife torment texts from apocalypses, testaments, satires, and philosophical dialogues that all have a possible date range during the first three centuries CE. The results of this analysis have shown that these types of texts can vary greatly in their purpose. Also, in order to ascertain the purpose of these texts, one must take into account the narrative and dialogical contexts surrounding descriptions of punishment. Without such contextual material, it is difficult to understand the intent of the text.

While many of the afterlife torment texts above still likely have a monitory purpose, the way they serve as a warning is not always as straightforward as

scholarship tends to assume. Some do not necessarily serve as warning against sinning, but as a warning to act in a certain way. The Testament of Isaac is a great example of this. Although the first half suggests the text is meant to warn its readers away from sinning, the second half emphasises mercy to such an extent that if people are merciful, perhaps even only one day a year, they will not receive punishment in the afterlife regardless of what sins they commit. Even with these dual meanings, the Testament of Isaac is a monitory text, but whereas the first half warns readers away from sin, the second half uses that warning to move readers towards mercy.

One common feature in Jewish and Christian afterlife torment texts is intercessions for the wicked.<sup>193</sup> Many of the texts surveyed above utilise this theme, but with different results. The Greek Apocalypse of Ezra is largely an argument between Ezra and God, with God refusing to grant mercy to the wicked despite Ezra's pleas. In the Apocalypse of Paul, although God allows the wicked a respite from torment on Sundays, angels ensure the wicked know this is not a result of God's mercy toward them but of his love for Paul. Both of these texts use their descriptions of afterlife torment to warn their readers not to sin but differ on what concessions will be granted to the wicked even while affirming God will not have mercy on them. On the other hand, texts like the Testament of Isaac and Latin Vision of Ezra do convey that God will have mercy on the wicked due to the intercession of the righteous. Both of these texts allow for mercy as long as the certain conditions which the seers request are met. In the Testament of Isaac, one must simply show mercy on the memorial days of Abraham and Isaac in order to receive mercy. In the Latin Vision of Ezra, one receives mercy by buying, copying, or preserving the book and memorialising Ezra's

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<sup>193</sup> Bauckham, "The Conflict of Justice and Mercy," 136–142.

passion. Both of these texts circumvent the torments in hell by allowing for entrance into paradise if people perform a certain deed. Finally, the Apocalypse of Zephaniah also utilises the theme of intercession for the wicked, but, due to its fragmentary nature, it does not give an account of God's response to the plea. Without God's response, interpreting the purpose of the text is problematic. Various possibilities present themselves, but none are conclusive. The importance of God's response to pleas for mercy will similarly play a vital role in interpreting the Apoc Pet.

While most of the afterlife torment texts above are monitory in some form, others convey entirely different purposes. Plutarch's *On the Daimonion of Socrates* uses an afterlife torment text to prove a philosophical point, and Lucian's *True Histories* uses afterlife torments to aid its reader in discerning falsehoods and telling convincing lies. While both of these texts contain frightening imagery, neither uses these images to instil fear in their readers or warn them about something. These two texts in particular reveal the possibility that other afterlife torment texts may utilise the torments in hell for non-monitory purposes. They are, nevertheless, in the minority of afterlife torment texts. It is therefore unsurprising that the default assumption in scholarship is to view these texts as monitory, for so many of the them are. However, this does not negate the necessity for detailed study of each of these texts in order to ascertain if they too break from the common function of the genre. It is with this possibility in mind, that it is now possible to begin a full analysis of the Apoc Pet.



## Chapter 4: A Composite Translation of the Apocalypse of Peter

Before discussing the primary purpose of the Apoc Pet, it is necessary to introduce a new version of the text. The new translation presented in this chapter seeks to correct some inaccuracies in the currently published translations of the Ethiopic text and encourage further study of the Apoc Pet. As Bauckham suggests, the inaccessibility of the Ethiopic text in most scholarship greatly hinders the study of the Apoc Pet and is likely a reason it sees little academic interest.<sup>194</sup> This translation attempts to make the text more accessible to exegetical analysis through the use of various translation strategies explained below.

The version of the Apoc Pet presented in this chapter is not only a new English translation but also a new edition which attempts to aid in increasing the approachability of the Apoc Pet in scholarship more broadly and challenge the current consensus regarding the complete reliability of the Eth Apoc Pet over the Akh Apoc Pet. Currently, most translations which present the Greek versions of the text together with the Ethiopic subordinate the Greek by rearranging the Akh Apoc Pet in order to present it in parallel columns next to the Eth Apoc Pet. As for the Bodleian and Rainer fragments, which are widely acknowledged as more reliable than the Eth Apoc Pet, typically they are relegated to footnotes in the text.<sup>195</sup> Of those publications which present the texts separately, and to varying degrees equally, James does not include the Rainer fragment, since it was not available at the time of his publication, while

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<sup>194</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 162.

<sup>195</sup> Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 625–638; Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 600–612; C. Detlef G. Müller, “Apocalypse of Peter,” in *New Testament Apocrypha*, eds. Wilhelm Schneemelcher and Robert McL. Wilson (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 2:668–683.

Kraus and Nicklas focus solely on the Greek fragments.<sup>196</sup> Others present the text in only one form, such as Ehrman's reproduction of only Elliott's Ethiopic translation.<sup>197</sup> Each of these publications present a different understanding of the Apoc Pet. This variety of approaches possibly hinders new scholars from effectively contributing to the study of the text without first understanding the complicated relationship between the extant manuscripts.<sup>198</sup>

Buchholz offers one of the best presentations of the text to date. His edition is a "mixed text" which is "reconstructed from the Ethiopic and Greek manuscripts", although it does not incorporate the Akh Apoc Pet. Buchholz's approach greatly advances scholarship on the Apoc Pet but does not allow easy access to the study of the text for those largely unfamiliar with it. As his intention "is to present the earliest Ethiopic text which the material at our disposal allows,"<sup>199</sup> his text is at times more comprehensible than the Ethiopic manuscripts but still contains late editorial changes in the text. This is particularly apparent in how he uses the Rainer fragment to modify multiple aspects of Eth Apoc Pet 14. While he modifies multiple parts of the Ethiopic text based upon the Rainer fragment, he does not include the Rainer fragment's post-mortem salvation of the wicked in 14:1, which is earlier than the Ethiopic tradition.<sup>200</sup> His approach therefore results in a form of the Eth Apoc Pet which may reflect an

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<sup>196</sup> James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 510–519; Kraus and Nicklas, *Das Petrus-evangelium und die Petrusapokalypse*, 104–128.

<sup>197</sup> Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, 281–287.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Malka Z. Simkovich, "Echoes of Universalist Testament Literature in Christian and Rabbinic Texts," *HTR* 109.1 (2016): 1–32; Eldon Woodcock, "Images of Hell in the Tours of Hell: Are They True?," *CTR* 3 (2005): 17–19. Both of these scholars show no awareness of the Rainer Fragment and its offer of post-mortem salvation for the wicked. As a result, they make claims regarding the lack of a universalist framework and possible escape from hell in the Apoc Pet that are demonstrably false.

<sup>199</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 119.

<sup>200</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 226–232, 342–360.

earlier text than the two extant manuscripts, but it is still a later form of the Apoc Pet than that which is contained in some of the Greek fragments. Buchholz was nevertheless correct that what is needed in the study of the Apoc Pet is a single, composite text reconstructed from the extant manuscript evidence. Such a task “results in a text reflecting no particular stage of the manuscript tradition, but it does represent the current progress in research.”<sup>201</sup> Unlike Buchholz’s text, which intends to recreate the earliest version of the Eth Apoc Pet, the goal of this text is to present the earliest recoverable form of the Apoc Pet based upon all of the currently extant manuscript evidence.

#### A. The Reconstruction and Translation of the Text

In order to accomplish the goal set forward for this edition of the Apoc Pet, certain methods of reconstructing and translating the text are required. Before offering the translation of the text, it is important to set out the translation approach adopted here.

##### *1. Manuscript Priority and Comparison*

Like Buchholz’s translations, the text offered here is a single, composite text based upon all of the currently extant manuscript evidence, rather than multiple texts presented separately or in parallel. In order to combine the various manuscripts into one text, decisions must be made regarding which manuscript likely reflects the earlier reading. The evidence supporting the priority of the Bodleian and Rainer fragments over the Ethiopic text is given below in the notes on their respective sections. This is

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<sup>201</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 119.

the first translation, however, which compares the Ethiopic and Akhmīm texts in detail rather than treating them as distinctly separate recensions with priority automatically given to the Ethiopic text.

The arguments in favour of Ethiopic priority were addressed above in chapter 1, but for the purpose of the discussion at hand, they deserve repeating.

1. The Ethiopic is longer and more closely adheres to the length recorded in Codex Claromontanus and the Stichometry of Nicephorus.
2. The Ethiopic text contains nearly all of the early quotations of the Apoc Pet, while the Akhmīm text only contains one.
3. The Bodleian and Rainer fragments, as well as the second Sibylline Oracle, confirm the general reliability of the Ethiopic text in content and its more original use of the future tense within the tour of hell over the past tense used in the Akhmīm text.<sup>202</sup>

These three points confirm Ethiopic priority in a broad sense, but do not disallow the Akhmīm text from at times preserving an earlier version of a phrase or section of text than that found in the Ethiopic. Even those who hold to complete Ethiopic superiority over the Akhmīm text admit that the former is corrupt in places, but some disagree as to the nature of these corruptions. Buchholz suggests that the author of the Pseudo-Clementine work within which the Eth Apoc Pet is contained, *The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead*, made at least a few deliberate changes to the text: the removal of the post-mortem baptism of the wicked in Apoc Pet 14, the divine names of Jesus in 15:1, 16:1, and 16:4, and the references to the eternal nature of the punishments in hell.<sup>203</sup> By contrast, Bauckham finds Buchholz's arguments unconvincing and instead believes that any translation errors and corruptions are

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<sup>202</sup> Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 162–164; Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 419; Duensing and Maurer, "Apocalypse of Peter," 665–667.

<sup>203</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 385–386.

accidental.<sup>204</sup> While Buchholz is correct that it is not possible to unequivocally prove the author of the Pseudo-Clementine text made changes to the Apoc Pet, the evidence, particularly in regard to the changes in Apoc Pet 14, indicates changes were deliberately made to the text at some point in the transmission process. The acknowledgment that the Eth Apoc Pet was in at least one place deliberately edited increases the likelihood of additional corruptions in the text, whether intentional or unintentional. This allows for the possibility that even in places where the Ethiopic text may not show signs of corruption, the Akhmīm text may still bear witness to an earlier version of the text.

A significant difference between the Ethiopic and Akhmīm texts lies in the verb tense used in their respective tours of hell. The Eth Apoc Pet uses the future tense and presents the tour of hell as an eschatological prophecy. The Akh Apoc Pet uses the past tense and presents the tour of hell as a vision shown to Peter and recounted in the text. James has convincingly argued from the evidence of patristic quotations of the Apoc Pet and the Bodleian fragment that the future tense of the Eth Apoc Pet is the more original.<sup>205</sup> The originality of the future tense bolsters Ethiopic priority and is one of the features of the Eth Apoc Pet used to discourage the type of textual comparison with the Akh Apoc Pet that the current translation employs. While James' arguments in favour of the originality of the future tense remain convincing, they should not discourage further detailed, comparative analyses of these two texts. As such, when the Akh Apoc Pet is considered to reflect an earlier version of the text within the tour of hell section, slight textual emendations are employed and the past

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<sup>204</sup> Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 163 n. 2.

<sup>205</sup> James, "A New Text of the Apocalypse of Peter," 573–576.

tense is changed to the future tense. While such emendations cause the translation to deviate from the manuscript evidence, the deviation is essential both for coherency in translation and in order to reflect the earlier verb tense of the Ethiopic even when the content of the Akhmīm is more original. All such emendations are noted in the text.

A further difference of note between the Eth Apoc Pet and the Akh Apoc Pet is the order of the narrative. The Eth Apoc Pet gives its description of hell before the description of paradise, while in the Akh Apoc Pet the description of paradise precedes the description of hell. Drawing from parallels between the Apoc Pet and Book 2 of the Sibylline Oracles, James argues that the order of the Ethiopic is more original. Sibylline Oracles 2.194–338 describes the judgment of the cosmic conflagration and the eschatological punishment of the wicked in hell. James argues that as the description of hell in the Sibylline Oracles directly follows the description of judgment, as in the Eth Apoc Pet, the order found in the Ethiopic is more original. This argument is unconvincing. First of all, book 2 of the Sibylline Oracles makes no mention of the pre-judgment paradise described in Apoc Pet 15–16, so it is of little help when attempting to determine a more original order.<sup>206</sup> Second, James' argument seems to assume that if the order of the Akh Apoc Pet were more original, the description of paradise would follow the cosmic conflagration. This is unlikely. Both the cosmic conflagration and the tour of hell (Eth Apoc Pet 4–14) are in the future tense in the Ethiopic, but the description of paradise (Eth Apoc Pet 15–16) is in the past tense, as in the Akh Apoc Pet. Therefore, the description of paradise would break

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<sup>206</sup> Philipp Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur: Einleitung in das Neue Testament, die Apokryphen und die Apostolischen Väter* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), 510; Philipp Vielhauer, *Historia de la literatura cristiana primitiva: Introducción al nuevo testamento, los apócrifos y los padres apostólicos* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1991), 525.

the narrative flow of the text if it were placed between the cosmic conflagration and tour of hell. The Akh Apoc Pet does not contain a cosmic conflagration, but the question at hand is whether the description of paradise comes before or after the entire eschatological vision.

Buchholz also argues in favour of the order of the Ethiopic narrative. He claims that as the tour of hell and description of paradise are in different tenses, something must have existed between them in the narrative in order to explain the change in tenses. No such narrative element exists in the Akh Apoc Pet. Therefore, in his estimation, the order of the Ethiopic is superior.<sup>207</sup> It is possible, however, that such a narrative element did exist in the original text and was edited out of the Akh Apoc Pet when the tour of hell was changed to past tense. A missing narrative element in an admittedly corrupt and fragmentary text which is unnecessary in its current form is not sufficient evidence to argue against the reliability its narrative structure. In fact, Apoc Pet 1–3 could function quite well as Buchholz’s missing narrative element which transitions from the description of paradise to the tour of hell. The Apoc Pet may have originally opened with chapters 15–16 and then continued as recorded in the Eth Apoc Pet. This will be discussed in more detail below.

Without a satisfactory argument in support of the narrative order of either text, this translation is forced to follow the Eth Apoc Pet solely due to it being the most comprehensive recension currently extant. Following the order of the Akhmīm text would require extensive emendation of the text. While this may result in a more original version of the Apoc Pet, it would also result in a text which does not adequately reflect the current manuscript evidence. One of the goals of this translation

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<sup>207</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 420–421.

is to reflect that extant manuscripts while still attempting to recover an earlier version of the text than any one manuscript exhibits. As such, the order of the Ethiopic must be retained for the present project.

The final dissimilarity between the various recensions which complicates the task of comparing the manuscripts is the language difference. Two manuscripts are written in Gə‘əz Ethiopic and three in Greek. Many scholars have, with varying degrees of success attempted to uncover the Greek *Vorlage* of the Eth Apoc Pet. Helmer and Julian Hills made significant progress in this regard by using the Ethiopic Bible in conjunction with the LXX and Greek NT to deduce possible Greek words and phrases behind the Eth Apoc Pet.<sup>208</sup> As this translation is more concerned with the extant manuscripts than the *Vorlagen*, the approach of Helmer and Hills is not utilised beyond consideration of the arguments already proposed by previous scholars. Furthermore, the language discrepancy makes “word for word” comparison difficult in many instances. To ease the difficulty of comparing texts in two different languages, this translation considers complete sections or phrases within each text rather than individual words. Using the Eth Apoc Pet as the baseline text, any section or phrase in the translation which comes from a Greek text is italicised with a note referencing from which text it derives.

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<sup>208</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand”; Julian V. Hills, “Parables, Pretenders, and Prophecies: Translation and Interpretation in the Apocalypse of Peter 2,” *RB* 98 (1991): 560–573.

## 2. Chapter and Verse Divisions

The below translation follows the chapter divisions proposed by Weinel.<sup>209</sup> The verse divisions mostly follow Buchholz's suggested divisions, with a few exceptions.<sup>210</sup> First, in some places where the Akh Apoc Pet is deemed more original, the text is longer than the Eth Apoc Pet (e.g. Apoc Pet 16:3). This necessarily causes a change in verse structure. Rather than adding further verse divisions to accommodate the additional content, Buchholz's verse divisions are maintained as accurately as possible. Second, in Apoc Pet 7:10–11, a difference in translation between Buchholz's text and the present text requires a slight change in the verse division. Buchholz's suggestion of supplying the verb "receive" between *wärə'yəwwomu* and *däynomu*, ("and they saw them *get* their punishment") and treating *qätäləwwomu* ("They killed them") as the start of a new sentence is unconvincing.<sup>211</sup> Instead, this translation follows most translators in supplying the possessive relative pronoun between *däynomu* and *qätäləwwomu* (the punishment *of those who* killed them).<sup>212</sup> As such, *qätäləwwomu* ends 7:10 in this translation rather than beginning 7:11 as in Buchholz's translation.

## 3. Translation Theory

As stated above, the current translation hopes to offer a text of the Apoc Pet which encourages and enables further study of the text without requiring knowledge of the Ethiopic language or the various extant manuscripts. However, the English version

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<sup>209</sup> Weinel, "Offenbarung des Petrus," 314–327.

<sup>210</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 162–244.

<sup>211</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 315.

<sup>212</sup> Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 604; Duensing and Maurer, "Apocalypse of Peter," 673; James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 515; Müller, "Apocalypse of Peter," 629.

presented here is still filtered through a particular translator with all the biases and deficiencies that accompany such a task. As such, it should not replace study of the individual extant manuscripts in their original languages for those capable of undertaking such a task. All translation is interpretation. This is an important maxim to remember. However, admitting this does not render the above stated goals impossible. While all translation does indeed require interpretation, not all methods of translating require the same degree of interpretation. In order to minimise the intrusion of the translator's own exegesis of the text into the translation itself, the methodology employed in translating the Apoc Pet is that of Formal-Equivalence rather than Dynamic/Functional-Equivalence. As Robert L. Thomas notes, the amount of interpretation required for a Dynamic-Equivalence translation "makes it unsuitable for close study by those who do not know the original languages."<sup>213</sup> For this translation of the Apoc Pet, Formal-Equivalence methodology particularly impacts choices concerning ambiguity, verbal consistency, and gender inclusive language.

#### *a. Ambiguity*

In the Apoc Pet, ambiguity arises from three main factors: 1) untranslatable words, 2) corrupt passages, and 3) multivalent terminology. Two unknown words occur in the Eth Apoc Pet: *hel* (10:5; 11:1) and *faqət* (10:7). In this translation, rather than the common practise of signifying the presence of these words with ellipses, they are placed in brackets within the text and left in their transliterated form. This practice is used to both signify the exact amount of unknown text, ellipses do not give clear

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<sup>213</sup> Robert L. Thomas, "Dynamic Equivalence: A Method of Translation or a System of Hermeneutics?," *MSJ* 1.2 (1990): 174.

indication whether one word is untranslated or an entire phrase, and to highlight that one unknown word, *hel*, occurs twice in the text. Many translators include a third word in the list of untranslatable words in the Apoc Pet: *məhəro* (11:1). Buchholz recognises that it is the infinitive form of *māharä*, but leaves it untranslated as he believes “that makes no sense in this context.”<sup>214</sup> However, Leslau lists the possible translations of *məhəro* as “teaching, doctrine.”<sup>215</sup> While such a translation of *məhəro* seemingly does not fit the context, it is not an unknown word and should be translated accordingly.

The corrupt nature of the Ethiopic text also leads to ambiguity in translation. The prime example of this is Apoc Pet 11:1–3, verses which Buchholz claims “are among the most corrupt in this document.”<sup>216</sup> These verses are largely incoherent. However, a Formal-Equivalence methodology allows for a degree of the uncertainty of the pericope to remain in the translation. Rather than attempting to clarify to what the relative clauses *zäyənädäd* and *zāhallo rä‘ad* refer, which are perhaps the most significant points of confusion in the text, the translation renders them literally into, “that which burns” and “that which is trembling” respectively. This not only allows the English reader to recognise the corrupt nature of the text, due to the awkward translation, but also encourages further discussion on what precisely this scene is meant to describe.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 333.

<sup>215</sup> Wolf Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Ge‘ez (Classical Ethiopic): Ge‘ez-English / English-Ge‘ez with an Index of the Semitic Roots* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991), 334.

<sup>216</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 332.

<sup>217</sup> M.R. James claimed, “This suggests a narrow bridge over a stream of fire which they keep trying to cross” (James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 517). William H. Brownlee, in a private conversation with Buchholz, offered the more plausible reading of the passage as a reference to a volcano (Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 333).

Finally, ambiguity exists as a result of the multivalent nature of language. When translating from one language to another, words can acquire additional meaning not necessitated by the source text depending on the translator's word choice. An awareness of this possibility is important for the current thesis in order to avoid offering a translation which anticipates the interpretation of the text offered in the following chapters. For example, in Apoc Pet 5:1, the text refers to "those who pervert (*'aläwä*) the faith of God," and in 7:3 it describes the punishment of "those who have rejected (*kəhda*) righteousness." Both texts could refer generally to non-Christians, specifically to apostates, or both. On the one hand, if these verses refer to non-Christians, the argument of this thesis would be strengthened because the text would give no explicit examples of Christians committing sin. On the other hand, if the verses refer to apostates, the argument of this thesis would be weakened. While to which group the verses likely refer will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, the translation itself should not reflect such interpretive decisions whenever possible. In instances such as this, ambiguous language is purposefully employed in the translation to support multiple understandings of the text.

#### *b. Verbal Consistency*

Eugene Nida offers some valid critiques against verbal consistency in translation.<sup>218</sup> Words almost never have a "one-to-one" correspondence between languages. Rather, most words contain within them a range of meanings which translators would do well to acknowledge and incorporate into their decisions. However, Nida's critiques have

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<sup>218</sup> Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 4th ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 14–22.

greater applicability when referring to translating a corpus, such as the Bible, rather than a single text. A single text is less likely to exhibit a varied utilisation of individual words than multiple texts written by different people in different contexts.<sup>219</sup> As the primary goal of this translation is to improve the exegetical accessibility of the text rather than merely its readability, it seems prudent to prioritise verbal consistency over contextual consistency. In so doing, this edition of the Apoc Pet will better facilitate word studies for readers unfamiliar with Ethiopic by translating important Ethiopic words with as much verbal consistency as possible. What follows is a discussion of the ways in which this translation differentiates between some important words which are to some extent synonymous in the Ethiopic.

One of the most intriguing pairs of such words is *däyyänä* and *k<sup>w</sup>ännänä*.<sup>220</sup> Lambdin glosses the basic verb *däyyänä* as “to judge, condemn, punish” and its noun form *däyn* as “judgment, punishment, condemnation.”<sup>221</sup> As for *k<sup>w</sup>ännänä*, he gives “to judge, condemn, punish; to rule, have power (over: acc. or *bä-*)” for the basic verb form and “judgment, condemnation, punishment” for the noun form *k<sup>w</sup>ännänä*.<sup>222</sup> English translations generally render these terms as “judgment” and “punishment”, but often treat them interchangeably (e.g. Buchholz translates both *däyyänä* and *k<sup>w</sup>ännänä*

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<sup>219</sup> There are of course exceptions to this, particularly regarding literary devices such as wordplay. The translator’s assumption, however, should be that an author of a text uses a word with consistent meaning unless context suggests otherwise.

<sup>220</sup> The occurrences of these words are as follows: *däyyänä* 8 times (6:6; 7:9; 8:10; 10:3; 11:2, 3, 4, 8), *däyn* 17 times (4:2, 5, 12, 13; 6:5; 7:4, 8, 10; 10:7; 12:1, 3, 4, 7; 13:3, 4, 5), *k<sup>w</sup>ännänä* 6 times (1:7; 4:13; 9:6; 11:4, 6, 7), *k<sup>w</sup>ännänä* 19 times (4:2, 5, 9; 5:1, 4, 8; 7:11; 8:1; 10:6, 7; 11:7, 9; 12:3; 13:4, 6), *mək<sup>w</sup>ännän* 1 time (7:11), and *mäk<sup>w</sup>ännän* 1 time (17:5). In this list and those that follow, I record occurrences of all the verbal forms under the basic stem and list the various nominal and participial forms separately.

<sup>221</sup> Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Classical Ethiopic (Ge’ez)*, HSS 24 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 396.

<sup>222</sup> Lambdin, *Introduction to Classical Ethiopic (Ge’ez)*, 409–410.

as “to punish” in 11:4).<sup>223</sup> As suggested by Apoc Pet 4:2, the text does not necessarily differentiate too strongly between these two terms: “And (on) the day of *däyn*, which is the *k<sup>w</sup>ännäne* of God, from the east to the west all of humanity will be gathered before my father, who lives eternally.” For sake of verbal consistency, however, this translation differentiates between them. The inclusion of the notion of rule or dominion over something in *k<sup>w</sup>ännänä*, further emphasised in Leslau’s more robust lexical entry, suggests this term better adheres to the English understanding of judgment than does *däyyänä*.<sup>224</sup> As such, throughout this translation the various forms of *k<sup>w</sup>ännänä* are translated “to judge, judgment” and the forms of *däyyänä* are translated “to punish, punishment.” One exception exists in 17:5 with the only occurrence of *mäk<sup>w</sup>anənt* in the text. The plural of *mäk<sup>w</sup>ännən*, *mäk<sup>w</sup>anənt* occurs in a citation of Ps 26:7 LXX and is thus a translation of ἄρχων.<sup>225</sup> As such, it is translated according to its primary definition of “rulers” rather than “judges” in the text.

The Apoc Pet also uses at least five different words that may carry some connotation of sin: *səhtä*, *ḥaṭ’a*, *’abbäsä*, *’ammäšä*, and *gegäyä*.<sup>226</sup> Of these five, *ḥaṭ’a* occurs the most. Six times it is used in its participial form *ḥaṭə’* with the primary substantive meaning “sinner.”<sup>227</sup> Another four times it is used as a noun that, in line with its participial form, is translated as “sin.” One anomaly in verbal consistency for *ḥaṭ’a* occurs in 5:5 with the only use of *ḥaṭi’* in the text referring to the firmaments

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<sup>223</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 218–219.

<sup>224</sup> Wolf Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge’ez (Classical Ethiopic)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 155.

<sup>225</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 374.

<sup>226</sup> The occurrences of these words are as follows: *səhtä* 2 times (1:4; 2:12), *māshəṭ* 1 time (2:12), *səhtät* 1 time (10:6), *ḥaṭə’* 6 times (3:2, 3, 4, 7; 6:5, 7), *ḥaṭi’* 1 time (5:5), *ḥaṭi’at* 4 times (Prologue; 5:1; 6:6; 14:4), *’abbäsä* 1 time (3:7), *’abäsa* 1 time (6:6), *’ammaši* 2 times (3:2; 6:5), *gegäyä* 1 time (2:9), and *gegay* 1 time (11:5).

<sup>227</sup> Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge’ez (Classical Ethiopic)*, 117.

drying up from lack of water. As the primary meaning of *ḥaṭ'a* in most of its forms refers to “lack,” the use of *ḥaṭi'* in the text in this way is unexceptional. In Eth Apoc Pet 10:6, *səḥtät* seems to refer to the idols placed in front of those who made them as “their mistake.” The other three occurrences of *səḥtä* in the text refer to deception or a deceiver. Its use in 10:6 is likely a result of a poor translation of a text similar to what is contained within the Bodleian fragment: τῶν εἰδῶλων πλανῶν.<sup>228</sup> As such, all four uses of the stem *səḥtä* refer to deceit, even if it is not possible to fully convey this in the English of 10:6. The final three words are all easily distinguished in English according to their main glosses: forms of *'abbäsä* translate as “transgress” or “transgression,” forms of *gegäyä* translate as “err” or “error,” and *'ammäṣä*, which only occurs in its participial form *'ammaṣi*, translates as “wicked.”<sup>229</sup>

Unlike the previous two discussions, which focused on differentiating between multiple Ethiopic words, these final examples of verbal consistency in translation differentiate between the various forms of a single stem. The first is *'aläm*.<sup>230</sup> In the Ethiopic Bible, *'aläm* translates both αἰών and κόσμος.<sup>231</sup> This, in conjunction with the possible relationship between the Apoc Pet and Matt 24, leads Helmer to translate *'aläm* as “age” in Apoc Pet 1:2 and 2:1.<sup>232</sup> While this is a possible translation, it breaks with the verbal consistency that this translation attempts to employ. In some places, such as Apoc Pet 4:6, *'aläm* must convey its spatial meaning. However, there are no

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<sup>228</sup> James, “A New Text of the Apocalypse of Peter,” 368; Kraus and Nicklas, *Das Petrus-evangelium und die Petrusapokalypse*, 124.

<sup>229</sup> Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic)*, 139, 170, 213.

<sup>230</sup> The occurrences of this stem are as follows: *'aläm* 11 times (1:2; 2:1, 8, 12; 4:6; 5:2, 5; 14:5, 6; 15:3; 16:8), *lä'aläm* 9 times (6:6, 9; 8:9, 10; 10:3, 6, 7; 11:2; 13:3), *zälä'aläm* 10 times (4:2; 6:1, 9; 7:8, 11; 11:3, 8, 9; 14:2, 3), and *lä'aläm 'aläm* 1 time (3:2).

<sup>231</sup> August Dillmann, *Lexicon linguae aethiopicae cum indice latino*, reprint of 1865 edition. (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1970), 951–952.

<sup>232</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 52–53.

cases of *'aläm* in the Apoc Pet which necessitate its temporal meaning. As such, all instances of *'aläm* are translated as “world.” The translation presented here also differentiates between when *'aläm* is prefixed with the preposition *lä* (to, for) and when it has both the preposition and the relative pronoun prefixed to it. Admittedly, the Eth Apoc Pet does not seem to have a strong distinction between *lä'aläm* and *zälä'aläm*; punishments during the tour of hell are described using both terms. However, the suggestion by Buchholz and Lanzillotta that the references to the endless nature of punishments were later additions to the text requires a detailed analysis of the text to substantiate.<sup>233</sup> The consistent differentiation between *lä'aläm* and *zälä'aläm* is an attempt at aiding such an analysis. As Leslau suggests, *lä'aläm* is translated “forever” and *zälä'aläm* is translated “eternal.”<sup>234</sup> There is also one instance of the phrase *lä'aläm 'aläm* in Apoc Pet 3:2, which is translated “from eternity to eternity” to differentiate it from *lä'aläm*, as well as convey the use of the idiom in the text.

Finally, the word God, *'agzi'abəher*, occurs many times in the Apoc Pet. In every instance but one, the term is translated as “God.” The single exception occurs in Apoc Pet 2:6. This verse continues the parable of the fig tree, but suddenly changes the man, *bə'əsi*, who owned the field to God, *'agzi'abəher*. This is an awkward shift in the text which has elicited comments from multiple scholars.<sup>235</sup> Helmer and Hills suggest the Greek behind this passage originally read ὁ κύριος, lord or master, as

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<sup>233</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 150–151, 386; Lanzillotta, “Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?,” 152–153.

<sup>234</sup> Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic)*, 169.

<sup>235</sup> Cf. Bauckham, “The Two Fig Tree Parables,” 282; Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 282.

'*agzi'abəher* often translates κύριος in the Ethiopic Old Testament.<sup>236</sup> While they are likely correct that the passage originally referred to the gardener's master, the word '*agzi*' is more consistently used in the Apoc Pet to refer to ὁ κύριος. In order to retain the distinction between Lord, '*agzi*', and God, '*agzi'abəher*', in the text, '*agzi'abəher* in 2:6 is rendered according to the literal translation of the word: "master of the land".<sup>237</sup>

### *c. Gender Inclusive Language*

The use of Formal-Equivalence in a translation places certain limits upon the extent to which gender inclusive language may be employed. In both the Greek and Ethiopic of the Apoc Pet, however, the methodology of distinguishing between possible synonyms in the text encourages the use of gender neutral terminology in this translation when the text refers to humanity in general. During the tour of hell, the text often refers specifically to both men ('*ad* or '*bə'asi* in the Ethiopic and ἄνδρες in the Greek) and women ('*anəst* or '*bə'asit* in the Ethiopic and γυναῖκες in the Greek). These instances necessitate gender specific nouns. Outside of the tour of hell, both the Greek and the Ethiopic largely use different words to refer to people. The Ethiopic uses both *sāb'* (people) and '*ag'w'alä 'əmähəyaw* (human, humanity), and the Greek uses ἄνθρωπος (people). The differentiation in both the Ethiopic and Greek versions of the text between nouns which necessarily include gender and those that do not is maintained in the English translation offered here. One exception exists in Apoc Pet 4:7 with the phrase *wäldä 'ag'w'alä 'əmähəyaw*. Although elsewhere in the text '*ag'w'alä 'əmähəyaw*

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<sup>236</sup> Helmer, "That We May Know and Understand," 105–106; Hills, "Parables, Pretenders, and Prophecies," 562–563.

<sup>237</sup> Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic)*, 147.

is translated as “human” or “humanity,” in this instance it is translated according to the traditional rendering, “Son of Man.” Outside of these words, the translation below does not adhere to gender inclusive language, as doing so would require adjusting the gender and/or number of various verbs and nouns. The translation would then no longer faithfully represent the text as it exists in the extant manuscripts. It would also misrepresent the patriarchal context from which the Apoc Pet originally arose. In order to aid in the exegesis of the text, the translation seeks to retain the perspective of the author, without endorsing such gendered distinctions.

## B. The Text

### 1. Translation Guide

( ): Parentheses in the text indicate a word or phrase which is not in the extant manuscripts but has been added by the editor to complete the sense of the translation.

[ ]: Square brackets in the text indicate a word or phrase which is in the extant manuscripts but is unnecessary when translated into English. Square brackets are also used for unknown words.

*Italics*: This edition is primarily based upon Buchholz’s Ethiopic text and critical apparatus.<sup>238</sup> When the text of a Greek fragment is used in place of the Ethiopic,

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<sup>238</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 162–243. Although Paolo Marrassini presented a newer version of the Eth Apoc Pet in 1994, Paolo Marrassini, “L’Apocalisse di Pietro,” in *Etiopica e oltre. Studi in onore di Langranco Ricci*, Studi Africanistici, Serie Etiopica 1, eds. Yaqob Beyene et al. (Napoli: Istituto universitario orientale, 1994), 221–232, he admits that it is not a critical edition and therefore not suitable for the task at hand.

that section will be italicised with a note explaining upon which fragment the translation is based.<sup>239</sup>

**Prologue, 1, 2, etc.:** Words and numbers in bold font indicate chapter divisions.

1, 2, etc.: Numbers in regular, non-bold font indicate verse divisions.

## *2. The Apocalypse of Peter*

**Prologue** The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead, which he told to Peter, who die for their sin because they did not observe the commandment of God, their creator. And this he reflected upon so that he might understand the mystery of the Son of God, the merciful and lover of mercy.

**1:1** And when he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, his followers approached toward him.

And we worshipped and entreated him privately. **2** And we asked him, saying to him, “Tell (us) what are the signs of your coming and of the end of the world, that we may know and understand the time of your coming and we may instruct those who come after us, **3** to whom we will proclaim the word of your gospel and establish in your church. That they, having heard, may be watchful so that they might perceive the time of your coming.”

**4** And our Lord answered us, saying to us, “Take care not to be deceived lest you become doubters and worship other gods. **5** Many will come in my name saying, ‘I am the Christ.’ Do not believe them and do not approach them. **6** As for the coming of the Son of God, it will not be revealed, except like lightning which flashes from the

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<sup>239</sup> The text and verse divisions for each Greek fragment follow Kraus and Nicklas, *Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse*.

east to the west. Likewise, I will come on a cloud from heaven with great power in my glory while my cross will go before my face. 7 I will come in my glory shining seven times brighter than the sun. I will come in my glory with all my holy angels when my father will place a crown upon my head that I may judge the living and the dead 8 and recompense everyone according to his deeds. 2:1 But as for you, learn from the fig tree its lesson. As soon as its sprout emerges and its branches bud at that time will be the end of the world.”

2 And I, Peter, answered him and said to him, “Explain to me about the fig tree and how we should understand it, 3 since each of its seasons the fig tree sprouts and each of its years its fruit is gathered for its masters. What is the fig tree’s lesson? We do not understand.”

4 And the master answered me and said to me, “Do you not understand that the fig tree is the house of Israel? 5 It is like a man (who) planted a fig tree in his garden and it did not produce fruit. And he sought its fruit many years, but he did not find it. And he said to his gardener, ‘Uproot this fig tree so that it won’t make our soil worthless for us.’ 6 And the gardener said to the master of the land, ‘Send (us). We will weed it and dig ashes beneath it and irrigate it with water. And if it does not bear fruit this time we will remove its roots from the garden and plant another in its place.’

7 Did you not perceive that the fig tree is the house of Israel? And indeed, I have told you, when its branches bud in the end, false messiahs will come. 8 And he will promise, ‘I am the Christ who has come into the world.’ And when they see his evil deeds, they will turn away. 9 And they will reject him who is called ‘the glory of our ancestors’, who crucified the first Christ and erred exceedingly. 10 But this liar is not the Christ. And when they resist him, he will wage war with the sword. And there

will be many martyrs. 11 Then at that time when the branches of the fig tree, this alone is the house of Israel, have budded, there will be many martyrs by his hand. And they will die and they will be martyrs. 12 Indeed, Enoch and Elijah will be sent in order to instruct them that this is the deceiver who will come into the world and perform signs and wonders to deceive it. 13 Therefore, all who die by his hand will be martyrs and will be counted in the company of the good and righteous martyrs who pleased God with their life.”

3:1 And he showed me in his right hand every soul and in the palm of his right hand the image of that which will be accomplished on the last day. 2 And how the righteous and sinners will be separated and how the upright in heart will act and how the wicked will be rooted out from eternity to eternity. 3 We saw how the sinners will weep in great affliction and sorrow to the extent that everyone who has seen it with their eyes will weep, whether the righteous, or angels, or even he himself.

4 And I asked him, saying to him, “O Lord, permit that I may proclaim your word about these sinners, because ‘it was better for them when they had not been created.’”

5 And the Saviour answered me, saying to me, “O Peter, why do you speak in such a way: ‘Non-creation were better for them’? In fact, (it is) you who opposes God. 6 And it is not you who shows them, his formation, mercy rather than he. For he created them and brought them forth where they did not exist. 7 But when you saw the grief which will happen to the sinners in the last days and because of this your heart was sorrowful. But they who have transgressed against the Most High, I will show you their works.

4:1 And behold now what will happen to them in the last days when the day of God comes. 2 And (on) the day of punishment, which is the judgment of God, from the east to the west all of humanity will be gathered before my father, who lives eternally. 3 And he will command Gehenna that it open its bars of steel and return everything that there is within it. 4 And also to the animals and the birds he will command that they return all the flesh that they ate when he requires that people appear. 5 For nothing is lost for God and nothing is impossible for him. Everything in this way is his. For everything (will happen) on the day of punishment, on the day of judgment, with the expression of God. 6 And everything will happen in accordance with how he creates. The world and everything that is in it he commanded (to be) and everything was. Thus (it will be) in the last days, 7 because everything is possible for God. And thus it says in the Scripture: ‘The Son of Man prophesied upon each of the bones 8 saying to the bone, “Bone to bones in limbs, sinew and muscle and flesh and skin and hair (be) onto it.”’ 9 And soul and spirit [and] the great Uriel will give at the command of God. For God established him over his resurrection of the dead on the day of judgment.

10 And look and understand the seeds which were sown in the earth. Like a withered thing that does not have a soul they are sown in the earth and live and bear fruit. 11 And the earth will give back in accordance with the deposit that was put under its protection. And this is that which dies: the seed that was sown in the earth and lives and is given life is people. 12 How much more for those who believe in him and his elect, for whose sake God made (the world). He will cause them to rise on the day of punishment. 13 And the earth will give everything back on the day of punishment, for

it (the earth) will be required on it (the day of punishment) to be judged at the same time and also heaven with it.

5:1 And it will happen on the day of judgment (to) those who pervert the faith of God and to those who have committed sin. 2 Cataracts of fire will be opened and there will be gloominess and darkness and it will clothe and cover the whole world. 3 And even the waters will be transformed and will be given into coals of fire and everything that is in it will burn and even the ocean will become fire. 4 From below heaven will be bitter fire which cannot be extinguished and flows for the judgment of wrath and the stars also will waste away in a flame of fire like they had never been created. 5 And the firmaments of heaven from lack of water [and] will depart and become as what was not created. And the lightning of heaven will not exist. And because of their exorcism they will terrify the world. 6 And the spirit of the dead will be made like them and will become fire at the command of God. And then all creation has dissolved.

7 And humans who are in the east will flee to the west. Those (in the west) will flee to the east. And those in the south will flee to the north. And those (in the north) to the south. 8 And in every direction the terrible wrath of fire will find them while a flame which cannot be extinguished will drive them out. It will offer them for the judgment of wrath in a river of fire which cannot be extinguished. A fire which flows while it burns [in it]. 9 But when the waves separate, boiling, [and] there will be much gnashing of teeth for humanity.

6:1 And all of them will see when I come on an eternal, bright cloud and the angels of God who are with me will sit (on) the throne of my glory at the right hand of my heavenly father. 2 And he will place a crown on my head. When the nations see it,

each of their nations will weep. And he will command them to pass through the middle of the river of fire. 3 And each one of their deeds will stand before them. Each one according to his deeds. 4 But each of the elect who have done well, they will come to me and they will not see death by the devouring fire. 5 But the wicked and sinners and hypocrites will stand in the midst of a pit of darkness which cannot be extinguished and their punishment will be fire. 6 And the angels will bring their sin and they will prepare for them a place where they will be punished forever each one according to their transgression. 7 And the angel of God, Uriel, will bring the soul of those sinners who perished in the flood and all who existed in every idol, in every molten image, in every love, and in pictures. 8 And they who dwell in all the high places and stone and in every path, who were called gods. 9 They will be burned with them in an eternal fire. And after all of them and their places where they dwell come to an end, then they will be punished forever.

7:1 And then men and women will come to the place that they deserve.

*2 And some there will be hanging by their tongues. And these are those who blasphemed the way of righteousness. And below them fire will burn and punish them.*<sup>240</sup>

3 And behold another place. And there is a pit, large and full. In it are those who have rejected righteousness. 4 And the angels of punishment will keep watch [and] there in it and light the fire of their punishment.

5 And furthermore, other women will be hanging by their neck and their hair. They will be cast into the pit. 6 And these are those who braid braids, and not for a

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<sup>240</sup> Akh Apoc Pet 22 is followed here in place of Eth Apoc Pet 7:2. The verb tense of Akh Apoc Pet 22 is changed from past to future.

beautiful disposition but going around for fornication so that they might ensnare the soul of people for destruction. 7 And the very men who lie with them in fornication will hang by their thigh in that place which burns. 8 And they will say among themselves, ‘We did not know that we would come to be in eternal punishment.’

9 And [for] those who kill life and even those who associate with them, they will be put in fire which is full of venomous animals *and they will be struck by those animals. And so they will writhe there in that punishment.* 10 *And worms like clouds of darkness will afflict them.*<sup>241</sup> And the angel Ezrael will bring the soul of those they killed, and they will be shown the punishment (of those who) killed them. 11 And they will say to them among themselves, ‘Righteousness and justice is the judgment of God. For, we heard but we did not believe that we would come to this eternal place of judgment.’

8:1 And near this flame will be a very large and deep pit. And into it will flow everything from everywhere: judgment and horror (and) excreta. 2 And their women will be swallowed up to their necks and will be punished in great anguish. Now, these are those who vanquish their children and destroy the work of God which he formed. 3 And opposite them is another place where will sit their children who they prevented living. 4 And they will cry out to God and lightning will come [and] from the infants, a drill in the eyes of those who in this fornication have brought about their destruction.

5 Other men and women will stand naked above there and their children will stand there opposite them in a place of delight. 6 And crying out, [and] they will groan and cry out to God about their parents: ‘These are those who despised and cursed and

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<sup>241</sup> Akh Apoc Pet 25 is followed here in place of Eth Apoc Pet 7:9b–10a. The verb tense of Akh Apoc Pet 25 is changed from past to future.

violated your commandment and died. 7 And they cursed the angel who formed (us) and they hung us up and were stingy with the light. But you gave (it) to everyone.’ 8 The milk of their mothers will flow from their breast and it will congeal and putrefy. 9 From within it will be flesh-eating animals and they will emerge and turn and punish them forever with their husbands because they forsook the commandment of God and killed their children. 10 But as for their children, they will be given to a care-taking angel. But those who killed them, they will punish them forever because it is the thing that God has required.

*9:1 And other men and women will be burning up to their middle and thrown into a dark place. 2 And they will be whipped by vicious spirits and their entrails will be eaten by sleepless worms. And these are those who persecuted the righteous and handed them over.*

*3 And near them will also be women and men gnawing their lips and being punished and receiving burning iron into their eyes. And these are those who blasphemed and spoke wrongly of the way of righteousness.*

*4 And opposite them will also be other men and women gnawing their tongues and having a flaming fire in the mouth. And these are the false witnesses.*

*5 And in another certain place will be small stones, sharper than swords or any skewer, burning. 6 And women and men dressed in filthy rags will roll on them in punishment. 7 And these are those who were wealthy and who trusted in their wealth and did not have compassion upon orphans and widows, but neglected the commandment of God.<sup>242</sup>*

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<sup>242</sup> Akh Apoc Pet 27–30 is followed here in place of Eth Apoc Pet 9. The verb tense of Akh Apoc Pet 27–30 is changed from past to future.

10:1 And (there is) another place near to it, [and] full of excreta. And men and women will be put into it up to their knees. These are those who lend and take usury.

2 *Other men and women will be thrown from a great cliff, fall down, and will be driven by those who were set over them to ascend up to the cliff* 3 *and will again be thrown down from there. And they will not have rest from this punishment.* 4 *These are those (men) who defiled their bodies behaving as women, and these women with them are those who slept with each other as a man with a woman.*<sup>243</sup>

5 And near to those [*hel*] and below them the angel Ezrael will make a place of much fire and every idol of gold and silver, every idol made by human hands, and which resembles the image of cats and lions, the image of reptiles, and the image of animals. 6 And also (*men and*) *women holding chains and whipping themselves before those deceitful idols. And without cessation they will experience this punishment.*

7 *And near them will be other men and women who burn in the fire of idol madness. These then are those who forsook the way of God and*<sup>244</sup> *followed* [*faqat*] demons.

11:1 And another place, extremely high, (will be) teaching and [*hel*]. (There will be) fire inside that which burns. It (will come) over the edge (of) that which burns. 2 Men and women who stumble while it rolls will descend upon that which is trembling. And again, while the thing flows, they will ascend and descend and repeat. Thus, according to its rolling so they will be punished forever. 3 These then are they

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<sup>243</sup> Akh Apoc Pet 32 is followed here in place of Eth Apoc Pet 10:2–4. The verb tense of Akh Apoc Pet 32 is changed from past to future.

<sup>244</sup> The Bodleian fragment is followed here in place of Eth Apoc Pet 10:6b–7a and Akh Apoc Pet 33–34.

who do not honour their father and mother and of their own accord abandon them. Therefore, they will be punished eternally.

4 And furthermore, Ezrael the angel will bring children and virgins so that they might be shown those who are punished. They will be judged with anguish and with hanging and with many wounds, which flesh-eating birds will cause. 5 These are those who believe in their error. They do not obey their parents and the instruction of their ancestors they do not follow and their elders they do not honour. 6 With them will be ten virgins and they will wear darkness as clothing and they will be judged with judgment and their flesh will dissolve. 7 These are those who do not preserve their virginity until they are given in marriage. And they also will be judged the very same judgment while it is revealed to them.

8 And furthermore, (there will be) other men and women who gnaw their tongues without rest while they are punished in eternal fire. 9 These then are slaves who do not obey their masters. This then will be their eternal judgment.

**12:1** And near this punishment will be men and women blind and deaf and their clothes will be white. And consequently, they will crowd (into) one another and fall onto coals of fire which cannot be extinguished. 2 These are those who practice almsgiving and say, 'We are righteous before God.' (But,) they have not pursued righteousness.

3 The angel of God, Ezrael, will bring them out of the flame and carry out the judgment of punishment. This then will be their judgment: 4 [and] a river of fire will flow and every punishment will descend in the midst of the river. 5 And Uriel will establish them. And he will give a wheel of fire and men and women will be hanging

on it by the force of its whirling. 6 The ones in the pit will burn. These then are they: sorcerers and sorceresses. 7 This wheel will be in every punishment in limitless fire.

**13:1** And then they will bring my elect and my righteous, the ones perfect in all righteousness, while angels carry them in their hands while they announce the clothes of life from above. 2 And they will see those who cursed him while he takes vengeance on them 3 (with) punishment forever, each one according to his work. 4 In one voice all of those who are in punishment will say, ‘Have mercy on us because now we have understood the judgment of God, which he previously proclaimed to us but we did not believe.’ 5 And the angel of Tartarus will come and rebuke them with more punishment. And he will say to them, ‘Now you would repent, when there is no time for repentance and no life has remained.’ 6 And all of them will say, ‘Just is the judgment of God, for we have heard and understood that his judgment is fair because we have received recompense, each one according to our deeds.’

**14:1** *I will give to my called and my elect whomever they ask of me out of punishment, and I will give them a good baptism in the salvation of the so-called Acherusian lake in the Elysian field, 2 a part of righteousness with my holy ones. And I will depart, I and my elect, rejoicing with the patriarchs to my eternal kingdom. 3 And I will accomplish with them my promises, which I promised to them, I and my father who is in heaven.*

*Behold, I have shown you, Peter, and explained everything. 4 And go to the city that rules the west and drink the cup which I have promised you at the hand of the son of the one who is in Hades, so that his destruction might have a beginning. 5 And you are the elect one acceptable to the promise<sup>245</sup> that I promised you. Therefore, [and]*

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<sup>245</sup> The Rainer fragment is followed here in place of Eth Apoc Pet 14:1–5a.

send into all the world my message in peace. 6 Because he rejoiced, my voice has poured out the promise of life and suddenly the world was torn.”

**15:1** *And continuing the Lord said, “Let us go to the mountain and pray.” And going with him we, the twelve disciples, requested that he might show us one of our righteous brothers who has departed from the world, so that we might see what manner of form they are, and having taken courage, we might also encourage those people who hear us. And while we were praying, 2 suddenly two men appeared standing in front of the Lord, at whom we were not able to look. For a ray like the sun was coming from their face 3 and their clothing was radiant, of what sort a person’s eye has never seen. 4 Neither is a mouth able to describe nor heart express the glory that they were wearing and the beauty of their appearance. When we beheld them, we were amazed. 5 For their bodies were whiter than any snow and redder than any rose. But their red was blended with white, and I am simply not able to describe their beauty. 6 For not only was their hair curly and splendid but it also suited their face and shoulders as though it were a crown woven of spikenard and many coloured flowers, or as a rainbow in the sky. 7 Such was their fine appearance. Therefore, when we beheld their beauty, we became utterly astonished by them, because they appeared suddenly.*

**16:1** *And approaching the Lord, I said, “Who are these?”*

*He said to me, “These are your brothers, the righteous whose forms you wanted to see.”*

*And I said to him, “And where are all the righteous or of what sort is the age in which they have this glory.” 2 And the Lord showed me a large place outside of this world exceedingly bright with light, and the sky there was illuminated by the rays of the sun and the ground itself blooming with unfading flowers and full of fragrant things*

*and plants beautifully blooming and imperishable and bearing blessed fruit. 3 And so great was the fragrance that it carried from there even to us. And the inhabitants of that place were clothed in the clothes of radiant angels, and their clothing was like their place. And angels moved about them there. And the glory of the inhabitants there was equal and with one voice they loudly praised the Lord God, rejoicing in that place. 4 The Lord said to us, "This is the place of your high priests, the righteous people."<sup>246</sup> 5 And I rejoiced and believed such will be "the honour and glory for those who were persecuted for my righteousness." 6 And I understood that which was written in the book of my Lord, Jesus Christ. 7 And I said to him, "My Lord, do you want me to make three tabernacles here, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah?" 8 And he said to me in anger, "Satan is attacking you and has veiled your understanding, and the affairs of this world are overcoming you. 9 Now your eyes are uncovered and your ears are open that (there is) one tabernacle, which was not made by people's hands, (but) which was made by my heavenly father for me and for the elect." And when we saw (it) we were rejoicing.*

**17:1** And behold a voice came suddenly from heaven while saying, "This is my son whom I love and I have delighted in my commandment. 2 And a cloud came over our heads great of size and very white, and it carried off our Lord, and Moses, and Elijah. And I trembled and was terrified. 3 And we looked and this heaven was opened and we saw people who were in the flesh, and they came and welcomed our Lord, and Moses, and Elijah. And they departed into the second heaven. 4 And the word of Scripture was accomplished: This generation sought him and sought the face of the God of Jacob. 5 And there was great fear and great dread in heaven. The angels

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<sup>246</sup> Akh Apoc Pet 4–20 is followed here in place of Eth Apoc Pet 15:1–16:4.

were crowding so that the word of Scripture might be accomplished which says, “Open the gates, rulers.” 6 And then this heaven which was opened was closed. 7 And we prayed and descended from the mountain while praising God who has written the names of the righteous in the book of life in the heavens.

### C. Notes on the Text

After a discussion concerning the inclusion of the prologue in the translation, this section gives the reasoning for each instance where a Greek text was deemed superior to the Eth Apoc Pet. The default position of the translation was to prefer the Eth Apoc Pet unless sufficient evidence existed in favour of following a Greek text. In some instances, such as Eth Apoc Pet 8:1–4 and Akh Apoc Pet 26, the Ethiopic and the Akhmīm recensions are so similar that the preference to follow the Ethiopic text was the sole deciding factor concerning which to include in the text. While each point of possible contact between the various recensions was thoroughly examined, only those instances where the Greek text is used instead of the Ethiopic are discussed below.

#### *1. The Prologue*

Neither Duensing nor Müller include the prologue in their translations of the Apoc Pet, nor do they give explanations as to why they exclude it. Bauckham also claims, without explicating his reasoning, that the prologue “certainly does not belong to the original text.”<sup>247</sup> Buchholz includes it, but views it as the prologue to the entire Pseudo-

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<sup>247</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 168.

Clementine text within which the Apoc Pet is contained.<sup>248</sup> Only Helmer argues for its inclusion as the prologue to the Apoc Pet on the basis that such prologues were common in early Christian literature.<sup>249</sup> Helmer is likely correct that the prologue is original to the Apoc Pet. Its authenticity is supported upon comparison with the first two verses of Revelation, which read as follows: “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place; he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.”<sup>250</sup>

Superscriptions like Rev 1:1–2 were common in apocalyptic and biblical texts.<sup>251</sup> Furthermore, it is not surprising that at least eight similarities exist between the prologue of the Apoc Pet and these two verses. Both texts:

1. start with the title (“The revelation of Jesus Christ” // “The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead”),
2. summarise the content (“what must soon take place” // “The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead ... who die for their sin ...”),
3. reveal the source of the revelation (“which God gave” // “which he [Jesus] told”),
4. explain how the revelation was received (“all that he [John] saw” // “told to Peter”),
5. state the recipient of the revelation (“John” // “Peter”),
6. give the recipient’s response to the revelation (“who testified to the word of God” // “And this he reflected upon”),
7. express the purpose of the revelation (“to show his servants” // “so that he might understand”),
8. and are written in third-person while the remainder of the text is written in the first-person.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 267, 377.

<sup>249</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 35.

<sup>250</sup> All Scripture citations are from the NRSV.

<sup>251</sup> Loveday Alexander, *The Preface to Luke’s Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1–4 and Acts 1.1*, SNTSMS 78 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 15; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 38A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 221–222.

<sup>252</sup> David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, WBC 52 (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 8–9; Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 181–184.

While these two superscriptions are similar in both form and function, they are not identical. The direct source of the revelation in the Apoc Pet is Jesus, but the ultimate source in Revelation is God, who gives the revelation to Jesus who in turn gives the revelation to John through an angel. Also, the title of the Apoc Pet serves both as the title and as the summary of the content, while Revelation has a separate title and content summary. It is important to note as well that some commentators include the beatitude in verse three as part of the superscription of Revelation, to which no parallel exists in the prologue of the Apoc Pet.<sup>253</sup> The similarities between Rev 1:1–2 and the prologue of the Apoc Pet suggest that the prologue of the Apoc Pet follows the same pattern of starting with a descriptive title found in apocalyptic literature. The differences between the two texts further support including the prologue as authentic to the Apoc Pet, as it does not exhibit overdependence upon the opening of Revelation in its formulation, but its own original thought.

Buchholz's view that the prologue belongs to the entire Pseudo-Clementine text and not just the Apoc Pet is also unconvincing. After the conclusion of the Apoc Pet, the Pseudo-Clementine text continues, "And he opened his mouth and said to me, 'Listen, my son Clement, everything that he created is for his glory.'"<sup>254</sup> James was the first to claim that this Pseudo-Clementine material following the Apoc Pet "is very evidently of later date."<sup>255</sup> Buchholz too claims that "The end of the Apocalypse of Peter in the Ethiopic text is also easily distinguishable."<sup>256</sup> Unlike James, however, Buchholz offers a convincing argument in support of this claim. At this point, the text

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<sup>253</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 51–59.

<sup>254</sup> All translations of the Pseudo-Clementine text are my own and use the Ethiopic text of Grébaud, "Littérature éthiopienne pseudo-clémentine," 309–316, 425–433.

<sup>255</sup> James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 520.

<sup>256</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 378.

introduces Clement for the first time and switches the first-person narrator from Peter to Clement. The sudden change in narrator, along with changes in setting and style, leaves little doubt that the remainder of the Ethiopic text is not originally part of the Apoc Pet.<sup>257</sup> Buchholz believes the distinct style of the prologue compared to the remainder of the Apoc Pet sets it off as part of the Pseudo-Clementine text as well.<sup>258</sup> As shown above, however, it is quite common to write an introduction to an apocalyptic text in a different style than the remainder of the text. Narratively speaking, the prologue does not function well as the introduction to the entire Pseudo-Clementine text, due to the switch from Petrine to Clementine authorship. To successfully introduce the entire text, the prologue should introduce Clement as the narrator of the text in order to unify the whole work. As it stands, it only successfully introduces the Apoc Pet and does nothing to prepare the reader for the additional Pseudo-Clementine material added onto the text.

## 2. *Apoc Pet* 7:2

Eth Apoc Pet 7:2

By their tongue with which they blasphemed the way of righteousness they will be hung, being split for them, which cannot perish, so that they might be torn apart perpetually.

Akh Apoc Pet 22

And some there were hanging by their tongues. And these were those who blasphemed the way of righteousness. And below them fire was burning and punishing them.

In both texts, this is the first depiction of punishment in hell. They both agree that those being punished have “blasphemed the way of righteousness” and that the punishment for such a sin is to hang by one’s tongue. However, the Eth Apoc Pet

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<sup>257</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 378–380.

<sup>258</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 377.

introduces the punishment abruptly.<sup>259</sup> The abrupt start to the verse and the lack of a clear antecedent for the pronouns suggests the sentence should be understood as continuing what came before. The previous verse reads as follows in the Ethiopic: “And then men and women will come to the place that they deserve” (Eth Apoc Pet 7:1). After describing the cosmic conflagration in Eth Apoc Pet 4–6, the text moves on in Eth Apoc Pet 7 to describe the punishments in hell. The torments in hell are designed according to the concept of mirror punishment.<sup>260</sup> That is why each place described is understood as “the place that they deserve.” For this reason, Eth Apoc Pet 7:1 is generally understood as the opening statement of the tour of hell section. However, the connection between Eth Apoc Pet 7:1 and 7:2 that results from the abrupt start and lack of pronominal antecedents in 7:2 causes these two verses to function together to describe the specific location of those who blasphemed the way of righteousness with the third person pronouns in 7:2 referring to the men and women of 7:1. The start of 7:3, “And behold another place,” then suggests a change in location not only from that described in 7:2 but from the place described in 7:1 as well. This leaves the tour of hell without a clear opening line. In Akh Apoc Pet 22, the use of the indefinite pronoun, ἄς, removes the pronominal ambiguity from the text and makes the punishment in 7:2 refer to only some of the men and women described in 7:1. This allows 7:1 to still function as an opening sentence for the entire tour of hell and not just a description of the first punishment.

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<sup>259</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 312.

<sup>260</sup> Callie Callon, “Sorcery, Wheels, and Mirror Punishment in the Apocalypse of Peter,” *J ECS* 18 (2010): 29–49. For more on the concept of mirror punishment in the Apoc Pet, see the discussion below in chapter six.

Also, the end of the verse in the Ethiopic is corrupt. Most translations emend the text by adding in the reference to fire from the Akh Apoc Pet: “There is spread under them unquenchable fire....”<sup>261</sup> Buchholz makes the best sense of the verse without emendations by suggesting the relative pronoun *zä* in *zä’iyəṭäff*, “which cannot perish”, refers back to their tongues, thus allowing the punishment to continue perpetually since the tongues of the blasphemers never tear apart completely.<sup>262</sup> While Buchholz’s interpretation of the verse makes sense, he is unable to correct the awkwardness of the passage in translation. The Akh Apoc Pet removes the unending nature of the punishment and ends with a description of the fire under the blasphemers rather than an extended description of how hanging by one’s tongue is punishment.<sup>263</sup> In this instance, Akh Apoc Pet 22 is less corrupt than Eth Apoc Pet 7:2.

Finally, The Akhmīm text contains the demonstrative explanation used in most of the punishments in hell and common in Jewish and Christian tours of hell: “These are those who”/οὗτοι ἦσαν οἱ ἄλλοι ἄμμουτῦ ἄλλᾶ.<sup>264</sup> Neither the Akh Apoc Pet or the Eth Apoc Pet uses this formula in every description of torment, but its inclusion is likely an indicator of an earlier reading. All these points together suggest that Akh Apoc Pet 22 is a more reliable witness to the earlier form of the Apoc Pet than is Eth Apoc Pet 7:2.

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<sup>261</sup> Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 604. Cf. Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 672; James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 514; Müller, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 628.

<sup>262</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 313.

<sup>263</sup> Interestingly, the Ethiopic uses *zälfa* (perpetual) rather than *lä’aläm* or *zälä’aläm* here in reference to the unending nature of the punishment. This is the only use of *zälfa* in the Eth Apoc Pet.

<sup>264</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 45–50.

### 3. Apoc Pet 7:9–10

#### Eth Apoc Pet 7:9–11

And [for] those who kill life and even those who associate with them, they will be put in fire which is full of venomous animals and they will be punished without rest while their suffering is revealed to them. And their worm will increase like a black cloud. And the angel Ezrael will bring the soul of those they killed, and they will be shown the punishment (of those who) killed them. And they will say to them among themselves, “Righteousness and justice is the judgment of God. For, we heard but we did not believe that we would come to this eternal place of judgment.”

#### Akh Apoc Pet 25

And I saw the murderers and those who conspired with them cast into a certain place, crowded and full of vicious reptiles, and they were struck by those beasts. And so they were writhing there in that punishment. And worms like clouds of darkness afflicted them. And the souls of those they killed stood and gazed upon the punishment of those murderers. They were saying, “O God, righteous is your judgment.”

The Eth Apoc Pet and the Akh Apoc Pet are similar in this section. The strangeness in the Ethiopic begins with the phrase “while their suffering is revealed to them.” Whose suffering is revealed to (or felt by) the murderers and accomplices? Buchholz believes it is the suffering of their victims.<sup>265</sup> This makes logical but not grammatical sense. The victims are not mentioned until later in the pericope, so the pronoun could not yet refer to them. The confusion continues with the notion that “their worm will increase.” Buchholz connects the reference to the worms that would have eaten the bodies of the dead victims.<sup>266</sup> This is plausible, but in what way do they increase and how precisely is their increase a punishment? The answer to this question is likely that these worms are eating the bodies of those being punished, but the Ethiopic seems to leave the actual act of punishment unspoken. This is unusual when compared to the rest of the tour of hell. The Akhmīm text is similar to the Ethiopic but lacks these oddities. The

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<sup>265</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 315.

<sup>266</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 315.

murderers and accomplices do not have anyone's suffering revealed to them, but they "writhe there in that punishment." Likewise, rather than having the worms merely increase, the Akh Apoc Pet describes the worms as "afflicting" them. In this case, both texts are similar enough that each likely bear witness to an early form of the text, but the Akh Apoc Pet does appear less corrupt when describing the actual punishment of the murderers and accomplices.

#### 4. *Apoc Pet 9:1–4*

##### *Eth Apoc Pet 9:1–4*

The angel of his wrath, Ezrael, will bring men and women who are partially burning and place them in a place of darkness, which is the Gehenna of men. And a spirit of wrath will torture them with every torment. And a worm that does not rest will devour their bowels. They are the persecutors and refuters of my righteous ones.

And near to those there are other men and women. And they will gnaw their tongues and they will be tormented with a fiery iron and their eyes will be burned. These are [those] the blasphemers and renouncers of my righteousness.

But as for other men and women, their deeds are fraudulent. Their lips will be cut off, and fire will enter into their mouths and their bowels: those who killed the martyrs (with) a lie.

##### *Akh Apoc Pet 27–29*

And other men and women were burning up to their middle and thrown into a dark place. And they will be whipped by vicious spirits and their entrails will be eaten by sleepless worms. And these were those who persecuted the righteous and handed them over.

And near them were also women and men gnawing their lips and being punished and receiving burning iron into their eyes. And these were those who blasphemed and spoke wrongly of the way of righteousness.

And opposite them were also other men and women gnawing their tongues and having a flaming fire in the mouth. And these were the false witnesses.

Many arguments regarding a hypothetical tradition or source behind the tour of hell in the Apoc Pet rely upon the originality of Eth Apoc Pet 9:1–4. Bauckham believes the author of the text took practically no creative license regarding which sins to include in the tour of hell, but just reproduced apocalyptic tradition. He claims the three sins

in 9:1–4 are the exceptions which prove the rule as they are unique to the Apoc Pet and not paralleled in other tours of hell.<sup>267</sup> Tigchelaar takes Bauckham’s arguments even further by suggesting a particular, lost source, rather than merely a tradition, behind the tour of hell. Referring specifically to 9:2–3, he makes three points: 1) these sins are similar to those already mentioned in 7:2–3, 2) no clear correlation between sin and punishment exists, and 3) the introduction of the first person singular pronoun “my” in reference to Jesus solely occurs here and is the only distinctly Christian aspect in the tour of hell. These three points suggests, in his view, that these verses were inserted into a pre-existing list of sins which comprises the remainder of the tour of hell.<sup>268</sup> However, no tradition or source is known to exist which could substantiate the claims of Bauckham or Tigchelaar. No two tours of hell completely coincide in the sins they include, nor is there a single sin which is included in every tour. Therefore, Bauckham’s claim that a tradition existed which necessitated the inclusion of most of the sins in the Apoc Pet has little textual evidence. Furthermore, the sins in 9:1–4 are not entirely unique to the Apoc Pet. The sin of persecuting the righteous occurs in *Gedulat Moshe*, the sin of blasphemy occurs in the *Elijah Fragment*, and the sin of false witness occurs in both the *Elijah Fragment* and the *Gedulat Moshe* (although admittedly only the *Eth Apoc Pet* specifies false witness that leads to martyrdom).<sup>269</sup> Bauckham and Tigchelaar overstate both the unexceptional nature of most of the tour of hell, as well as the exceptional nature of 9:1–4.

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<sup>267</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 184.

<sup>268</sup> Tigchelaar, “Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?,” 71–73.

<sup>269</sup> Bauckham acknowledges the parallel between Apoc Pet 9:2 and *Gedulat Moshe*; Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 184 n. 27.

While the claims regarding the uniqueness of Apoc Pet 9:1–4 compared to other tours of hell are perhaps overstated, these verses are still unusual in the Ethiopic when compared to the rest of the tour in the Apoc Pet. Tigchelaar was correct to point out that the intrusion of the first person singular pronoun likely points to an editorial emendation to an already existing text, but what he does not seem to consider is that the edited text was likely the Apoc Pet itself. When comparing Eth Apoc Pet 9:1–4 to Akh Apoc Pet 27–29, it appears as though the Ethiopic text refers to sins committed specifically against Christians while the Akhmīm text refers to more general sins.<sup>270</sup> It is far more likely for a second-century text like the Apoc Pet to become further Christianised during its transmission than for explicit Christian references to be removed from the text. As such, the intrusion of the first person singular pronoun in the Ethiopic text is perhaps a corruption in the text.

The use of the demonstrative explanation gives further evidence for the reliability of the Akh Apoc Pet as well. The Ethiopic text only uses the demonstrative explanation in 9:3, but the Akhmīm text uses it to describe all three sins. Tigchelaar, following the suggestion of Paolo Marrassini and citing the Akhmīm text as evidence, recognises the corrupt nature of the Ethiopic text in this case and suggests emending the text of 9:4 to include the demonstrative explanation.<sup>271</sup> However, emending the text solely to include the demonstrative explanations does not sufficiently remove corruption from it. The intrusion of the first person singular pronoun significantly changes the message of the text by giving it a distinctly Christian focus. The Akhmīm text lacks such a Christian focus and offers a reading of the text that is likely more

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<sup>270</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 201.

<sup>271</sup> Marrassini and Bauckham, “Apocalypse de Pierre,” 766; Tigchelaar, “Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?,” 71.

original. Rather than “my righteous” in 9:2, the text refers to the righteous more generally. Likewise, “my righteousness” in 9:3 is restored to “the way of righteousness,” a phrase also used in 7:2 in both the Ethiopic and Akhmīm texts. Finally, the unusual focus on martyrdom through false witness is removed in favour of a punishment of false witnesses in general.

#### 5. *Apoc Pet 9:5–7*

##### Eth *Apoc Pet 9:5–7*

And near to those who were presented is a place by a stone column of fire, and the pillar is sharper than a sword. (There are) men and women who will be clothed in worn out clothes and filthy rags, and they will be placed on it so that they might be judged with judgment, anguish which will not end. These are those who trust in their riches and neglected the widows and women with orphans, against God.

##### Akh *Apoc Pet 30*

And in another certain place were small stones, sharper than swords or any skewer, burning. And women and men dressed in filthy rags were rolling on them in punishment. And these were those who were wealthy and who trusted in their wealth and did not have compassion upon orphans and widows, but neglected the commandment of God.

The two texts have different, but not wholly unrelated, punishments for the wealthy.

The Eth *Apoc Pet* envisions a single, flaming stone column upon which the wicked are impaled, while the Akh *Apoc Pet* describes a place full of small, sharp stones upon which the wicked roll. It is possible that the singular column in the Ethiopic is a corruption in the text. Such a lack of distinction between singular and plural is common in this text and in Ethiopic in general.<sup>272</sup> Multiple flaming spikes would bring the two recensions closer together, but the punishments would still be distinct: impalement verses laceration. Neither punishment distinguishes itself enough from the other as a more original reading.

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<sup>272</sup> Tigchelaar, “Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?,” 66.

Helpfully, Buchholz finds two intrusions in the Ethiopic text. The first is *lä'älä qärbu*, which he translates as “to those who had approached.” As he explains, the text makes no mention of anyone who could be described as approaching.<sup>273</sup> It is possible to translate the phrase as “to those who were presented” as above in reference to the sinners described previously, but the use of *qärbä* as “be presented” likely refers to presentation in a cultic or ceremonial sense, such as in sacrifices or the Eucharist.<sup>274</sup> Therefore, Buchholz is likely correct that *lä'älä qärbu* is an intrusion in the text. The second intrusion he finds in this pericope is *la'lä 'ägzi'abəher*. Buchholz translates *la'lä 'ägzi'abəher* as “concerning God” and understands the text as accusing the wealthy of not sharing their knowledge of God with widows and orphans. However, he rightly notes that the issue is their lack of monetary generosity toward the widows and orphans not some form of intellectual snobbery.<sup>275</sup> A better translation of *la'lä 'ägzi'abəher* in the context is “against God.” The neglect that the wealthy show the widows and orphans is something that is contrary to God. Implicit in this phrase is that such an act is against the commandment of God, something that the Akh Apoc Pet explicitly mentions. The final words of this pericope are likely not an intrusion, as Buchholz suggests. Instead, the corruption in the text is a result of the exclusion of the word *tə'əzaz*, commandment, from the Ethiopic.

A third issue for the Ethiopic text comes from the phrase *bə'əsitä 'əg'älä mawta*, “women with orphans.” Buchholz claims this phrase is not unusual for the historical context. Children were considered orphans after losing their father,

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<sup>273</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 325.

<sup>274</sup> Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez*, 440.

<sup>275</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 325.

regardless of whether their mother still lived.<sup>276</sup> While Buchholz's recourse to the historical understanding of what constitutes an orphan makes sense of the phrase itself, it does not aid in understanding how the phrase fits in the context of the Apoc Pet. The sin of the wealthy is their neglect of widows and orphans. The command to care for widows and orphans is a common refrain throughout the Bible (e.g. Exod 22:22, Isa 1:17, Zech 7:10, and Jas 1:27). The Eth Apoc Pet does not, however, refer to neglect of orphans, but of women with orphans. This is simply another way of referring to widows, although these are specifically widows with children. The Ethiopic text, with its use of *bə'asitā 'əgʷalä mawta* only condemns the neglect of widows. The Akh Apoc Pet, contains the more traditional pairing of orphans and widows.

Buchholz seems content to dismiss the Akh Apoc Pet in this section because it describes a different punishment which he does not believe relates to the crime of the wealthy.<sup>277</sup> The use of mirror punishment in the Apoc Pet does necessitate some degree of correspondence between the sin committed and the punishment received, but impalement is not inherently more appropriate than laceration for punishing the neglect of widows and orphans. Dressing the wealthy in filthy rags, such as those likely worn by widows and orphans, is a case of role reversal included in both texts. This role reversal could itself be enough to adhere to mirror punishment, so neither text can be judged superior to the other based upon its choice of further punishment. However, Eth Apoc Pet 9:5–7 is corrupt in at least three places. None of these corruptions are present in Akh Apoc Pet 30. Therefore, the Akh Apoc Pet likely reflects an earlier reading.

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<sup>276</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 325–326.

<sup>277</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 326.

6. *Apoc Pet 10:2–4*

Eth *Apoc Pet 10:2–4*

And other men and women from a high (place) will throw themselves and again they will return and run and demons will drive them. These are [they] the idolaters. And they will drive them to the edge of reason and they will cast themselves down and they will do this in this way continuously. They will be punished forever. These are those who cut their flesh, men who copulate with men, and women who were with them. And in it are men who as women defile one another.

Akh *Apoc Pet 32*

Other men and women were thrown from a great cliff, fell down, and were driven by those who were set over them to ascend up to the cliff and were again thrown down from there. And they did not have rest from this punishment. These were those (men) who defiled their bodies behaving as women, and these women with them were those who slept with each other as a man with a woman.

Both recensions describe roughly the same punishment and sin. Men and women plummet from a precipice, whether by jumping or being thrown, and are driven back up to the top only to fall off of it again. The Akhmīm text is vague regarding who is driving the wicked back to the top of the cliff, only describing them as τῶν ἐπικειμένων, but the Eth *Apoc Pet* calls them demons, *'aganant*. The Ethiopic text also contains a reference to the punishment lasting forever, which the Akhmīm text lacks. As mentioned above, however, Buchholz and Lanzillotta have suggested such references to the eternal nature of punishment were later additions to the text. As for the sin condemned in this section, many translations render the phrase *hawaryanā bə'asi* as “apostles of a man.”<sup>278</sup> Buchholz rightly criticises this translation, offering instead a translation of “sodomites.” He then interprets the Eth *Apoc Pet* as condemning both homosexual and heterosexual sodomy, whereas the Akh *Apoc Pet* condemns homosexual intercourse whether between men or women.<sup>279</sup> However,

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<sup>278</sup> Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 677; Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 607; James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 516; Müller, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 631.

<sup>279</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 328–329.

Buchholz here falls prey to an anachronistic reading of the text through his use of the term sodomy.<sup>280</sup> A more precise rendering of the phrase given by Leslau is “man who copulates with a man,”<sup>281</sup> thereby showing that both recensions condemn homosexual intercourse in this pericope.

While both the Ethiopic and Akhmīm texts largely describe the same sin and punishment, the Eth Apoc Pet contains additional material that is likely corrupt. The phrase *'əlu 'əmntu māṭa 'wänä*, “these are [they] the idolaters,” is an intrusion in the text. It breaks into the middle of the punishment and offers an alternative designation of this group from that given at the end of the pericope.<sup>282</sup> Likewise, *yəməttəru śəgahomu*, “they cut their flesh,” makes little sense and may be a further corruption in the text. These corruptions make the Eth Apoc Pet unreliable as a witness to an earlier version when compared to the Akh Apoc Pet.

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<sup>280</sup> The term “sodomy” is itself a medieval invention with an unstable meaning; Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 161–164.

<sup>281</sup> Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez*, 249.

<sup>282</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 327–328.

7. *Apoc Pet 10:6–7*

Eth Apoc Pet 10:5–7  
And near to those [*hel*]  
and below them the  
angel Ezrael will make  
a place of much fire and  
every idol of gold and  
silver, every idol made  
by human hands, and  
which resembles the  
image of cats and lions,  
the image of reptiles,  
and the image of  
animals. And also those  
men and women who  
made their images will  
be in chains of fire  
(with) which they will  
beat themselves on  
account of their  
mistake before them.  
And such will be their  
judgment forever.

And near to  
them will be other men  
and women and they  
will burn in the flame  
of judgment. Their  
punishment is forever.  
These are those who  
forsake the  
commandment of God  
and followed [*faqəṭ*]  
demons.

Bodleian fragment

... (men and)  
women holding chains  
and whipping  
themselves before  
those deceitful idols.  
And without cessation  
they will experience  
this punishment.

And near them will be  
other men and women  
who burn in the fire of  
idol madness. These  
then are those who  
forsook the way of God  
and ...

Akh Apoc Pet 33–34  
And beside that cliff  
was a place full of the  
most fire. There stood  
men who with their  
own hands had made  
images for themselves  
in place of God.

And beside  
them were other men  
and women holding  
rods of fire and striking  
each other and never  
resting from such  
punishment.

And again near  
them, other women and  
men were burning and  
writhing and frying.  
These were those who  
left the way of God.

This is the only instance where all three recensions can be compared. The Bodleian fragment is difficult to read, but Kraus and Nicklas have offered a convincing reconstruction of it.<sup>283</sup> Buchholz believes the Eth Apoc Pet and the Bodleian fragment are from the same recensions, but the relationship between these three texts suggests

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<sup>283</sup> Kraus and Nicklas, *Das Petrus-evangelium und die Petrus-apokalypse*, 124.

each one is a witness to a different recension.<sup>284</sup> The Eth Apoc Pet and the Bodleian fragment agree in multiple ways. They both use the future tense, reference the deceitfulness of the idols, describe the wicked beating themselves rather than each other, and use chains rather than rods in the punishment.<sup>285</sup> At the same time, the Akh Apoc Pet and the Bodleian fragment share commonalities which are not reflected in the Eth Apoc Pet. The Greek texts refer to the ceaselessness of punishment where the Eth Apoc Pet says it lasts forever. They do, however, express this concept in different ways. The Akh Apoc Pet says, καὶ μηδέποτε παύόμενοι τῆς τοιαύτης κολάσεως, and the Bodleian fragment says, καὶ ἀναπαυστῶς ἔξουσιν τὴν κόλασιν. They also both describe the final group of sinners as forsaking the way of God instead of the commandment of God as in the Ethiopic. This similarity admittedly relies on reconstructing the Bodleian text, and once again the Greek texts do not match exactly. The Akh Apoc Pet reads, οὗτοι δὲ ἦσαν οἱ ἀφέντες τὴν ὁδὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, and the Bodleian fragment reads, οὗτοι δὲ εἰσὶν οἵτινες κατέλιπον τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ὁδὸν. Finally, the chains and rods in the Ethiopic and Akhmīm texts are described as fiery, but no such use of fire exists in the Bodleian fragment.<sup>286</sup> Buchholz is correct that the Akh Apoc Pet is a different recension from the Eth Apoc Pet, but he perhaps overstates his case on the similarities between the Eth Apoc Pet and the Bodleian fragment. They are indeed more similar to each other than either is to the Akhmīm text, but they also share things in common with the Akhmīm text that the other does not. As such, these texts all likely reflect different recensions of the Apoc Pet.

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<sup>284</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 152.

<sup>285</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 149; James, “A New Text of the Apocalypse of Peter,” 368–369.

<sup>286</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 149–152.

As for determining which is the earliest recension, the structure of the Akh Apoc Pet gives some indication. In this section, the Akh Apoc Pet contains three groups of sinners, whereas the Eth Apoc Pet only has two. The Akhmīm text is likely corrupt in this regard as no sin is mentioned for the second group and no distinct punishment is described for the first group.<sup>287</sup> These two groups were likely originally a single class of sinner as described in the Eth Apoc Pet. The Bodleian fragment further supports this with its use of the demonstrative in τοῦ τῶν εἰδωλῶν πλατῶν, which perhaps originally had as its antecedent something similar to that found in Eth Apoc Pet 10:5. When comparing the Eth Apoc Pet and the Bodleian fragment, it is significant that in most cases where they disagree, the Bodleian text agrees, at least conceptually, with the Akh Apoc Pet. As such, the Bodleian fragment seems to witness an older recension that is at least partially preserved in both the Akhmīm and Ethiopic texts.

#### 8. Apoc Pet 14:1–5

##### Eth Apoc Pet 14:1–5

And then I will give to my elect and to my righteous ones the baptism and salvation which they have asked of me in the field of Acherusia, which is called Elysium. A portion of the righteous ones has bloomed and I will depart when I will rejoice with them. I will lead the nations into my eternal kingdom. And I will do for them what I promised them eternally, I and my heavenly father.

##### Rainer fragment

I will give to my called and my elect whomever they ask of me out of punishment, and I will give them a good baptism in the salvation of the so-called Acherusian lake in the Elysian field, a part of righteousness with my holy ones. And I will depart, I and my elect, rejoicing with the patriarchs to my eternal kingdom. And I will accomplish with them my promises, which I promised to them, I and my father who is in heaven.

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<sup>287</sup> James, “A New Text of the Apocalypse of Peter,” 368.

I have told you, Peter, and informed you. Go, therefore, and depart for the city in the west to the vineyard of which I will tell you so that, because of the suffering of my son who is without sin, the work of desolation may be sanctified. But you, however, are the elect one according to the promise that I promised you. Therefore, [and] send into all the world my message in peace.

Behold, I have shown you, Peter, and explained everything. And go to the city that rules the west and drink the cup which I have promised you at the hand of the son of the one who is in Hades, so that his destruction might have a beginning, and you acceptable to the promise ...

Chapter 14 of the Eth Apoc Pet is corrupt and “largely unintelligible” in places.<sup>288</sup> In the first two verses, not only does the text refer to Acherusia as a field rather than a lake, but perplexingly uses *ṣägäyā*, to bloom, blossom, or flower, to describe some of the righteous. The incoherency of this chapter continues in 14:4 with the phrase *’amdäwehu läwäldyā läzä’ənbälä ḥaṭi’at kāmā yəṭqäddäs gäbra musənnä*.<sup>289</sup> The translation of this phrase given above, “so that, because of the suffering of my son who is without sin, the work of desolation may be sanctified,” closely follows the first suggested rendering of the phrase offered by James, but it still is not straightforward.<sup>290</sup> These oddities show that, even without the Rainer fragment for comparison, Eth Apoc Pet 14 is corrupt.

The Rainer fragment clarifies the corruptions in the Eth Apoc Pet, and contains a further important difference. In the Rainer fragment, the righteous are given the opportunity to request that the wicked be removed from punishment. This notion of post-mortem salvation is not in the Eth Apoc Pet. This will be discussed in much more

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<sup>288</sup> James, “The Rainer Fragment of the Apocalypse of Peter,” 270.

<sup>289</sup> The Ethiopic here has been reconstructed from the critical apparatus in Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 231. Buchholz has created his own version of the Ethiopic of chapter 14 using the Rainer Fragment. As such, his text is not an accurate representation of the Eth Apoc Pet as extant in the manuscripts.

<sup>290</sup> James, “The Rainer Fragment of the Apocalypse of Peter,” 272.

detail in chapter six below, but the reliability of either reading needs to be addressed presently. Some debate exists on the proper reading of the Rainer fragment. Charles Wessely and Karl Prümm, followed recently by Tamás Adamik, have suggested the text reads, ἔξομαι τοῖς κλητοῖς μου καὶ ἐκλέκτοις μου θ(εὸ)ν ἕαν στήσωντα' με ἐκ τῆς κολάσεως ....<sup>291</sup> James, followed by Kraus, Nicklas, and Peter van Minnen, offers an alternate reading: ἔξομαι τοῖς κλητοῖς μου καὶ ἐκλέκτοις μου ὄν ἕαν ἐτήσωνταί με ἐκ τῆς κολάσεως ....<sup>292</sup> The renderings differ by only two words, but that difference entirely changes the meaning of the text. The most important difference is between θ(εὸ)ν and ὄν. Prümm and Wessely believed the text contains the *nomen sacrum*  $\overline{\theta\nu}$ , thus rendering the text θ(εὸ)ν. Kraus and Nicklas, however have claimed, “Unter dem Mikroskop wird erkennbar: Der Schreiber setzt hier einen Punkt als *spiritus asper*, aus dem er beim Anheben versehentlich noch einen leicht geschwungenen Strich nach rechts führt.”<sup>293</sup> It is also clear, as Kraus, Nicklas, and van Minnen point out, that no horizontal line exists within the o to make it a θ.<sup>294</sup> As such, the rendering of ὄν proposed by James, Kraus, Nicklas, and van Minnen is more likely. The distinction between στήσωνται and ἐτήσωνταί is more difficult to determine. Even in the clearer picture provided by Adamik, a smudge makes it difficult with the uncial hand to see if

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<sup>291</sup> Tamás Adamik, “The Description of Paradise in the Apocalypse of Peter,” in *The Apocalypse of Peter*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and István Czachesz, SECA 7 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 87; Karl Prümm, “De genuino Apocalypsis Petri textu: examen testium iam notorum et novi fragmenti Raineriani,” *Biblica* 10 (1929): 78; Wessely, “Les plus anciens monuments du christianisme écrits sur papyrus (II),” 482.

<sup>292</sup> James, “The Rainer Fragment of the Apocalypse of Peter,” 271; Kraus and Nicklas, *Das Petrus-evangelium und die Petrusapokalypse*, 126; van Minnen, “The Greek Apocalypse of Peter,” 37–38.

<sup>293</sup> Kraus and Nicklas, *Das Petrus-evangelium und die Petrusapokalypse*, 126.

<sup>294</sup> Kraus and Nicklas, *Das Petrus-evangelium und die Petrusapokalypse*, 126; van Minnen, “The Greek Apocalypse of Peter,” 38. Kraus and Nicklas include pictures of the manuscript and the end of their book, but a much clearer picture can be found in Adamik, “The Description of Paradise in the Apocalypse of Peter,” 90.

a horizontal line exists to change c to ε, although van Minnen claims to see such a line in the picture.<sup>295</sup> However, Kraus and Nicklas have once again scrutinized the text under a microscope and discovered such a line does exist, rendering the text as ἐτήσωνται.<sup>296</sup>

Knowing that the Rainer fragment does indeed contain post-mortem salvation for sinners, the next step is determining if such theology was a part of the earliest form of the Apoc Pet. James has argued that book 2 of the Sibylline Oracles is dependent upon the Apoc Pet and used this connection to restore the Rainer fragment.<sup>297</sup> Adamik rightly criticises this method of restoring the text. He further contests that if any relationship between the texts exists, which he doubts, it is more likely the Apoc Pet was dependent upon the Sibylline Oracles. He claims instead that both texts independently drew their material from Plato's *Phaedo*. He interprets the Rainer fragment, according to Wessely and Prümm's rendering, as referring to purgatory for those who are neither righteous nor wicked. This idea, he claims, would have originated in *Phaedo* 113d–e.<sup>298</sup> Adamik's continued use of Wessely and Prümm's rendering of the Rainer fragment, however, is invalidated by the work of Kraus and Nicklas, even if he convincingly argued against the reason James gave for reconstructing the text in the way he did. As such, his reading of the Rainer fragment as referring to purgatory for those who were neither righteous nor wicked is unsubstantiated, and his argument that the Apoc Pet and the Sibylline Oracles are not

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<sup>295</sup> van Minnen, "The Greek Apocalypse of Peter," 38.

<sup>296</sup> Kraus and Nicklas, *Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse*, 126.

<sup>297</sup> James, "The Rainer Fragment of the Apocalypse of Peter," 272; James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 521.

<sup>298</sup> Adamik, "The Description of Paradise in the Apocalypse of Peter," 83–86.

closely connected, except through their connection with Plato's *Phaedo*, is unconvincing.

This leaves James' hypothesis that a direct relationship exists between the Apoc Pet and book 2 of the Sibylline Oracles as the most likely option. The link between these two texts is further solidified when one looks beyond the Rainer fragment. Sibylline Oracles 2.330–338 parallels the Rainer fragment, but throughout Sibylline Oracles 2.194–338 multiple parallels exist with the Apoc Pet. Therefore, some relationship must exist between these two texts. Adamik's claim that the greater importance of the Sibylline Oracles in antiquity makes them more likely the source for the Apoc Pet is unconvincing.<sup>299</sup> The importance of one document is largely irrelevant in determining the direction of dependence when compared to another valued text. Even if we adhere to the dating of book 2 of the Sibylline Oracles of no later than 150 CE, the date of composition for the Apoc Pet would likely have fallen before this time.<sup>300</sup> This is especially true for those that follow the Bar Kokhba hypothesis and thus date the Apoc Pet between 132–135 CE.<sup>301</sup> Even for those that do not adhere to the Bar Kokhba hypothesis, the probability remains that the Apoc Pet was written prior to the completion of the Christian redaction of book 2 of the Sibylline Oracles. As such, the Apoc Pet likely originally contained the post-mortem salvation of the wicked as contained in the Rainer fragment and referenced in Sibylline Oracles 2.330–338.

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<sup>299</sup> Adamik, "The Description of Paradise in the Apocalypse of Peter," 86.

<sup>300</sup> John J. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:331–332.

<sup>301</sup> Richard Bauckham, "A Quotation from 4Q Second Ezekiel in the Apocalypse of Peter," in *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, NovTSup 93 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 259–260; Richard Bauckham, "Resurrection as Giving Back the Dead," in *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, NovTSup 93 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 286; Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 44–46.

9. *Apoc Pet 15:1–16:4*

Eth Apoc Pet 15:1–16:4

And my lord, Jesus Christ our king, said to me, “Let us proceed to the holy mountain.” And his disciples came with him while they were praying.

And behold, (there were) two people. And we were powerless to look at their face, because from one of them was coming a light which was shining more than the sun. And even their clothes were bright, and it is not possible to say. And there is nothing which can be compared with them here in the world. And a mouth is not able to say (in) simplicity the beauty of their splendour, because their appearance was stupefying and a wonder. And the other, great I say, was shining more than snow in his appearance. Like a rose was the beauty of his appearance and his flesh and the hair on his head. And down from his shoulders and upon their foreheads were garlands of spikenard woven with beautiful flowers. Like a rainbow in water was his hair. Thus was the charm of his face. And (he was) adorned with every adornment. And when we saw them suddenly, we marvelled.

And I approached near to God, Jesus Christ, and I said to him, “Lord, who is this?”

And he said to me, “This is Moses and Elijah.”

And I said to him, “(What about) Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the other righteous fathers?”

Akh Apoc Pet 4–20

And continuing the Lord said, “Let us go to the mountain and pray.” And going with him we, the twelve disciples, requested that he might show us one of our righteous brothers who has departed from the world, so that we might see what manner of form they are, and having taken courage, we might also encourage those people who hear us.

And while we were praying, suddenly two men appeared standing in front of the Lord, at whom we were not able to look. For a ray like the sun was coming from their face and their clothing was radiant, of what sort a person's eye has never seen. Neither is a mouth able to describe nor heart express the glory that they were wearing and the beauty of their appearance. When we beheld them, we were amazed. For their bodies were whiter than any snow and redder than any rose. But their red was blended with white, and I am simply not able to describe their beauty. For not only was their hair curly and splendid but it also suited their face and shoulders as though it were a crown woven of spikenard and many coloured flowers, or as a rainbow in the sky. Such was their fine appearance. Therefore, when we beheld their beauty, we became utterly astonished by them, because they appeared suddenly.

And approaching the Lord, I said, “Who are these?”

He said to me, “These are your brothers, the righteous whose forms you wanted to see.”

And I said to him, “And where are all the righteous or of what sort is the age in which they have this glory.”

And he showed us an open, large garden full of fruitful trees and blessed fruit, full of the aroma of perfume. Its aroma was delightful. And its aroma was coming to it and from within it I saw a wonder: abundant fruit.

And my Lord and my God, Jesus Christ, said to me, “[And] You have seen the nation of the fathers, and thus is their rest.”

And the Lord showed me a large place outside of this world exceedingly bright with light, and the sky there was illuminated by the rays of the sun and the ground itself blooming with unfading flowers and full of fragrant things and plants beautifully blooming and imperishable and bearing blessed fruit. And so great was the fragrance that it carried from there even to us. And the inhabitants of that place were clothed in the clothes of radiant angels, and their clothing was like their place. And angels moved about them there. And the glory of the inhabitants there was equal and with one voice they loudly praised the Lord God, rejoicing in that place. The Lord said to us, “This is the place of your high priests, the righteous people.”

The proper name of Jesus is only used four times in the Ethiopic text, all in Eth Apoc Pet 15 and 16. In addition to the sudden use of Jesus’ name, Eth Apoc Pet 15–16 also introduces new titles for Jesus, king (*nəguś*) and God (*’əgzi’abəher*), that occur nowhere else in the narrative.<sup>302</sup> The use of such titles in these chapters reveals a high Christology.<sup>303</sup> The name of Jesus, the titles God and King applied to Jesus, and such a high Christology do not exist anywhere else in the Eth Apoc Pet or any of the Greek fragments. Helmer believes the different forms of address for Jesus between Eth Apoc Pet 15–16 and the rest of the text evidences a threefold structure in the narrative.<sup>304</sup> He does not seem to consider that such inconsistency may indicate corruption in the text.

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<sup>302</sup> While *’əgzi’abəher* occurs elsewhere in the Eth Apoc Pet, only in Eth Apoc Pet 16 does it apply to Jesus.

<sup>303</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 363.

<sup>304</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 44–45. He gives no explanation for the lack of such titles for Jesus in Eth Apoc Pet 17, which he includes as part of the third narrative section along with Eth Apoc Pet 15–16.

Buchholz, however, recognises this possibility when he says, “By their very form these titles must be under suspicion, but the Akhmīm is also different and may preserve the more original titles. In that case ‘Jesus Christ our King’ is an addition.”<sup>305</sup> The Akh Apoc Pet refers to Jesus as the Lord, ὁ κύριος, in this section, which is the same title used throughout the Eth Apoc Pet, save for Eth Apoc Pet 15–16.<sup>306</sup> The use of ὁ κύριος in Akh Apoc Pet 4–20 maintains both verbal and theological consistency with the remainder of the narrative where Eth Apoc Pet 15–16 does not.

A further possible corruption in the text, which Buchholz acknowledges, is the description of the two men who appear on the mountain. Buchholz claims the difference between the Akh Apoc Pet and the Eth Apoc Pet is that the Akhmīm text describes both men together and the Ethiopic text describes each separately. While he admits on his reading that the issue of which is more original cannot be resolved, he prefers the reading of the Eth Apoc Pet.<sup>307</sup> Contrary to Buchholz’s claims, however, the Eth Apoc Pet does not only describe both men separately. The description begins in v. 2 with “from one of them was coming a light which was shining more than the sun.” The description continues in vv. 3–4, but is applied to both men. Then in vv. 5–7, the text mostly describes “the other” man.<sup>308</sup> As such, the text does not describe one and then the other as Buchholz claims, but one, then both, then the other. This confusion in the text could be a further case of the inconsistency in differentiating between the singular and the plural that is common throughout the Eth Apoc Pet, but it also could reveal that the Ethiopic text is corrupt in this section. If the Eth Apoc Pet

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<sup>305</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 363.

<sup>306</sup> The Ethiopic word used for “Lord” is ‘əgzi’.

<sup>307</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 364–365.

<sup>308</sup> There is also one place in vv. 5–7 where the garlands of spikenard are said to adorn both men’s foreheads, which further muddles this issue.

truly described first one man then the other, Buchholz would be correct that the matter of which is a more original reading could not be decided. As it stands, however, the Eth Apoc Pet awkwardly switches between the singular and plural, and Akh Apoc Pet reads far smoother by applying the whole description to both men. This suggests the Apoc Pet originally described both men together. Furthermore, as Philipp Vielhauer explains, it is unlikely that these two men were originally designated as Moses and Elijah.<sup>309</sup> It is doubtful that the editor of the Akh Apoc Pet would have stripped such notable characters of their names. Instead, the Eth Apoc Pet likely took these two anonymous characters and gave them prominent names in harmony with transfiguration accounts such as that of Matt 17:3.

The Eth Apoc Pet and the Akh Apoc Pet also differ greatly in their descriptions of paradise. On the one hand, the Ethiopic text is poorly written and often requires some degree of emendation in order to make it comprehensible. The most common change is emending “its aroma was coming to it (*ḥabehu*)” to “its aroma was coming to us (*ḥabenä*).”<sup>310</sup> The Akh Apoc Pet, on the other hand, is significantly longer than the Ethiopic text, and this is in fact the only place where the Akhmīm text contains notably more material than the Ethiopic. Theophilus’ *Ad Autolyicum* may witness to the originality of some of the additional material found in the Akh Apoc Pet. Theophilus writes, “After forming man, God chose a place for him in the eastern regions, excellent for its light, brilliant with brighter air, most beautiful with its plants”

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<sup>309</sup> Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur*, 510–511; Vielhauer, *Historia de la literatura cristiana primitiva*, 526.

<sup>310</sup> Hugo Duensing, “Ein Stücke der urchristlichen Petrusapokalypse enthaltender Traktat der äthiopischen Pseudoklementinischen Literatur,” *ZNW* 14 (1913): 73 n. 11.

(2.19).<sup>311</sup> Gilles Quispel and Robert Grant believe Theophilus used the Apoc Pet as his source for this passage.<sup>312</sup> Buchholz does not believe the evidence is compelling enough to prove a relationship between the texts, although he uses the parallels to suggest that the Akh Apoc Pet was expanded with traditional material.<sup>313</sup> He instead suggests the Eth Apoc Pet contains parallels with descriptions of paradise such as those in 1 Enoch 24:4 and 32:3–6. While he admits these similarities may have found their way into the Eth Apoc Pet during its transmission, he believes they were original to the Apoc Pet.<sup>314</sup> As both recensions reflect traditional understandings of paradise, neither the parallels with 1 Enoch nor Theophilus' *Ad Autolyicum* are compelling enough to determine which recension may be more original.

Both descriptions of paradise are introduced with a question from Peter requesting to know the fate of the righteous dead. While both give the description of paradise as the answer to this question, only the Akh Apoc Pet actually describes the righteous who live in the garden. The Eth Apoc Pet makes no mention of the inhabitants of paradise. It does, however, conclude its depiction of paradise with Jesus saying, “You have seen the nation of the fathers, and thus is their rest.” This is a perplexing claim, for the text gives no indication that the disciples saw anyone in paradise. If Buchholz is correct that *'ahzabā 'abāw*, nation of the fathers, is a unique way of referring to the patriarchs in the Eth Apoc Pet, then Jesus could be referring back to Moses and Elijah.<sup>315</sup> Jesus' statement then encompasses all of Eth Apoc Pet

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<sup>311</sup> Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum*, trans. Robert M Grant, OECT (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 59.

<sup>312</sup> G. Quispel and Robert M Grant, “Note on the Petrine Apocrypha,” *VC* 6 (1952): 31–32.

<sup>313</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 49.

<sup>314</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 367–368.

<sup>315</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 369–370.

15–16 by telling Peter he has seen the glorified form of Moses and Elijah (Eth Apoc Pet 15:2–7) and their paradisiacal abode (Eth Apoc Pet 16:2–3). However, this still fails to answer Peter’s question, even if the references to Moses and Elijah were not later additions. In Eth Apoc Pet 16:1, Peter does not ask for details regarding the abode of the righteous, but about the righteous themselves, naming Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in particular. In the Akhmīm text, the disciples first ask to see the righteous who have died (Akh Apoc Pet 5), and then Peter follows this with a question regarding where the glorified righteous reside (Akh Apoc Pet 14). Jesus’ response in Akh Apoc Pet 15–19 is then a robust answer to Peter’s question, which not only describes paradise but also the inhabitants who live there. The inadequate response to Peter’s question in the Ethiopic compared to the detailed description in the Akhmīm text suggests the earliest form of the Apoc Pet likely included a reference to the inhabitants of paradise.

#### D. Conclusions

This chapter has presented a new translation of the Apoc Pet in the form of a composite text. By no longer assuming the Akh Apoc Pet is an inferior recension to the Eth Apoc Pet, the critical comparison of each recension was able to uncover further corruptions in the Eth Apoc Pet which were either unknown or only theorised until now. While the composite text that resulted from the comparison of all the available manuscripts likely reflects an earlier form of the Apoc Pet than any single extant manuscript, it is still a corrupt text. The decision to regard one recension as superior to another should not be mistaken as a claim that the superior recension is free from corruption. With the notable exception of changing the past tense in the Akh Apoc Pet tour of hell to future

tense, corruptions were largely retained in the composite text when no extant manuscript corrects the mistake. At least four such possible corruptions still exist in the text as presented above which should be addressed before moving onto the next chapter.

First, the text still contains references to the punishments in hell lasting forever/eternally (6:6, 9; 7:8; 8:9, 10; 11:2, 3, 9; 13:3). As mentioned above, some scholars have hypothesised based upon the Bodleian fragment that the references to the eternal nature of the punishments in hell were a later addition to the text. The superiority of the Akhmīm text in 10:3 reveals a further instance in which the Ethiopic text may have added the claim that the punishments will last forever. This strengthens the suggestion that such references were not originally part of the Apoc Pet, but the manuscript evidence does not sufficiently support this claim to allow for the removal of every passage which claims punishment in hell is eternal.

Second, the lack of references to Ezrael in the Akh Apoc Pet in 25 (Apoc Pet 7:10) and 27 (Apoc Pet 9:1), as well as the use of τῶν ἐπικειμένων in 32 (Apoc Pet 10:2) where the Ethiopic has demons, *'aganənt*, possibly suggests the earliest form of the Apoc Pet did not contain as sophisticated an angelology and demonology as found in the Eth Apoc Pet. This supports S. R. Burge's suggestion that the references to Ezrael in the Eth Apoc Pet may have come from Islamic tradition.<sup>316</sup> The inclusion of references to specific angels, or lack thereof, was not a determining factor in considering which text is more original. Nevertheless, two of the five references to Ezrael were removed from the composite text. This bolsters Burge's hypothesis, but

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<sup>316</sup> S. R. Burge, "ZR'L, The Angel of Death and the Ethiopic Apocalypse of Peter," *JSP* 19 (2010): 217–224.

does not prove it. The references to the Apoc Pet in Clement of Alexandria and Methodius of Olympus which describe a caretaking angel (ἀγγέλω τημελούχῳ) confirm the original inclusion of such an angel in Apoc Pet 8:10 (*mal'akä tamlakos*).<sup>317</sup> Therefore, the Apoc Pet was not void of angelology, but it likely contained fewer references to specific angels than exhibited in the Eth Apoc Pet, and perhaps no references to demons.

Third, many of the parallels between Apoc Pet 15–17 and the transfiguration accounts in the Synoptic Gospels and 2 Peter 1:16–18 are possibly later intrusions in the text.<sup>318</sup> Even though Apoc Pet 15–17 is not an account of the transfiguration (Jesus is not transfigured in the Apoc Pet), the relationship between the Apoc Pet and the biblical transfiguration accounts, or the traditions behind them, has long been a source of discussion in the study of this text.<sup>319</sup> Most of the parallels are only present in the Eth Apoc Pet. In following the Akh Apoc Pet throughout 15:1–16:4, the composite translation has removed some of the parallels. The adjective holy (*qaddus*) to describe the mountain in Eth Apoc Pet 15:1, the most significant link between Apoc Pet 15–17 and 2 Peter 1:16–18, is dropped when following the Akhmīm text. The reference to Moses and Elijah is also removed from 16:1, but the other three references to them (16:7; 17:2, 3) are still retained in the text where only the Eth Apoc Pet is extant. The removal of some of the parallels between Apoc Pet 15–17 and the biblical transfiguration accounts suggests that, in its earlier, form the Apoc Pet may not have drawn as heavily upon various transfiguration accounts as was previously believed.

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<sup>317</sup> For more information on the angel Temelouchos, see Jean-Marc Rosenstiehl, “Tartarouchos – Temelouchos. Contribution à l’étude de l’Apocalypse Apocryphe de Paul,” in *Deuxième Journée d’Études Coptes* (Leuven: Peeters, 1986), 34–43.

<sup>318</sup> This was first suggested to me by Paul Foster in a private conversation.

<sup>319</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter: An Account of Research,” 4735–4736.

Perhaps most of the parallels were added during the transmission process as later readers were reminded of the transfiguration by the appearance of the two righteous men in glorified states.

Fourth, the arrangement of the text may not reflect the original narrative sequence. This possibility was suggested above, but it is best to revisit it in more detail at this time. One common point of discussion for Apoc Pet 15–17 has been identifying the narrative setting. Helmer separates the Apoc Pet into three sections partially based upon the narrative setting of each section. In his view, the first section (1–2) is on the Mount of Olives, the second (3–14) in the palm of Jesus’ hand, and the third (15–17) on the holy mountain.<sup>320</sup> When discussing the location of the holy mountain, Helmer considers Mount Tabor, Mount Hermon, and the unnamed mountain in Matt 28:16. In the end, he decides the mountain in the narrative need not coincide with an actual mountain. The notion of import to the narrative is that the scene parallels the biblical transfiguration accounts by being located on a mountain.<sup>321</sup> Bauckham believes the reference to the holy mountain in Eth Apoc Pet 15:1 is a reference to Mount Zion, because throughout the Old Testament the only mountain referred to as the holy mountain is Mount Zion.<sup>322</sup> This is far more plausible as the disciples and Jesus would only need to cross the Kidron valley from the Mount of Olives to get to Mount Zion. Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon are both considerably farther away and would require that the narrative skip forward in time significantly in order to continue without

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<sup>320</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 39–40.

<sup>321</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 133–137.

<sup>322</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 193; Richard Bauckham, “Jews and Jewish Christians in the Land of Israel at the Time of the Bar Kochba War, with Special Reference to the Apocalypse of Peter,” in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Stroumsa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 231–232.

reference to their journey. As discussed above, however, the Apoc Pet likely did not originally refer to the mountain as the holy mountain, and Bauckham's suggestion no longer stands when following the Akh Apoc Pet.

Also discussed above, Apoc Pet 15–17 is likely not an account of the transfiguration and is perhaps less dependent upon the biblical transfiguration accounts than previously believed. This significantly impacts the possible narrative setting of this section. Seeing that Apoc Pet 15–17 is not meant to describe the transfiguration, it must therefore primarily be an account of the ascension. If the author adhered to tradition, then the narrative setting of this ascension account would be the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12).<sup>323</sup> Both the Akh Apoc Pet and the Eth Apoc Pet begin this section with Jesus instructing his disciples to go with him to the mountain. In the Eth Apoc Pet, however, the group is already seated on the Mount of Olives when Jesus gives this instruction. Since both recensions retain the command to go the mountain, it is likely original to the Apoc Pet. However, it does not make sense in the narrative for this command to be given in Apoc Pet 15. It is more likely that the command to go the mountain came near the beginning of the narrative as it does in the Akh Apoc Pet, thus changing the sequence of events in the text. Jesus instructs his disciples to go with him to the Mount of Olives where they are given a glimpse into the paradise of the righteous (Apoc Pet 15–16). They then have a seat on the mountain and ask Jesus for details concerning the Parousia and receive his response (Apoc Pet 1–14). After the conclusion to the revelation in Apoc Pet 14, the narrative closes with Jesus ascending

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<sup>323</sup> Bauckham, "The Two Fig Tree Parables," 276.

into heaven (Apoc Pet 17).<sup>324</sup> According to this restructuring of the narrative, the whole Apoc Pet is a pre-ascension account occurring on the Mount of Olives.

While this arrangement of the material better accounts for the narrative settings in the text and does not contradict the paraphrase of the Apoc Pet found in Sibylline Oracles 2.194–338, not enough manuscript evidence exists to warrant restructuring the composite text. Neither the Akh Apoc Pet nor the Eth Apoc Pet reflect the proposed order of the text. The Akhmīm text does place the vision of paradise before the tour of hell, but it leaves out the cosmic conflagration and the ascension. It also begins with what may be a truncated summary of Apoc Pet 1–2 (Akh Apoc Pet 1–3). The Eth Apoc Pet is corrupt throughout chapters 14–16, which may give further support to the idea that the order, as well as the content, of these chapters was changed. However, because the Eth Apoc Pet contains the most comprehensive version of the Apoc Pet among the currently extant manuscripts, it is best to retain the narrative sequence as given in the Ethiopic text.

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<sup>324</sup> Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur*, 510; Vielhauer, *Historia de la literatura cristiana primitiva*, 525–526.

## Chapter 5: Setting the Stage

Having presented a new, composite translation of the Apoc Pet in the last chapter, it is now possible to begin discussing the primary purpose of the text. This chapter will analyse the material leading up to the eschatological vision of Apoc Pet 4–14 in order to discern the context within which the tour of hell is best understood. The chapter will first discuss the significance of the prologue for the interpretation of the text as a whole. Then, an exploration of the narrative setting and the audience of the Apoc Pet will unveil the perspective the text intends its readers to have while engaging with its content. Finally, the importance of Apoc Pet 3 as the introduction to the eschatological vision will be discussed in detail, noting in particular its emphasis on mercy and compassion.

### A. The Prologue

As discussed in the previous chapter, the prologue is likely original to the Apoc Pet. Therefore, it plays an important role in introducing everything that follows. It first reveals the content of the text: “The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead ... who die for their sin because they did not observe the commandment of God, their creator.” The content is twofold. The text describes the second coming of Christ (Apoc Pet 1–2) and the resurrection of the dead who die for their sin (Apoc Pet 3–14). This sets a specific focus for the Apoc Pet that is not necessarily intuitive from the narrative. The cosmic conflagration (Apoc Pet 4–6) describes the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked, and Apoc Pet 15–16 gives a depiction of the glorified state of the righteous and their garden paradise. The prologue does not describe the content of the text as a description of the general resurrection and fate of

all people; rather it describes only the fate of the wicked who “did not observe the commandment of God.” The inclusion of the vision of paradise in both the Ethiopic and Akhmīm recensions suggests it was originally part of the Apoc Pet, so the prologue’s emphasis on the resurrection of the wicked should not be viewed as implying that the text was later edited to include the fate of the righteous. Rather, the prologue reveals that the main emphasis of the Apoc Pet is on the eschatological fate of the wicked, even though it includes descriptions of the fate of the righteous.

It is possible that this sentence, which introduces the content of the text, also reveals the intended audience. This possibility arises from Elliott’s translation of the prologue: “The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead which Christ revealed through Peter to those who died for their sins, because they did not keep the commandment of God, their creator.”<sup>325</sup> This translation, however, is wrong. In order to translate the text as “to those who died,” the Ethiopic would necessarily read *lä’elä yämāwwetu* instead of *’elä yämāwwetu*. Helmer likewise adds a different preposition, “concerning,” to his translation which reads, “The narrative of Peter (concerning) the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead who died on account of their sins, because they did not observe the commands of God their creator.”<sup>326</sup> Helmer’s addition of the preposition is necessary due to his nominal translation of *zänägäro läpetros* into “the narrative of Peter.” A nominal translation is unlikely, as *zänägäro* is the perfect form of the verb *nägärä* with the relative pronoun *zä-* and the third-person masculine singular object suffix *-o*. A nominal reading of the phrase would likely either use the construct state, *zänägärä petros*, or the pronominal

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<sup>325</sup> Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 600.

<sup>326</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 35.

suffix, *zänägäru läpetros*. Even though he does not follow it, Helmer nevertheless notes the possibility of a verbal understanding of *zänägäro läpetros*.<sup>327</sup> However, a verbal translation of the phrase is preferable to a nominal translation. Thus, the phrase should be translated as “which he told to Peter.” This relative phrase is then an interjection in the sentence. While it is awkward in English without a preposition, it is not necessary to add one into the sentence. If the interjection is removed for the sake of clarity, the sentence reads, “The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead who die for their sin because they did not observe the commandment of God, their creator.” The sentence, therefore, describes the content of the Apoc Pet, as explained above, but gives no indication regarding the audience of the text.

In addition to summarising the content of the Apoc Pet, the prologue also presents the pseudonymous authorship of the text. The Apoc Pet was purportedly written by Peter as a record of something Jesus told him. Although the subject of the verb *zänägäro*, “which he told,” is not immediately obvious, the relative pronoun refers back to the preceding clause, “The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead,” which suggests it was Christ who told the revelation to Peter.<sup>328</sup> This inference is further confirmed by the narrative structure of the text as a series of questions and responses between Jesus and his disciples. In conjunction with the narrative structure and the content of the text, the prologue’s description of Peter as the recipient of an eschatological revelation from Jesus, coupled with its use of a pseudonymous author, places the Apoc Pet within the genre of apocalypse, as explained above in chapter two.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 35 n. 3.

<sup>328</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 266.

<sup>329</sup> Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” 9.

Beginning in the prologue, Helmer connects the text's content concerning the fate of those who sin by disobeying the commandments of God with a focus on "the ethical standards of the community."<sup>330</sup> However, the prologue itself makes no such connection. There is an implicit understanding that the content of the text concerns the justice of God, as the second coming of Christ ushers in the day of judgment/punishment (Apoc Pet 4:1–5:1) when those who did not observe the commandments of God will be found guilty of sin and punished accordingly (Apoc Pet 7–13). Nevertheless, the prologue does not refer to the audience of the text, nor does it claim that the purpose of the text is ethical exhortation. The purpose of the Apoc Pet, according to the prologue, is to "understand the mystery of the Son of God." This mystery, which Peter attempts to understand, is left ambiguous, save for two hints.

1. It somehow relates to the content of the Apoc Pet: the parousia and the eschatological fate of the wicked.
2. Reflecting upon this mystery elicits from the author the epithet "the merciful and lover of mercy," *māhari wāmāfqāre mahrāt*, in reference to Jesus.

Such an epithet seems out of place in a text which primarily describes the fate of the wicked in hell, and it is the first indication that the Apoc Pet might not be a monitory text. If the text were meant to frighten its readers, any number of epithets would better serve this purpose in the prologue, such as references to the Son of Man's justice, holiness, or impartiality. Instead, the prologue sets mercy as the tone for the entire text.

The tension between the prologue's acknowledgment of the Son of God's mercy and its focus on the fate of the wicked may be the very mystery that Peter wishes to understand. The answer to this mystery would then culminate in the post-mortem

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<sup>330</sup> Helmer, "That We May Know and Understand," 36.

salvation of the wicked granted by Jesus at the request of the righteous in chapter 14. Even though he reads the prologue as the introduction to the entire Pseudo-Clementine text, Buchholz comes to a similar conclusion. He claims the theme of the Pseudo-Clementine text, and thus the mystery which Peter ponders, is the salvation of sinners. While he attempts to problematise this mystery as being about the sinners rather than Jesus, he does admit that such a distinction is uncertain, as it is only by the mercy of Jesus that the wicked are saved.<sup>331</sup> Considering that the Pseudo-Clementine text is likely meant to incorporate the Apoc Pet, it is unsurprising that both it and the Apoc Pet would share the same theme. It is nevertheless important to distinguish that the post-mortem salvation of the wicked is the answer to the mystery, not the mystery itself. As hinted at in the prologue and expanded upon throughout the text, the mystery is the relationship between divine justice and mercy.

The above examination of the prologue reveals that, as originally part of the Apoc Pet and not a later addition, it introduces multiple important aspects of the text. It presents the pseudonymous author of the text as Peter, who was verbally given a revelation from Jesus. The content of this revelation is the second coming of Christ and the fate of the wicked who disobey God. By reflecting upon this content while recognising that Jesus is merciful, Peter hoped to understand the mystery of the Son of God. The prologue opens the Apoc Pet with a solemn yet compassionate tone. The word mercy, *mäḥarä*, is used in various forms only four times in the Ethiopic text, two of which are in the prologue. While the word itself is not as frequent as other important words, such as judgment (*k<sup>w</sup>ännäne*) and punishment (*däyn*), the emphatic tone of mercy that begins in the prologue is reinforced throughout the text.

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<sup>331</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 267.

## B. The Narrative Setting

Following the prologue, the text begins by giving the setting of the narrative. Helmer suggests the Apoc Pet can be broken into three sections based partially on the three different narrative settings he sees in the text.<sup>332</sup> The narrative opens by locating Jesus and his disciples on the Mount of Olives: “And when he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, his followers approached toward him” (Apoc Pet 1:1). While Helmer acknowledges that chapters 1–14 are all set on the Mount of Olives, he sees a scene shift from the Mount of Olives in 1–2 to the palm of Jesus’ right hand in 3–14: “And he showed me in his right hand every soul and in the palm of his right hand the image of that which will be accomplished on the last day” (3:1). He rightly notes that the Apoc Pet does not contain an actual journey to hell. The disciples see the entire eschatological vision of 3–14 in the palm of Jesus’ right hand while sitting on the Mount of Olives. The third narrative setting Helmer differentiates in the text is the holy mountain of chapters 15–17: “And my lord, Jesus Christ our king, said to me, ‘Let us proceed to the holy mountain.’ And his disciples came with him while they were praying” (Eth Apoc Pet 15:1). Thus, Helmer divides the Apoc Pet into three sections based upon three different narrative settings: The Mount of Olives, the palm of Jesus’ right hand, and the holy mountain.<sup>333</sup>

While taking no issue with Helmer’s division of the Apoc Pet into three sections, it is important to also emphasise the static nature of the narrative. No movement happens between chapters 2 and 3. Jesus and the disciples are still seated on the Mount of Olives, even if the focus moves to the eschatological vision Jesus

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<sup>332</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 39.

<sup>333</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 39–40.

shows them. Also, as discussed in the previous chapter, the mountain in 15–17 is likely still the Mount of Olives, which was traditionally the location of the ascension.<sup>334</sup> This further suggests that 15–17 is best understood as an ascension narrative rather than a transfiguration narrative. Jesus’ command to go to the mountain and pray may indicate that chapters 15–16 originally opened the Apoc Pet, as in the Akh Apoc Pet, but this is impossible to confirm with the current manuscript evidence. Nevertheless, by recognising that the entire narrative occurs on the Mount of Olives, the unity of chapters 1–14 and 15–17 is better understood. The Apoc Pet is not one extended teaching of Jesus, 1–14, with a second scene of additional teaching, 15–17, at the end. Instead, the entire text is one scene in which Jesus relates teachings concerning the fate of the dead, even if the text’s stated focus is only on the fate of the wicked.

As suggested by Helmer, the rationale behind using the Mount of Olives as the narrative setting for the Apoc Pet could arise from multiple motivations. First, the setting may indicate from the opening of the text that the Apoc Pet is a post-resurrection narrative due to the popularity of the Mount of Olives in post-resurrection dialogues.<sup>335</sup> Second, it may reflect a tradition similar to that of John 18:2, which understands the Mount of Olives as a typical location in which Jesus met with his disciples. Third, it may reflect an eschatological affinity for the Mount of Olives stemming from traditions such as that expressed in Zech 14:1–5.<sup>336</sup> Against this final suggestion, the text shows no familiarity with traditions such as those found in Zech

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<sup>334</sup> Bauckham, “The Two Fig Tree Parables,” 276. Bauckham only states that the Mount of Olives was traditionally the location of the Ascension. He does not claim the Holy Mountain is the Mount of Olives. Instead, he believes it is Mount Zion.

<sup>335</sup> Cf. First Revelation of James, Letter of Peter to Phillip, Wisdom of Jesus Christ, Pistis Sophia, Questions of Bartholomew, History of Joseph the Carpenter, and the Coptic conclusion to the Apocalypse of Paul. This list appears in Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 172 n. 13 and Helmer “That We May Know and Understand,” 55 n. 19, but only Bauckham includes First Revelation of James.

<sup>336</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 55–56.

14:1–5 as they relate to the Mount of Olives, so its use in the Apoc Pet as a traditional eschatological setting is unlikely. Thus, Helmer’s first two suggestions are more convincing. The setting could be a result of traditions which commonly placed Jesus on the Mount of Olives while teaching the disciples. The Apoc Pet shows familiarity with such traditions in its connection with the material found in Matt 24. The setting could also be a result of the narrative occurring immediately before the ascension. However, Helmer perhaps pushes this tradition too far in claiming it as signifying a post-resurrection setting rather than merely being a result of such a chronology. In either case, the Mount of Olives setting arises naturally from the content of the narrative itself.

In addition to the location of the narrative, the chronology of the Apoc Pet in relation to the life and ministry of Jesus is also an important aspect of the setting. It is only in the last chapter, with the ascension of Jesus, that the narrative indicates the setting as a post-resurrection dialogue between Jesus and his disciples. Even if the chronology is only verified at the end of the narrative, it suggests that the entire text is meant to function as supplemental to Gospel traditions rather than correctively. As Bauckham explains,

Those who wished to attribute to Jesus Christ further revelations additional to those known from the Gospel traditions evidently found it appropriate to place such revelations in the period of the resurrection appearances. This was because these additional revelations presupposed the teaching of Jesus already given in the Gospel traditions. They interpreted and developed the teaching of Jesus that was already known. They often refer back to the teaching Jesus had given before his death and offer further explanation of what Jesus had meant or further information on subjects that Jesus’ earlier teaching had not sufficiently covered.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 172–173.

This intention of connecting the new revelation of the text with previous tradition is also likely what is intended with the use of the fig tree parable in Apoc Pet 2, as it does not directly connect to the principal content of the text.<sup>338</sup> The narrative setting of the Apoc Pet, combined with the pseudonymous Petrine authorship, functions to give the text a significant claim of authority. The text purports to be written by Peter concerning a revelation given by Jesus at a location that was significant for him and his disciples and at a time that assumes an understanding of all that he said and did previously.

### C. The Audience of the Text

A great deal of scholarship has discussed the *Sitz im Leben* of the Apoc Pet. Bauckham has perhaps given the most detailed analysis of the provenance of the text in his defence of the Bar Kokhba hypothesis, but the focus of his discussion regarding the audience is primarily concerned with the presence of a false messiah and persecution.<sup>339</sup> He claims, “The false Messiah must be already a threat; the Apocalypse’s readers must be already tempted to believe his claim; some of those who, out of loyalty to the Messiah Jesus, refuse to follow him must have already been put to death.”<sup>340</sup> However, the inconclusiveness of the Bar Kokhba hypothesis requires a reassessment of the *Sitz im Leben* of the text and the intended audience.<sup>341</sup> The appearance of a single messianic claimant is entirely traditional and need not refer to

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<sup>338</sup> Paul Foster, “Peter in Noncanonical Traditions,” in *Peter in Early Christianity*, ed. Helen K. Bond and Larry W. Hurtado (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2015), 256.

<sup>339</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 176–194; Bauckham, “Jews and Jewish Christians in the Land of Israel at the Time of the Bar Kochba War,” 228–238; Bauckham, “The Two Fig Tree Parables,” 269–287.

<sup>340</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 183.

<sup>341</sup> Tigchelaar, “Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?”

a historical individual.<sup>342</sup> If the false messiah does not necessarily reflect the historical situation of the text, then perhaps neither do the references to persecution and martyrdom. The text does reveal some degree of perceived persecution (cf. Apoc Pet 2:10–13, 9:1–2, 16:5), but to what extent this is actualised in the audience is unknown.

Even a discussion concerning whether or not the audience was undergoing persecution assumes something that still needs to be proven: the notion that the Apoc Pet was written for Christians. The text presents a hyperbolic view of both the righteous and the wicked and asserts that every person is one or the other. Some monitory readings might assume the text was written for a wicked, non-Christian audience, akin to a modern “fire and brimstone” tract designed to frighten sinners into repentance and faith. Yet, the text gives indications that its intended audience is righteous Christians who do not commit the sins for which the wicked are punished in hell.<sup>343</sup>

### *1. The Distinction Between the Righteous and the Wicked*

The Apoc Pet is structured as a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples, with the disciples asking questions and Jesus responding. The initial question is posed by the disciples collectively: “Tell (us) what are the signs of your coming and of the end of the world?” (Apoc Pet 1:2a). As Helmer points out, this question is twofold: the disciples want to know the signs of both the parousia and the eschaton.<sup>344</sup> Jesus

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<sup>342</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 119–124.

<sup>343</sup> The importance of correctly identifying the audience can be seen in Cambry Pardee, “Apocalypse of Peter,” *E-Clavis: Christian Apocrypha*, September 2017, <http://nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/apocalypse-of-peter/>, who recognises the emphasis on compassion in the Apoc Pet but, due to understanding the text as though it were written for the wicked, still reads it as though it is a monitory text.

<sup>344</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 67.

responds to the first part in Apoc Pet 1, and to the second in Apoc Pet 2. However, the disciples do not merely ask their question; they also give the rationale for the inquiry: “that we may know and understand the time of your coming and we may instruct those who come after us; to whom we will proclaim the word of your gospel and establish in your church” (Apoc Pet 1:2b–3).

Not only do they want to know the signs of the parousia and the eschaton for their own understanding, but they wish to impart their knowledge onto “those who come after” them. Bauckham suggests this concern for the next generation of believers, coupled with a lack of interest in Jerusalem and the temple, reveals the post-apostolic provenance of the text.<sup>345</sup> Likewise, while the Apoc Pet appears to portray the disciples as not expecting the parousia to occur in their lifetime, the imminent return of Christ is still a prominent aspect of the text. As Buchholz has suggested, the phrase in Apoc Pet 1:3, “That they, having heard, may be watchful so that they might perceive the time of your coming,” likely reveals the author of the Apoc Pet still believed that the return of Christ was close at hand.<sup>346</sup>

The disciples’ stated desire to pass along their knowledge suggests the audience of the text is those “established in the church.” While the prologue describes the primary content of the text as the eschatological fate of the wicked, Apoc Pet 1:2–3 designates the recipients of this content as Christians. The Apoc Pet never conflates these two groups. Even when the whole world burns, the conflagration only applies to “those who pervert the faith of God and to those who have committed sin” (Apoc Pet 5:1), while “each of the elect who have done well, they will come to me [Jesus] and

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<sup>345</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 177.

<sup>346</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 271; Contra Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur*, 513; Vielhauer, *Historia de la literatura cristiana primitiva*, 528.

they will not see death by the devouring fire” (Apoc Pet 6:4). Although a clear distinction between these two groups exists, the Apoc Pet possibly does allow for those who were Christians at one time to lose their elect status, thus becoming one of the wicked. This possibility rises from verses that reference those who pervert the faith (Apoc Pet 5:1) and the punishment in hell for those who reject righteousness (Apoc Pet 7:3–4). However, these verses are not entirely clear whether they refer to those who perpetually denied righteousness, and thus were never Christians, or to those who were apostates.

Before discussing whether the text allows for situations of apostasy, one final point regarding the distinction between the righteous and the wicked should be made. Not only does the Apoc Pet delineate between the righteous and the wicked, placing everyone as a part of one group or the other, but it does not give any indication that someone can be righteous and not act accordingly. The Apocalypse of Paul serves as a helpful contrastive comparison to further this claim that the Apoc Pet contains no ambiguity as to a person’s status within the church. In Apoc Paul 31, an angel says to Paul, “Come and follow me, and I will show you the souls of the godless and sinners, that you may know what manner of place it is.” Just as in Apoc Pet 5:1, two categories of wrongdoers are mentioned: first, the godless or those who pervert the faith of God and, second, sinners. Unlike the Apoc Pet, which seems to treat these two groups as synonymous, the Apocalypse of Paul distinguishes between the godless and sinners. The tour of hell begins in Apoc Paul 31 with a “river boiling with fire” within which are those who “are neither hot nor cold, because they were found neither in the number of the just nor in the number of the godless.” Thus, for the Apocalypse of Paul, the category of “sinner” is reserved for those who are neither among the righteous nor the

godless. Furthermore, the Apocalypse of Paul allows for the classification of those within the church as among the godless. In Apoc Paul 34–37, punishment is meted out upon a presbyter, a bishop, a deacon, a reader, and certain churchgoers. By contrast, the Apoc Pet contains no punishments for sins which only Christians could commit, nor does it convey the notion that a third category exists for Christians who are neither righteous nor godless. Consequently, for the Apoc Pet, a person is either established in the church, and thus righteous, or a sinner who perverts the faith of God, and thus wicked.

The emphasis on the eschatological fate of the wicked in the Apoc Pet, as stated in the prologue, combined with the intended audience, the righteous who are established within the church, significantly impacts the purpose of the text. The Apoc Pet is not an evangelistic, “fire and brimstone” tract meant to frighten sinners into repentance and salvation, nor perhaps are any ancient Christian tours of hell. The intended audience of the Apoc Pet and most other such texts are those already in the church not those outside of the community. A more likely monitory function for this text would be, as Helmer has suggested, an encouragement for those within the Christian community to stay inside the ethical bounds of the community by not sinning.<sup>347</sup> However, this interpretation of the text fails to account for the lack of any indication in the Apoc Pet that the righteous sin. Rather, as will now be further discussed, the righteous are portrayed in the text as perpetually faithful to God. Therefore, it is more likely that the Apoc Pet is not meant to convey a monitory message.

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<sup>347</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 36.

## 2. *The Faithfulness of the Righteous*

As Henning has explained, tours of hell are not meant to describe real people, because real people do not only commit a single sin for which they would deserve punishment.<sup>348</sup> Likewise, if every person who sinned received punishment in hell for their sin, no one would be among the righteous. The Apoc Pet does not contain an explicit soteriology incorporating the death and resurrection of Jesus. However, it nevertheless functions with an understanding that, while punishment in hell is based entirely upon one's actions, salvation from hell is dependent, at least in part, upon divine intervention. This implicit soteriology, most apparent in the post-mortem salvation of the wicked in chapter 14, underlies the entire text, thus allowing for a clear delineation between the righteous and the wicked. The Apoc Pet is written for those who will not receive eschatological punishment for their sins, but it is written about those who will.

As shown above with the Apocalypse of Paul, not all tours of hell equate those established in the church with the righteous. However, the Apoc Pet appears to understand these two groups as synonymous. This is not to say that the Apoc Pet views them as incapable of sin. The disciples want Jesus to reveal the signs of his coming and the end of the world so that their successors “may be watchful so that they might perceive the time of your coming” (Apoc Pet 1:3).<sup>349</sup> Jesus responds to their request with a warning, “Take care not to be deceived lest you become doubters and worship other gods” (Apoc Pet 1:4). Jesus' warning communicates that the righteous are

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<sup>348</sup> Henning, “Meghan Henning.”

<sup>349</sup> Helmer translates *yət 'aqābu* as “beware” rather than “watchful” to mirror his monitory reading of the text. His translation relies too heavily on the view that the Apoc Pet encourages a particular ethical response from the readers in line with the desire to avoid punishment, and is thus inappropriate. Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 53–54.

capable of being deceived and thus they have the potential to commit the sin of idolatry. The logical inference of this warning is that they are equally capable of performing any of the other sins mentioned in the tour of hell as well.

Jesus continues in his response to explain that the righteous will not, however, misinterpret the signs of his return, because it will be unambiguous.

As for the coming of the Son of God, it will not be revealed, except like lightning which flashes from the east to the west. Likewise, I will come on a cloud from heaven with great power in my glory while my cross will go before my face. I will come in my glory shining seven times brighter than the sun. I will come in my glory with all my holy angels when my father will place a crown upon my head that I may judge the living and the dead and recompense everyone according to his deeds. (Apoc Pet 1:6–8)

Some debate exists on whether to emend the Ethiopic of Apoc Pet 1:6. The first part of this verse in the Eth Apoc Pet reads, “As for the coming of the Son of God, it will not be revealed (*'iyət 'awwäq*), except (*'alla*) like lightning which flashes from the east to the west.” Most translations include the negative particle and conjunction, conveying that, as Buchholz explains, “The emphasis here in v. 6a is clearly upon the suddenness and unexpectedness of the parousia.”<sup>350</sup> Bauckham has suggested this contradicts the text’s claim “that there *are* signs of the approaching parousia,” and thus the negative particle is a mistake.<sup>351</sup> Bauckham is correct that the text gives signs of the parousia, i.e. the budding fig tree (Apoc Pet 2:1) and the coming of false messiahs (Apoc Pet 2:7), but these signs indicate the *arrival* of the end of the world not its *approach*. As such, they do not disallow for a statement regarding the suddenness and unexpectedness of the return of Christ. His understanding of the lightning metaphor as referring to the universal visibility of the parousia rather than its suddenness is still

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<sup>350</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 273.

<sup>351</sup> Bauckham, “The Two Fig Tree Parables,” 272 n. 10. Italics original.

warranted, however, because Jesus gives a detailed description of what the parousia will entail in Apoc Pet 1:7–9. He does this so that people can differentiate between his return and the arrival of false messiahs. If *'iyät'awwäq* refers to this differentiation between the coming of Jesus and the coming of false messiahs, then the negative particle could indeed contradict the point of the metaphor, since Jesus just revealed the manner in which he will return. Helmer furthers the case for dropping the negative particle by comparing the context of Apoc Pet 1:6 with that of Matt 24:27.<sup>352</sup> In Matt 24:23–26, the issue at hand is also the coming of false messiahs, and Jesus likewise warns his disciples to not believe them. The lightning metaphor demonstrates here in Matt 24:27 how the return of the true messiah will be clear to everyone.<sup>353</sup>

While Bauckham and Helmer have convincingly argued that the lightning metaphor in Apoc Pet 1:6 refers to the universal clarity of the parousia, it is still inadvisable to emend the extant manuscript to conform to one's preferred interpretation. A more suitable course is to re-evaluate the translation of the text. The translation of *'iyät'awwäq* as “it will not be revealed” in Apoc Pet 1:6 reflects the other uses of the passive *tä'awqä* in Eth Apoc Pet 7:9 and 11:7. While describing the punishment for murderers and their accomplices, Eth Apoc Pet 7:9 describes that “their suffering is revealed (*yät'awäqomu*) to them.” Likewise, Apoc Pet 11:7 claims, “those who do not preserve their virginity until they are given in marriage ... will be judged the very same judgment while it is revealed (*yät'awäqon*) to them.” These passages are both ambiguous as to what exactly is to be revealed to those in punishment, but

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<sup>352</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 54–55, 74–76.

<sup>353</sup> W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Vol. 3*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 353–354; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 199.

*tä'awqä* refers to something being made known to someone. There is no reason to believe it is used in any other way in Apoc Pet 1:6.

Perhaps the confusion comes more with *'alla* than with *'iyät'awwäq*. The conjunction *'alla* typically denotes contrast or contrariety and is thus mainly translated as “but”.<sup>354</sup> If one understands the lightning metaphor in Apoc Pet 1:6 as contrasting the statement that the parousia will not be revealed, then the negative particle on *'iyät'awwäq* only makes sense if the verse refers to the suddenness of the parousia. Bauckham and Helmer’s interpretation requires that no contrast exists in Apoc Pet 1:6. A different way of understanding *'alla* in this verse arises if the Ethiopic text of the Apoc Pet was translated from Arabic, as many have suggested.<sup>355</sup> When texts are translated from Arabic into Ethiopic, the Ethiopic *'alla* also corresponds to the Arabic *'illā*, denoting exception.<sup>356</sup> If *'alla* in Apoc Pet 1:6 conveys exception, then the lightning metaphor is able to take on both a meaning of suddenness and of universal visibility. The parousia “will not be revealed, except like lightning.” In other words, the parousia will only be revealed suddenly and in a manner clearly visible to everyone. Thus, the translation given here allows for both interpretations of the metaphor to function simultaneously without emending the text.

Following his statements concerning the suddenness and universal visibility of the true Messiah’s return, Jesus gives a parable to describe the coming of false

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<sup>354</sup> August Dillmann, *Ethiopic Grammar*, ed. Carl Bezold, trans. James A. Crichton, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 413.

<sup>355</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 162; Alessandro Bausi, “Towards a Re-Edition of the Ethiopic Dossier of the Apocalypse of Peter: A Few Remarks on the Ethiopic Manuscript Witnesses,” *Apocrypha* 27 (2016): 179–196; Bremmer, “Christian Hell: From the Apocalypse of Peter to the Apocalypse of Paul,” 301; Bremmer, “Orphic, Roman, Jewish and Christian Tours of Hell: Observations on the Apocalypse of Peter,” 306; Burge, “‘ZR’L, The Angel of Death and the Ethiopic Apocalypse of Peter,” 221; Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 11; Dimitris J. Kyrtatas, “The Origins of Christian Hell,” *Numen* 56 (2009): 289; Müller, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 624.

<sup>356</sup> Dillmann, *Ethiopic Grammar*, 413.

messiahs. The explanation of this parable in Apoc Pet 2:7–11 is difficult to translate and often leads to a misunderstanding of the text. It reads as follows:

Did you not perceive that the fig tree is the house of Israel? And indeed, I have told you, when its branches bud in the end, false messiahs will come. And he will promise, ‘I am the Christ who has come into the world.’ And when they see his evil deeds, they will turn away. And they will deny him who is called ‘the glory of our ancestors’, who crucified the first Christ and erred exceedingly. But this liar is not the Christ. And when they resist him, he will wage war with the sword. And there will be many martyrs. Then at that time when the branches of the fig tree, this alone is the house of Israel, have budded, there will be many martyrs by his hand. And they will die and they will be martyrs.

The first point of difficulty for this translation is *yəgābbə’u dəḥrehomu* (“they will turn away”). Many translators understand the plural pronominal suffix, *homu*, as referring to the false messiahs in Apoc Pet 2:7, thus rendering the phrase as “they will turn away after them.”<sup>357</sup> This reading suggests that the false messiahs will succeed in deceiving the house of Israel. However, Hills has suggested that the pronominal suffix is reflexive, and when *dəḥrehomu* is combined with *gāb’a* the suggested action is that of drawing back (cf. John 6:66; 18:6).<sup>358</sup> His suggestion reverses the sense of the passage from the typical translation, which interprets the house of Israel as being deceived by the false messiah, to a reading that shows they will not follow the false messiah but draw back/turn away from him.

Hill’s understanding of the phrase better adheres to the surrounding context for two reasons. First, reading *dəḥrehomu* as a reference to the false messiahs of Apoc Pet 2:7 causes confusion in the text in that every other reference to a false messiah in Apoc

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<sup>357</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 173; Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 669; James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 511; Müller, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 626.

<sup>358</sup> Hills, “Parables, Pretenders, and Prophecies,” 565–566.

Pet 2:8–13 refers to only one false messiah. Such confusion causes Buchholz to admit, “I do not believe these differences can be reconciled, and it is not easy to see why an original [*dəhrehu*] would have been changed to [*dəhrehomu*].”<sup>359</sup> Second, the text states in Apoc Pet 2:10–11 that the house of Israel will deny the false messiah. This coincides with Hill’s translation of Apoc Pet 2:8, but causes the traditional translation to require that those who follow him initially will eventually deny him.<sup>360</sup> Reading the plural pronominal suffix as reflexive suits the context and bypasses all the difficulty of the traditional translation.

The second point of translational difficulty is with Apoc Pet 2:9: “And they will deny him who is called ‘the glory of our ancestors’, who crucified the first Christ and erred exceedingly” (*wäyəkəhhədəwwo zäyəbəlu səbhatä ’abäwinä zäsäqälewwo läqädamawi kərəstos wägegäyu fädfadä*). Most translations follow Duensing when translating this verse: “and deny him to whom our fathers gave praise (?), the first Christ whom they crucified and thereby sinned exceedingly.”<sup>361</sup> Duensing admits his translation of *zäyəbəlu səbhatä ’abäwinä*, “to whom our fathers gave praise,” is problematic, but few have offered a better understanding of the text.<sup>362</sup> Buchholz recognises that *zäyəbəlu* is imperfect, not perfect as Duensing translates, and thus suggests the phrase could mean “who is called ‘the Glory (or praise) of our fathers.’”<sup>363</sup> He does not, however, follow this proposal in his translation. Helmer and Hills follow

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<sup>359</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 285–286.

<sup>360</sup> Buchholz proposes the second option, Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 409.

<sup>361</sup> Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 669; See also Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 173; Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 601; James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 511; Müller, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 626.

<sup>362</sup> Duensing, “Ein Stücke der urchristlichen Petrusapokalypse,” 67 n. 10.

<sup>363</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 287.

Buchholz's suggestion, but their translations cause further difficulties for the majority understanding of the text.<sup>364</sup>

Most translators understand *wäyäkəḥḥədəwwo*, “And they will deny him,” to refer to the house of Israel's denial of Jesus.<sup>365</sup> However, as Hills has explained, “those who are doing the denying are those who have (rightly) turned away from the false messiah.”<sup>366</sup> Therefore, the object of denial in Apoc Pet 2:9 must be the false messiah. This necessitates the use of the periphrastic passive with *zäyabəlu*, “who is called,” because the subject changes from the house of Israel, who would not deny the false messiah while calling him “the glory of our ancestors,” to an unspecified group which gives him the title *səbḥatä 'abäwinä*.<sup>367</sup>

Most translations, following Duensing, also understand the subject of the phrase *zäsäqälewwo*, “whom they crucified,” to be the house of Israel, thus accusing them of crucifying Jesus. This too conflicts with a reading of the text which portrays the house of Israel as faithful to Jesus. If one understands the relative pronoun, *zä*, to refer to the subject of the verb rather than to the object a different translation emerges. The preposition *lä* designates *qädamawi kərəstos*, the first Christ, as the object of *säqälewwo*. As *säqälewwo* is a plural verb with a masculine, singular object suffix, it follows that most translations would understand the masculine, singular relative pronoun, *zä*, as a reference to the first Christ as well. However, *zä* commonly functions as a general relative pronoun irrespective of gender or number.<sup>368</sup> The function of *zä*

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<sup>364</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 104; Hills, “Parables, Pretenders, and Prophecies,” 572.

<sup>365</sup> Cf. Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 287.

<sup>366</sup> Hills, “Parables, Pretenders, and Prophecies,” 566.

<sup>367</sup> Lambdin, *Introduction to Classical Ethiopic (Ge'ez)*, 235.

<sup>368</sup> Dillmann, *Ethiopic Grammar*, 332–333.

as a general relative pronoun leads Hills to translate it as plural even though he admits the plural relative pronoun *'ellä* would more readily render such a translation.<sup>369</sup> Translating *zä* as a general relative pronoun referring to the subject of *säqälewwo* gives the translation “who crucified him” with the antecedent being the immediately preceding word, *'abäwinä* (“our ancestors,” lit. “our fathers”).<sup>370</sup> This allows for a translation which maintains the house of Israel’s faithfulness to Jesus. Hills’ suggestions improve the translation of the text and render moot most of the difficulties and criticisms levied toward this pericope.<sup>371</sup> They also draw out an entirely new understanding of the parable and of the text’s perception of its audience. Rather than Buchholz’s interpretation that “some Christians will join the cause of this man,” the text actually portrays Christians as recognising the false messiah and rejecting him from the beginning.<sup>372</sup>

Although Jesus warns his disciples to not be deceived by false messiahs, he believes they will not be deceived. He claims his coming will be sudden and apparent to everyone just like a lightning flash in the sky (Apoc Pet 1:6–8). He also tells them that when a false messiah does come, the righteous will reject him and remain faithful to the true Messiah. While the possibility exists that those established in the church

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<sup>369</sup> Hills, “Parables, Pretenders, and Prophecies,” 568 n. 33.

<sup>370</sup> This also increases the anti-Jewish polemic of the pericope. If the false messiah is called “the glory of our ancestors”, and these ancestors are those “who crucified the first Christ and erred exceedingly”, then the ancestors, and those giving the false messiah this title, are the Jews. The use of the phrase “house of Israel” then becomes something the Apoc Pet is co-opting to refer to a new group of righteous people. This further makes sense of the concern in v. 11 to clarify that “this alone is the house of Israel.” The true house of Israel is not the Jews who follow the false messiah and crucified Jesus, but the followers of Jesus who remain faithful to him in the face of martyrdom. For a counter proposal that views this passage as looking favourably upon the Jews, see David Flusser, “The Antichrist and ‘The House of Israel Alone,’” in *The Beginnings of Christianity: A Collection of Articles*, ed. Jack Pastor and Menachem Mor (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2005), 349–357.

<sup>371</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 287; Duensing, “Ein Stücke der urchristlichen Petrusapokalypse,” 67 n. 10.

<sup>372</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 409.

could be deceived by false messiahs, the Apoc Pet functions with an understanding that they will not be deceived. It will be clear when the true Messiah returns, and until then every other messianic claimant will be rejected.

A final point that needs addressed while discerning the audience of the Apoc Pet is whether the text contains any references to sins which only Christians can commit, particularly apostasy. If the text at any point refers to apostates, then a synonymous relationship between those established in the church and the righteous is difficult to maintain. Two places where the text may mention apostasy are Apoc Pet 5:1 and 7:3–4. The text of Apoc Pet 5:1 reads, “And it will happen on the day of judgment (to) those who pervert the faith of God and to those who have committed sin.” The word translated here as “pervert” is *‘alāwā*, which most translations render as “fall away.”<sup>373</sup> Only Buchholz has translated *‘alāwā* as pervert, as in the translation offered here.<sup>374</sup> While *‘alāwā* could refer to desertion, rejection, and apostasy, its more common meanings refer to corruption and distortion.<sup>375</sup> Unfortunately, this word only occurs once in the Apoc Pet and no parallel passage exists in the Greek recensions, so it is difficult to say which meaning is intended here. If one looks to uses of the word in another text with similar themes, however, a pattern starts to emerge. Twice in 1 Enoch, *‘alāwā* is used in contexts referring to sinners.<sup>376</sup>

Woe to you who alter the true words  
and pervert [*yä ‘alwu*] the everlasting covenant  
and consider themselves to be without sin;  
they will be swallowed up in the earth. (1 Enoch 99:2)

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<sup>373</sup> Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 671; Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 602; James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 513; Müller, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 627.

<sup>374</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 187.

<sup>375</sup> Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge‘ez (Classical Ethiopic)*, 167–168.

<sup>376</sup> I am grateful to Ralph Lee for pointing this out to me.

And now I know this mystery,  
that sinners will alter and copy the words of truth,  
and pervert [*wäyā 'alwu*] many and lie and invent great fabrications,  
and write books in their own names. (1 Enoch 104:10)<sup>377</sup>

The uses of *'aläwä* in 1 Enoch carry the meaning of corruption or distortion. The context of these two passages is not identical to that of Apoc Pet 5:1, but they are similar in their association of *'aläwä* with sin. In 1 Enoch, the sin described is that of altering the words of truth, or the true words. The use of *'aläwä* in Apoc Pet 5:1 likely carries a similar connotation of distorting or altering the faith of God, although whether this distortion comes from within or outwith the church is unknown. Thus, the translation “pervert the faith of God” is sufficiently ambiguous as to whether it refers to Christians or non-Christians while also discouraging an understanding of *'aläwä* as “falling away”, which exclusively and incorrectly in this context refers to Christians leaving the faith.

The second place in the text which may refer to apostates is Apoc Pet 7:3–4: “And behold another place. And there is a pit, large and full. In it are those who have rejected (*kəḥdäwwo*) righteousness. And the angels of punishment will keep watch [and] there in it and light the fire of their punishment.” The word in question here is *kəḥda*, which carries a range of meanings: “deny, abjure, denounce, repudiate, renounce, reject, rebel, be perfidious, be treacherous, apostatize.”<sup>378</sup> The decision to translate *kəḥda* as “reject” in the present translation derives primarily from a combination of its use elsewhere, both in the Apoc Pet and in 1 Enoch, and the parallel passage to Eth Apoc Pet 7:3–4 in Akh Apoc Pet 23.

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<sup>377</sup> All translation of 1 Enoch are from George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. Vanderkam, *1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012).

<sup>378</sup> Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic)*, 150.

Unlike *‘alāwä*, *kəḥda* is used more than once in the Apoc Pet. In Apoc Pet 2:9, Jesus says, “And they will reject him (*wäyəkḥədəwwo*) who is called ‘the glory of our ancestors’, who crucified the first Christ and erred exceedingly.” As explained in the last chapter, the edition of the text given in this study attempts to translate important words with as much consistency as possible. Therefore, if possible *kəḥda* will be translated using the same English word in both Apoc Pet 2:9 and 7:3. The above discussion on chapter 2 explained that the person being rejected in Apoc Pet 2:9 is the false messiah, who is rejected by the followers of Jesus from the outset. As such, in this context *kəḥda* cannot refer to apostasy or a renunciation of previous loyalty. This does not mean that *kəḥda* in Apoc Pet 7:3 cannot refer to apostasy, but it does mean that it should only be translated that way if the verse necessitates such a reading.

Although the composite text follows the Ethiopic recension in Apoc Pet 7:3–4, the Akhmīm recension does contain a parallel passage: “And there was a great lake full of burning mire, in which were some people who rejected (*ἀποστρέφοντες*) righteousness, and tormenting angels afflicted them” (Akh Apoc Pet 23). On some occasions in the New Testament, *ἀποστρέφω* refers to those within the church rejecting the faith and apostatising (cf. 2 Tim 4:4 and Titus 1:14).<sup>379</sup> This meaning is contextual, however, as *ἀποστρέφω* could mean “turn aside from,” (cf. Matt 5:42).<sup>380</sup> Without sufficient contextual evidence to support a particular interpretation, the ambiguity of *kəḥda*, and *ἀποστρέφω*, as either a reference to apostasy or a general rejection of righteousness in Apoc Pet 7:3 should be retained in the translation.

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<sup>379</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 401; Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 605, 707.

<sup>380</sup> Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 685.

The context of Apoc Pet 7:3–4 offers little aid in interpreting the nuances of *kəḥda* in the passage. Those being punished are in a pit which is full. The Eth Apoc Pet does not describe what the pit is full of, but the Akh Apoc Pet puts the sinners in a lake rather than a pit and describes it as “full of burning mire.” Neither of these descriptions help narrow down precisely what sin these people may have committed as the locations are too generic. The punishment inflicted upon this group of sinners is also lacking in detail. They are punished by angels either with afflictions (Akh Apoc Pet) or fire (Eth Apoc Pet). Like the location itself, the generic method of punishment gives no clear indication regarding whether these sinners are apostates or a more general group of those who rejected righteousness. Therefore, as the immediate context offers little in the way of elucidating the question at hand, it is perhaps necessary to once again look at the use of *kəḥda* in similar passages in 1 Enoch. In 1 Enoch, “[t]he formula to ‘deny [*kəḥda*] (the name of) the Lord of Spirits,’ or a close variant of it, occurs nine times in the Parables (38:2; 41:2; 45:1, 2; 46:7; 48:10; 60:6; 67:8, 10).”<sup>381</sup> The sinners who deny the name of the Lord of Spirits are often described as “the kings and the mighty,” so they are not just apostates. As Nickelsburg and VanderKam explain:

As is typical in biblical and related literature, the “name” functions to characterize the person, and it participates in the reality of that person. Thus, denial of the name of the Lord of Spirits is a repudiation of, and an assault against, the deity’s “person.” ... Thus, denial of the name of the Lord of Spirits is the opposite of the faith that characterizes the righteous and chosen. It is to reject the divine status and the authority of the Lord of Spirits (46:5), to deny his power to judge them (67:8), to persecute those who place their faith and trust in him (46:8), and to deify the idols they themselves have fabricated (46:7). In all of these respects, this characterization of the kings and the mighty prepares us

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<sup>381</sup> George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. Vanderkam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 37-82*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 149.

for the judgment scene also anticipated in chap. 46 and then enacted in chaps. 62–63.<sup>382</sup>

If the denial of righteousness in Apoc Pet 7:3–4 parallels to the denial of the name of the Lord of Spirits in 1 Enoch, it is possible that righteousness in Apoc Pet 7:3–4 could also be understood as a reference to the “person” of God. Thus, the same understanding of *kəḥda* would likely be at work in the Apoc Pet and 1 Enoch. However, the emphasis on actions throughout the Apoc Pet makes it more likely that righteousness in 7:3–4 likewise refers to the actions of a person rather than to God himself. In other words, these sinners are being punished because they refused to act in a righteous manner. Thus, the link between the uses of *kəḥda* in Apoc Pet and 1 Enoch is not as secure. Further complicating the issue is the use of *kəḥda* in Matt 26:72 to describe Peter’s denial of Jesus. If Apoc Pet 7:3 intends to bring to mind the denial of Jesus by one of his disciples, it could then be describing those who were once established in the church abandoning lives of righteousness through apostasy.<sup>383</sup> The similar themes surrounding the use of *kəḥda* in 1 Enoch and Apoc Pet, including the phrase “it was better for them when they had not been created/born” (Apoc Pet 3:4 // 1 Enoch 38:2), suggests Apoc Pet 7:3–4 describes a general group of those who reject righteousness rather than apostates in particular, but this suggestion is by no means certain. If this punishment was for apostates, it would be an anomaly as the only reference in the entire text to a sin which only someone who was at one time established in the church could commit.

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<sup>382</sup> Nickelsburg and Vanderkam, *1 Enoch* 2, 149.

<sup>383</sup> Once again, I am grateful to Ralph Lee for pointing out the usage of *kəḥda* in 1 Enoch and Matt 26 and its relevance to the discussion at hand.

In the Ethiopic recension, one final place which may refer to apostasy appears in Eth Apoc Pet 9:3: “And near to those there are other men and women. And they will gnaw their tongues and they will be tormented with a fiery iron and their eyes will be burned. These are [those] the blasphemers and renouncers (*wämäyätəyaniha*) of my righteousness.” However, for the reasons explained in the previous chapter, the Akhmīm recension is likely more original than the Ethiopic for this verse and it describes the sin more specifically as blasphemy than as renouncing righteousness. As such, this verse is not relevant to the discussion at hand.

### *3. Conclusion*

The Apoc Pet clearly distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked. Every person is a part of one group or the other. The content of the text, as revealed in the prologue, is the fate of the wicked, but the intended audience is the righteous who will not receive punishment in hell (Apoc Pet 1:2–3). The Apoc Pet gives no indication that the righteous commit sin. Even though they are capable of being deceived (Apoc Pet 1:4), the signs of Jesus’ return will be apparent to everyone (Apoc Pet 1:6–7), and the righteous will not be deceived by false messiahs (Apoc Pet 2:7–13). The few places in the text which may refer to apostasy (Apoc Pet 5:1 and 7:3–4) are ambiguous. This likely means that they imply a more general rejection of righteousness by those outside of the faith rather than apostasy by those within, but this conclusion is tenuous at best. Nevertheless, the distinction between the righteous and the wicked throughout the text requires that only the wicked receive punishment in hell. The righteous cannot have committed any of the sins for which the wicked are punished because “each of the

elect who have done well, they will come to me [Jesus] and they will not see death by the devouring fire” (Apoc Pet 6:4).

All of this suggests that the Apoc Pet understands its audience as righteous Christians who do not sin. No such group likely ever existed, but neither did a group of sinners who each only committed one sin for which to be punished. The Apoc Pet uses hyperbole to typecast each person as either righteous or wicked. In so doing, it encourages its Christian readers to identify with the righteous, even if they are not as perfect as the text portrays the righteous to be. This perspective requires the reader to view the fate of the wicked as a spectator rather than a participant. Such a perspective requires shifting away from a monitory, self-focused understanding of the text and toward an understanding which seeks to respond to the plight of others.

#### D. Introducing the Eschatological Vision

After discussing the second coming of Christ in Apoc Pet 1–2, the text moves in Apoc Pet 3 to its main concern, “the resurrection of the dead . . . who die for their sin because they did not observe the commandment of God” (Apoc Pet Prologue). Unlike the teaching on the parousia, Jesus’ teaching concerning the fate of the wicked includes a visual revelation in addition to the apocalyptic discourse: “And he showed me in his right hand every soul and in the palm of his right hand the image of that which will be accomplished on the last day” (Apoc Pet 3:1). In fact, the entirety of Apoc Pet 4–14 is Jesus’ narration of the vision which he shows Peter and the disciples in his right hand. Jesus’ role as the giver of divine revelation is unsurprising in the text and was introduced from the opening of the prologue. The method of revelation, however, is peculiar and has no biblical parallels. Buchholz points to the seven stars, which are the

seven churches, in Jesus' right hand in Rev 1:16 as a point of comparison, but there is little to compare between these two verses. He also compares the role of Jesus as the divine revealer of what will happen on the last day to Deut 32:20 (LXX), John 4:25, and John 16:13.<sup>384</sup> Again, these are poor points of comparison, because only John 4:25 refers to Jesus, and in that verse the Samaritan woman claims the Messiah will reveal "all things" not just the fate of the wicked. It is unclear why the vision appears in Jesus' right hand. It may bear significance that, as a post-resurrection account, the hand which displays this vision is also that hand that was pierced, but the reference to the palm of Jesus' right hand detracts from this possibility since it was not Jesus' palm that was pierced at the crucifixion.<sup>385</sup>

As described in Apoc Pet 3:1, the vision Jesus shows Peter and the disciples is of "every soul" and what "will be accomplished on the last day." The next verse elaborates on this: "And how the righteous and sinners will be separated and how the upright in heart will act and how the wicked will be rooted out from eternity to eternity" (Apoc Pet 3:2). At first glance, this statement appears to still focus equally on the fate of the righteous and the wicked, but it actually is the beginning of the shift toward a more specific focus on the fate of the wicked. After the righteous and sinners are separated, the vision shows the eschatological fate of the wicked, "how the wicked will be rooted out from eternity to eternity", but it does not show the eschatological fate of the righteous. Instead, it shows "how the upright in heart will act." The translation given here is unique among English translations. Duensing and Müller

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<sup>384</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 289.

<sup>385</sup> Although he misinterprets this scene as a pre-crucifixion account, this connection was suggested by Alan Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds* (London: UCL Press, 1993), 283.

render the phrase, “how those will do (?) who are upright in heart.”<sup>386</sup> James also shows an uncertainty in his translation: “how they †do† that are upright in heart.”<sup>387</sup> Elliott attempts to ease his translation with a gloss: “how those who are upright in heart will fare.”<sup>388</sup> Finally, Buchholz maintains the odd language in his literal translation, “how the upright of heart will do”, but interprets the text similar to James’ gloss in his free translation, “I saw what will happen to the pure in heart.”<sup>389</sup>

The issue with the previous English translations is that they either leave the text abstruse or they mistranslate a key word of the phrase to better fit with a misinterpretation of the verse. The word in question is *yəgäbbəru*, which is the imperfect active form of *gäbrä*, “to act, do, work, make, be active....”<sup>390</sup> The interpretation Elliott and Buchholz utilise in their translations is that this phrase refers to the eschatological reward of the righteous.<sup>391</sup> However, as the verb is active and the upright in heart are the subject rather than the object of the verb, it conveys an action done by the righteous not something done to the righteous. James, Duensing, and Müller all translate *yəgäbbəru* appropriately as an active verb with the upright in heart as its subject, but their use of “do” causes confusion as one would expect an object to explain what it is that the righteous do. This confusion can be eased by translating *yəgäbbəru* with another of its possible English equivalents, “they will act” rather than “they will do.” This gives the translation “how the upright in heart will act”, thus more faithfully translating the extant text and offering clarity to the passage. The point of

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<sup>386</sup> Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 669; Müller, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 626.

<sup>387</sup> James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 512.

<sup>388</sup> Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 601.

<sup>389</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 177.

<sup>390</sup> Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge‘ez (Classical Ethiopic)*, 205.

<sup>391</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 289.

this passage is not what will happen to the righteous, as per Elliott and Buchholz's translations, but how the righteous will respond to what happens. Therefore, the vision which appears in Jesus' right hand shows the separation of the righteous and the wicked, how the righteous will react, and how the wicked will be punished.

### *1. Eschatological Sorrow*

The next verse continues describing the overall picture of what the disciples see: "We saw how the sinners will weep in great affliction and sorrow to the extent that everyone who has seen it with their eyes will weep, whether the righteous, or angels, or even he [Jesus] himself" (Apoc Pet 3:3). The weeping of sinners in the eschaton is wholly traditional and unsurprising from a text which draws from Matthean tradition (cf. Matt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).<sup>392</sup> The weeping of others in reference to eschatological judgment is less common in the biblical tradition, but does appear in various apocalypses (cf. 2 Enoch 41; Apoc Paul 16, 20, 33; Apoc. Vir. 5–6, 13). The Apoc Pet still manages to stand out from most texts by including Jesus as one of those who weep upon seeing the punishment of the wicked.<sup>393</sup> The importance of Jesus' weeping will be addressed later, but it is first necessary to discuss who else weeps in Apoc Pet 3:3.

Many scholars misinterpret the second half of v. 3 regarding who is weeping. The confusion largely arises from an incorrect understanding of the word *yābākkyu*, "they will weep", in the verse. Although *yābākkyu* is imperfect, James, Elliott, Duensing, and Müller render the second half of this verse in the simple past tense as

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<sup>392</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 290.

<sup>393</sup> Bauckham, "The Conflict of Justice and Mercy," 145 n. 39.

though the verb were perfect: “all who saw it with their eyes *wept*.”<sup>394</sup> Buchholz, in his free translation, uses the possible durative sense of the imperfect, but adds the first person plural pronoun, “... all *of us* watching it began to weep ....”<sup>395</sup> The past tense translations and Buchholz’s addition of the personal pronoun imply that the disciples wept upon seeing the vision, thus leading some scholars to conclude that it is “all those present” on the mountain who are described as in distress here.<sup>396</sup> However, this is not what the verse claims. As the verb is imperfect rather than perfect, the simple past translations of *yäbäkkyyu* are incorrect. The imperfect could be understood in a durative sense, as with Buchholz, but its more common use, particularly when describing the eschatological vision in the Apoc Pet, is the future tense.<sup>397</sup> A future tense translation of *yäbäkkyyu* suggests the weeping described in Apoc Pet 3:3 happens within the eschatological vision itself. As such, it is the righteous, angels, and Jesus within the vision who weep at the affliction of the wicked, rather than the disciples and Jesus on the mountain.

This understanding of v. 3 makes contextual sense as well as grammatical. The disciples could logically be included among the righteous, but nowhere in the Apoc Pet are the two groups treated as synonymous. The disciples are always understood in the narrative as those who are with Jesus on the mountain to whom he gives the revelation about the day of judgment, while the righteous are understood more holistically as those who remain faithful to God in life, whether they lived before,

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<sup>394</sup> Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter”; Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*; James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*; Müller, “Apocalypse of Peter.” Italics added. James’s translation reads, “all that saw...,” while the other three read as above.

<sup>395</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 177. Italics added.

<sup>396</sup> Lanzillotta, “Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?,” 138.

<sup>397</sup> Lambdin, *Introduction to Classical Ethiopic (Ge’ez)*, 144–145.

during, or after the time of the disciples. As such, the use of the term righteous to refer solely to those present with Jesus on the mountain in Apoc Pet 3:3 would be out of place in the text. This might not be the case if the order of the narrative in the Akh Apoc Pet is more original than that found in the Eth Apoc Pet. If the appearance of the two men in Apoc Pet 15–16, who the Eth Apoc Pet describes as Moses and Elijah, originally occurred before Jesus reveals the vision of hell in Apoc Pet 3, then the reference to the weeping of the righteous could perhaps refer to these men who might still be present on the mountain. However, this would cause the same grammatical issue as in most English translations, by translating the imperfect verb as if it were perfect. Therefore, regardless of the order of the text, the reference to the righteous in Apoc Pet 3:3 is best understood as a reference to the elect within the eschatological vision on Jesus' right hand (cf. Apoc Pet 6:4 and 13:1).

Likewise, the reference to the weeping of angels contextually suggests this weeping occurs within the vision itself. Angels feature prominently in the Apoc Pet, but rarely outside of the cosmic conflagration or tour of hell. Of the seventeen references to named and unnamed angels in the Apoc Pet, not including the reference in 3:3, fourteen occur within the eschatological vision of Apoc Pet 4–14, while only three occur elsewhere (Apoc Pet 1:7, 16:3, and 17:5). In Apoc Pet 1:7 the angels accompany Jesus at the parousia, in Apoc Pet 16:3 they move about the righteous in paradise, and in Apoc Pet 17:5 they crowd around each other during the ascension. In no place in the narrative are angels present on the mountain with Jesus and the disciples. Thus, the weeping of angels in Apoc Pet 3:3 is most likely a reference to angels weeping at some time and place other than on the mountain. The most likely

contextual possibility for such a sorrowful response from angelic beings is in the cosmic conflagration and tour of hell of Apoc Pet 4–14.

Claiming that the weeping of Jesus in Apoc Pet 3:3 is best understood as occurring within the eschatological vision rather than on the mountain may at first seem strange, but it also adheres to the context. Jesus is the only character within the narrative that is described as both on the mountain with the disciples and within the vision:

And all of them will see when I come on an eternal, bright cloud and the angels of God who are with me will sit (on) the throne of my glory at the right hand of my heavenly father. And he will place a crown on my head. When the nations see it, each of their nations will weep. And he will command them to pass through the middle of the river of fire. (Apoc Pet 6:1–2)

In this scene, Jesus narrates the vision on display in his right hand. As such, he is describing to the disciples what they see him doing in the vision. Jesus' presence within the vision, therefore, allows for the statement in Apoc Pet 3:3 to refer to his weeping as occurring in the future. The narrative is unclear whether Jesus also weeps on the mountain while he narrates the vision, but showing the disciples his own weeping in the vision suggests that he has a similar emotional reaction to the vision in their presence as well.

All the weeping in Apoc Pet 3:3 occurs within the eschatological vision in Jesus' right hand. As such, in addition to the wicked weeping in their own affliction and sorrow, the righteous, angels, and Jesus himself are also described here as in emotional distress as a result of observing the punishments of the wicked. Some scholars interpret the weeping of the righteous as a result of them "calling into question

their own ethical behaviour that then invites the audience members to do the same.”<sup>398</sup> This interpretation makes little sense, however, as it would necessarily imply that the angels and Jesus were also questioning their own ethical behaviour. This is especially unlikely for Jesus, who committed no sin for which he could be punished. There is no indication in the text that the weeping of the righteous is of a different type than the weeping of the angels and Jesus. As such, the most likely interpretation is that the righteous, angels, and Jesus weep upon seeing the torment of the wicked because they feel compassion for them.

## *2. Peter's Sorrow and God's Mercy*

Upon viewing this vision in Jesus' hand, Peter responds with a request: “And I asked him, saying to him, ‘O Lord, permit that I may proclaim your word about these sinners, because “it was better for them when they had not been created.”” (Apoc Pet 3:4). As is apparent here, Peter is in distress, but like the righteous, angels, and Jesus, he does not become introspective. Instead, his concern is for the sinners and a desire to save them from torment. Thus, even Peter's distress is not a result of feelings of guilt for his own ethical misconduct, but an outpouring of concern for the wicked.

Peter wishes to warn sinners about their eschatological fate, presumably so that they might avoid it. The argument he gives in favour of his request paraphrases Jesus' own words from Matt 26:24 and Mark 14:21, but likely originates from an earlier

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<sup>398</sup> Henning, “Meghan Henning.”

tradition or text. Bauckham has noted multiple texts which claim that it would be better for the wicked had they not been created/born.<sup>399</sup> He subsequently says,

This was already a conventional expression (cf. Eccl 4:2–3; Mark 14:21; 2 Bar 10:6), used of the damned in 1 Enoch 38:2 without any kind of pity. But in the contexts we are considering it conveys a sense of compassion and tragedy, and sometimes, at least, an element of implied protest: that the very creation of sinners should become regrettable directs a question at God’s purpose and providence.”<sup>400</sup>

The use of this traditional motif immediately following the weeping of the righteous, angels, and Jesus implies that, as Bauckham claims, the emotion behind Peter’s request is compassion. Therefore, Peter is here described as having a similar reaction to the punishments of the wicked as those viewing them within the vision. Bauckham’s claim that the argument that it would be better for sinners to not be created at times questions providence also holds true for the Apoc Pet. This is, however, only apparent when Jesus rebukes Peter in the following verses.

Jesus never gives Peter an answer to whether or not he may proclaim the fate of the wicked. Instead, he rebukes him for his statement that it was better for the wicked when they had not been created:

And the Saviour answered me, saying to me, “O Peter, why do you speak in such a way: ‘Non-creation were better for them’? In fact, (it is) you who opposes God. And it is not you who shows them, his formation, mercy rather than he. For he created them and brought them forth where they did not exist. (Apoc Pet 3:5–6)

Michael Gilmour believes Jesus’ rebuke is meant to discourage the reader from sharing in Peter’s compassion and instead to display a sense of *Schadenfreude*.<sup>401</sup> However,

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<sup>399</sup> “4 Ezra 4:62–64; 7:116–117; [cf. 4:12]; 7:45, 166; ApPet 3:4; ApPaul 42; GkApMary [James §11]; ApSedr 4:2; GkApEzra 1:6, 21; 5:9, 14; 2 En 41:2.” Bauckham, “The Conflict of Justice and Mercy,” 139.

<sup>400</sup> Bauckham, “The Conflict of Justice and Mercy,” 139.

<sup>401</sup> Gilmour, “Delighting in the Sufferings of Others,” 137.

this interpretation fails to account for the previous verse where Jesus himself weeps for the damned within the vision. It is unlikely that Jesus would rebuke Peter for sharing in his own distress. Rather, it is more probable that Jesus rebukes Peter for the claim he is making regarding God's character. As Meira Kensky says, "Perhaps without realizing it, Peter has, by his comment, pronounced judgement on God and God's wisdom in these matters."<sup>402</sup> Peter's judgment, according to Kensky, is that God is not just in punishing the wicked. Thus, she argues, the description of the cosmic conflagration and tour of hell is meant to correct Peter and show him that he is wrong for having compassion on the wicked. Again, this fails to account for the preceding context where the righteous, angels, and Jesus all weep in compassion for the wicked.

In reprimanding Peter, Jesus makes no mention of divine justice. Instead, he focuses entirely on divine mercy. Jesus accuses Peter of claiming to be more merciful than God. He then corrects Peter by reminding him that he is not in fact more merciful than God. This type of rebuttal is common in apocalyptic texts (cf. 4 Ezra 5:33; 8:47; Apoc Paul 33; 40). Moreover, as Bauckham notes when discussing this theme in general, "The point seems to be: God loves his own creation more than you do, but even so does not deliver the damned from hell. Since his greater love is not a basis for mercy for the damned, your lesser love should not be. It is an odd argument!"<sup>403</sup> While the argument may seem odd as a recurring theme in apocalyptic texts, the Apoc Pet contains some elements that improve the coherency of Jesus' statement. First, unlike many other tours of hell, the Apoc Pet does contain deliverance from hell for the wicked in the conclusion of the eschatological vision. Therefore, God's love, as

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<sup>402</sup> Meira Z. Kensky, *Trying Man, Trying God: The Divine Courtroom in Early Jewish and Christian Literature*, WUNT II 289 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 262.

<sup>403</sup> Bauckham, "The Conflict of Justice and Mercy," 140.

implemented through the prayers of the righteous, is a basis for mercy for the damned in the Apoc Pet. Second, Jesus does not merely claim God is more merciful than Peter, but he also gives justification for this statement: “For he created them and brought them forth where they did not exist” (Apoc Pet 3:6b). According to Jesus, the true display of God’s mercy for the wicked is that he created them in the first place. Thus, Peter’s claim that non-creation would be better for them directly contradicts God’s merciful act of creation. In this way, Peter opposes God.

### *3. The Integration of Justice and Mercy*

In Apoc Pet 3:7, Jesus ceases reprimanding Peter and instead attempts to comfort him: “But when you saw the grief which will happen to the sinners in the last days and because of this your heart was sorrowful. But they who have transgressed against the Most High, I will show you their works.” This verse does not easily cohere with the rest of the chapter, as it seemingly sets up a contrast between compassion and justice. After acknowledging Peter’s sorrow upon seeing the torment of the wicked in Apoc Pet 3, Jesus begins explaining the vision in his hand, which comprises the next ten chapters. By contrasting the forthcoming explanation with Peter’s sorrow, Jesus seems to suggest that Peter’s sorrow should abate once he understands what the wicked have done in order to deserve their punishment. Perhaps he might even approve of their punishment rather than sympathise with them once he understands.<sup>404</sup> However, an attentive reader will remember that in Apoc Pet 3:3 Jesus also weeps for the wicked in hell. Just like Peter, Jesus sympathises for the wicked. Therefore, he most likely does not intend his explanation to erase Peter’s sorrow, but to transform it.

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<sup>404</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 292.

Lautaro Lanzillotta has contributed greatly to the study of the relationship between justice and mercy in the Apoc Pet, even though his use of Buchholz misleading “free translation” led him to multiple misinterpretations of the text. Regarding Apoc Pet 3, he notes that Peter’s compassion is excessive in that it moves him to question the mercy of God, but the compassion of Jesus is more measured and of a different sort than Peter’s. He then compares Peter’s excessive mercy with the responses of those who view the punishments within the eschatological vision. Contrasting what he sees as two different responses to divine punishment, Lanzillotta analyses multiple scholarly interpretations of the relationship between justice and mercy in the Apoc Pet. These include divine justice superseding human compassion, justice and mercy coexisting, and mercy first requiring justice. In the end, he finds all these interpretations problematic. Instead, he argues for a more integrated understanding of divine justice and mercy in the Apoc Pet where compassion mitigates punishment and righteousness incorporates intercession.<sup>405</sup> This is a step further than those who read the text as teaching that God is merciful *but* he is also just.<sup>406</sup> The concepts of justice and mercy in the Apoc Pet are not portrayed as opposing forces. Instead, the text conveys that God’s justice is merciful and God’s mercy is just.

This concept was already introduced in the prologue, and Jesus addresses it more fully starting in Apoc Pet 3:7. He already explained how creation itself is an expression of God’s mercy, now he is beginning his explanation of how God’s justice is itself merciful. The answer spans the entire eschatological vision and is perhaps only sufficiently answered in Apoc Pet 14. However, upon hearing this explanation, Jesus

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<sup>405</sup> Lanzillotta, “Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?,” 138–149.

<sup>406</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 338.

seems to believe that Peter will understand the mercy and justice of God and thus move from an excessive sorrow that challenges the mercy of God to a measured compassion for the wicked that also acknowledges God's justice.

#### *4. Conclusion*

As the introduction to the cosmic conflagration and tour of hell, Apoc Pet 3 is perhaps one of the most important chapters in the text in the way that it sets up the eschatological vision described in Apoc Pet 4–14 by transitioning from the discussion on the parousia in Apoc Pet 1–2 to a discussion about the fate of the wicked. The text does not neglect the righteous in these chapters, but it is primarily concerned with their response to the punishments in hell rather than their own eschatological fate (cf. Apoc Pet 3:2). Many scholars have overlooked that the emotional state of the righteous, angels, and Jesus throughout eschatological vision is that of weeping in sorrow (Apoc Pet 3:3). This significantly impacts the interpretation of Apoc Pet 4–14 and problematises understandings which see those within the vision who observe or enact the punishments as unmoved by what they see.<sup>407</sup> Instead, they are here described as moved to the point of weeping.

This chapter also describes Peter's own excessive compassion and his challenge that creating humans who will inevitably end up in such torment is not something a merciful God would do (Apoc Pet 3:4). Jesus rebukes Peter for this claim, arguing that Peter is not more merciful than God. Instead, God's act of creation is itself a display of his mercy, rather than it being more merciful to have not created people in the first place (Apoc Pet 3:5–6). Following this rebuke, Jesus moves to comfort

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<sup>407</sup> Lanzillotta, "Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?," 140.

Peter by explaining to him what sins the wicked have committed in order to receive such punishment (Apoc Pet 3:7). In so doing, Jesus seems to suggest that Peter's excessive compassion should become more measured. Jesus likely does not intend for Peter's sorrow to abate completely, as he himself weeps for the damned, but instead that it might transform into a more integrated understanding of justice and mercy.

In Apoc Pet 3, the wicked are weeping in affliction and sorrow; the righteous, angels, Jesus, and Peter are also in distress upon seeing the torment of the wicked; and God is acknowledged as the merciful creator. This focus on compassion for the wicked opens the cosmic conflagration and tour of hell with a sympathetic tone. The audience set forth in the opening chapters are equated with the righteous in the text, therefore they are here encouraged to share in the widespread compassion for the wicked. This challenges past readings of the Apoc Pet which require the audience to feel fearful that they might suffer the punishment of the wicked, according to a monitory reading, or to feel pleasure that the wicked receive the punishment they deserve, according to a reading which encourages *Schadenfreude*. Instead, the eschatological vision of Apoc Pet 4–14 opens in Apoc Pet 3 with compassion, and, as will be seen, it also closes in Apoc Pet 14 with the same compassionate tone. Therefore, Apoc Pet 3 is the first part of an *inclusio* which encompasses the entire eschatological vision. The emphasis on mercy which frames these chapters serves to conceptualise divine justice as integrated with divine mercy.

## E. Conclusions

The Apoc Pet opens with a prologue that reveals the content of the text and hints at its purpose. The content is described as “The second coming of Christ and the resurrection

of the dead ... who die for their sin because they did not observe the commandment of God, their creator” (Apoc Pet Prologue). This shows that although the text describes the general resurrection during the eschaton and includes a vision of paradise, its primary concern is the fate of the wicked. The prologue also states that Peter, as the pseudonymous author, reflected upon this content “so that he might understand the mystery of the Son of God, the merciful and lover of mercy.” This passage reveals that the purpose of the text is to understand some mystery about Jesus, but it does not yet reveal this mystery. Instead, it only hints at it. The first hint is that it somehow relates to the fate of the wicked. The second is that it in some way elicits a reference to the mercy of Jesus. These two hints suggest the mystery has something to do with the relationship between justice and mercy. In this way, the prologue prepares the readers to focus their attention on the descriptions of the wicked in the text, but to do so through the lens of mercy.

The text uses its post-resurrection setting as well as its pseudonymous authorship as a way to claim authority in the eyes of its audience. This audience was likely Christians, who are equated with the righteous in the text. The narrative begins revealing this view of the audience when the disciples ask Jesus a question in order that they may pass along the answer to those they establish in the church (Apoc Pet 1:2–3). This shows the concern of the text is to impart knowledge on those already part of the community, not those outside of the community. The concern for those within the church is evidence of a dichotomy in the text between the righteous and the wicked. Not all tours of hell maintain a clear distinction between those within the community, and those outside of it (cf. the Apoc Paul). However, the Apoc Pet seems to function with an understanding that all those within the community are righteous,

and all those outside of the community are not. This distinction between the righteous and the wicked is emphasized throughout the first two chapters of the text by its assurance that those established in the church by the apostles, i.e. the righteous audience, will not be deceived by false messiahs. Instead, they will recognise the clear signs of the coming of the true messiah (Apoc Pet 1:6–8) and remain faithful to him in the face of persecution from false messiahs (Apoc Pet 2:7–11).

After the text describes the parousia and establishes the presumed faithfulness of the righteous, it then begins to discuss the eschatological fate of the wicked. The introduction to the eschatological vision, Apoc Pet 3, prepares the readers for what is to follow by describing the vision as one of universal sorrow. Not only do the wicked weep in their torment, but everyone in the vision, including the righteous, angels, and Jesus, weeps upon seeing such torment (Apoc Pet 3:3). Upon seeing this vision, Peter also becomes sorrowful and requests that he be allowed to warn the wicked of their fate in order to save them from it. He supports the urgency of his request by saying, “it was better for them when they had not been created” (Apoc Pet 3:4). Jesus, however, views Peter’s claim as a direct challenge to God’s mercy. Therefore, he rebukes Peter’s assertion that he is more merciful than God, and reminds Peter that God was merciful by creating the wicked in the first place (Apoc Pet 3:5–6). He then begins to explain the eschatological vision to Peter in an attempt to comfort him by describing how even God’s justice in punishing the wicked is itself merciful (Apoc Pet 3:7). As the introduction to the eschatological vision of Apoc Pet 4–14, Apoc Pet 3 sets the tone for everything that follows. It is therefore incredibly important that the focus of this chapter is on the sorrow and compassion evoked by the torment of the

wicked. It is this focus on compassion and mercy that is meant to drive the readers' interpretation of the tour of hell.

## Chapter 6: The Tour of Hell

The previous chapter discussed how the Apoc Pet reveals its audience to be Christians and equates them with the righteous in the text. By revealing its content to be primarily about the fate of the wicked, the text encourages its readers to view themselves as spectators of the punishments the wicked endure rather than participants in them. It also uses the themes of mercy and compassion multiple times leading up to the eschatological vision to instil within the readers that upon viewing the punishment of the wicked they should likewise have compassion for them. This mercy, however, must not impinge upon justice. Jesus explains to Peter that he will show him how the sinners in hell deserve their punishment. This explanation is meant to comfort Peter, because it will explain how God's justice and mercy form an integrated whole. This chapter will therefore analyse the concept of justice utilised in the tour of hell of Apoc Pet 7–14. It will first discuss how the text makes use of mirror punishment to ensure that each torment described is just. Next, making use of Henning's work on the role of *ekphrasis* in afterlife torment texts, the various responses to punishment in the text will be analysed in order to ascertain their intended impact on the reader. The chapter will then culminate in a discussion on Apoc Pet 14, which contains the ultimate integration of justice and mercy via the post-mortem salvation of the wicked.

### A. God's Just Punishment

Almost two-thirds of the Apoc Pet is dedicated to the description of the cosmic conflagration and tour of hell.<sup>408</sup> The sheer amount of space devoted to the

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<sup>408</sup> This figure is drawn from comparing the word count for the entire text in both Ethiopic and English to the word count in Apoc Pet 4–14.

eschatological vision highlights its significance, which could function as an argument in favour of a monitory reading of the text. However, the framework of mercy surrounding this section requires reading it as more than just a frightening text meant to scare people away from sinning. In order to assess the impact of this framework on the text, it is necessary to understand the justice pattern utilised in the text. The Apoc Pet makes use of a form of retributive justice called mirror punishment.<sup>409</sup> This section will analyse how the text defines and employs its justice pattern in the punishment of the wicked.

### *1. According to Deeds*

The versification given by Buchholz in Apoc Pet 1 betrays the overconfidence in most scholarship concerning the Apoc Pet in interpreting the text as monitory. Apoc Pet 1:8 reads as follows: “and recompense everyone according to his deeds.” Although this is neither a complete sentence nor even a complete thought, Buchholz sets it apart as its own verse in order to elevate it as the main theme of the text. The comments discussing this verse further remove any doubt that this phrase is viewed by many as the most important phrase in the Apoc Pet. Buchholz says, “This is in reality the theme of the Apocalypse of Peter.”<sup>410</sup> Likewise, Helmer believes, “Herein is found the driving theme of the work as a whole.”<sup>411</sup> Finally, Bauckham more modestly claims, “The phrase encapsulates the theme of eschatological judgment which will dominate chapters 6–13.”<sup>412</sup> While scholars are right to note that the concept of recompense

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<sup>409</sup> Callon, “Sorcery, Wheels, and Mirror Punishment in the Apocalypse of Peter,” 29–49.

<sup>410</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 276.

<sup>411</sup> Helmer, “That We May Know and Understand,” 80.

<sup>412</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 195.

according to deeds is important in the Apoc Pet, some go too far in claiming it is *the* main theme of the text.

Various forms of the phrase “each one according to his deeds” occur five times in the Apoc Pet:

1. everyone according to his deeds/*lāk<sup>w</sup>əllu bākämä məgbaru* (1:8)
2. each one according to his deeds/*lälä ’aḥadubäkämä məgbaru* (6:3)
3. each one according to their transgression/*lälä ’aḥadubäkämä ’abäsahomu* (6:6)
4. each one according to his work/*lälä ’aḥadu ’aḥadubäkämä gəbru* (13:3)
5. each one according to our deeds/*’aḥadu ’aḥadubäkämä məgbarinä* (13:6)<sup>413</sup>

It is readily apparent when listing the five occurrences of this phrase in the Apoc Pet that it is never repeated the same way. Some of the differences are so minor that they are difficult to convey in the English translation and are largely inconsequential for determining the significance of the phrase in the text, such as the difference in preposition and numeral use between Apoc Pet 6:3 (*lälä ’aḥadubäkämä*) and 13:6 (*’aḥadu ’aḥadubäkämä*). Many of the differences, however, do impact the phrase’s ability to serve as a central concept of the text, whether positively or negatively.

The first variance between the different occurrences of the phrase concerns who is being repaid according to their actions. In Apoc Pet 1:8, everyone (*k<sup>w</sup>əllu*), that is all the living and the dead, receive recompense according to their deeds. In the other four instances, only the wicked are repaid in accordance with their deeds. While this may seem like a point of discontinuity in the text, it is perhaps a result of the focus on

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<sup>413</sup> In all these verses, *’aḥadu* is written using the numerical sign for one rather than the word itself. I have transliterated it as *’aḥadu* rather than *1* here for ease of reading. Note that there is a space in Buchholz’s text between *lälä* and *’aḥadu* in 13:3 but not in 6:3 or 6:6. Also note, for readers unfamiliar with Gə’əz numerical signs, that *’aḥadu ’aḥadu* is a repetition of the number one and not eleven.

the wicked in Apoc Pet 6–13. Apoc Pet 1 speaks generally about the return of Jesus and the day of judgment for all people, but, as the prologue foreshadows, Apoc Pet 6–13 focuses on the fate of the wicked in particular. Bauckham claims that Apoc Pet 6 is the point in the narrative that distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked and begins the emphasis on the punishment of the wicked.<sup>414</sup> Even though this separation is already apparent in Apoc Pet 3:2, one can also see it in the narrative in Apoc Pet 6:4–5: “But each of the elect who have done well, they will come to me and they will not see death by the devouring fire. But the wicked and sinners and hypocrites will stand in the midst of a pit of darkness which cannot be extinguished and their punishment will be fire.” These verses show that the fate of the righteous also adheres to the concept of recompense according to actions, but the text quickly passes over this notion and does not even explain what “doing well” entails. It is merely assumed that the righteous act rightly, and that the readers know what it means to act righteously. Instead, it emphasises the fate of the wicked and prepares the reader for the tour of hell beginning in Apoc Pet 7.

In a similar vein, the various occurrences of this phrase are not consistent in describing recompense according to deeds as judgment (*kʷənnäne*) or punishment (*däyn*). Both Apoc Pet 1:8 and 13:6 refer to recompense according to actions as judgment, while Apoc Pet 6:6 and 13:3 refer to it as punishment. No explicit reference to either judgment or punishment exists in the immediate context of Apoc Pet 6:3. Likely, this inconsistency reflects a lack of distinction between judgment and punishment in the text, but further work needs to be done in order to verify this. There

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<sup>414</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 195.

may be more to this inconsistency than there initially seems, but a detailed analysis of the uses of *k<sup>w</sup>ənnāne* and *däyn* in the Apoc Pet is beyond the scope of this study.

In addition to inconsistencies regarding who receives recompense on the day of judgment, the text is not consistent concerning according to what people are repaid. Most of the verses claim it is in accordance with their deeds (*məgbar*) (Apoc Pet 1:8, 6:3, 13:6), but Apoc Pet 6:6 uses transgression (*'abäsa*) and 13:3 uses work (*gəbr*). The root for work (*gəbr*) and deeds (*məgbar*) is the same, so this difference is minor. The use of transgressions in Apoc Pet 6:6, however, further emphasises the text's focus on the fate of the wicked. All five verses make it clear that recompense is according to actions. The implication in Apoc Pet 6:3, 13:3, and 13:6, with their reference to the wicked, is that these actions are sinful. This aligns with the use of transgression in Apoc Pet 6:6 to convey that recompense is in accordance with wicked actions. The actions in Apoc Pet 1:8, however, could be either righteous or wicked, because everyone, not just the wicked, in this verse receives recompense in accordance with their actions.

One final difference that needs addressed is who in the narrative voices each occurrence of the phrase. The first four times Jesus is speaking, but the last time, in Apoc Pet 13:6, it is the wicked who speak. This difference is perhaps the most significant in emphasising the importance of this concept in the Apoc Pet. Throughout most of the text, Jesus, as the giver of divine revelation, explains the concept of recompense according to deeds. In Apoc Pet 13:6, however, the concept moves from divine revelation to human acceptance. This serves to emphasise the justice of the punishments. While it may be sufficient for God to deem as just the recompense in

accordance with deeds, it further upholds this claim to put it in the mouths of those being punished.<sup>415</sup>

When discussing the importance of this phrase in the Apoc Pet, Bauckham pays special attention to the placement of each occurrence in the text. He claims, “It occurs first in the programmatic description of the parousia as Jesus Christ’s coming to exercise divine judgment. Then it occurs twice in each of the two chapters (6 and 13) which frame the long description of the punishments in hell.”<sup>416</sup> The *inclusio* formed by this phrase in Apoc Pet 6 and 13 is particularly significant as it once again serves to highlight the text’s emphasis on the fate of the wicked and the system of justice with which the Apoc Pet functions. It is this placement of the phrase which gives it significance in the eschatological vision. While it may not be *the* main theme of the Apoc Pet, as the framework for the tour of hell it reveals that the text operates with a concept of retributive justice where the punishment corresponds to the sin committed. Therefore, the text foreshadows a particular pattern for the punishments in hell in Apoc Pet 6. This pattern is then affirmed in Apoc Pet 13 by the admission of the wicked concerning the justice of the judgment of God due to them receiving recompense in accordance with their deeds.

## 2. *Lex Talionis and Mirror Punishment*

Some debate exists whether the punishments in the Apoc Pet utilise the notion of *lex talionis* or mirror punishment in their application of retributive justice. On the one hand, scholars such as David Fiensy believe the correspondence between the sin

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<sup>415</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 196.

<sup>416</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 196.

committed and the punishment inflicted “is precisely the principle behind *lex talionis*.”<sup>417</sup> On the other hand, Callie Callon and others prefer the concept of mirror punishment, claiming, among other things, that the eternal duration of the punishments constitutes the lack of a measured response and therefore breaks the *talio* principle.<sup>418</sup> However, a strict distinction between the two forms of retributive punishment is perhaps unnecessary.

Bernard Jackson argues that *lex talionis* is only applied to non-fatal injuries and requires inflicting the same injury upon the perpetrators of the crime as they inflicted upon their victim.<sup>419</sup> This problematises reading the Apoc Pet according to the principle of *lex talionis*, as it contains punishment for murderers (Apoc Pet 7:9–11) and many instances where the punishment is different from what the victims of the crime would have experienced (cf. Apoc Pet 8:1–4; 9:5–7; 10:1). A further feature of *lex talionis* in rabbinic circles, which Jackson describes, is that it is a matter of divine justice rather than human justice.<sup>420</sup> This criterion, unlike the previous, supports the possibility that the punishments in the Apoc Pet follow the principle of *lex talionis*. Every punishment in the Apoc Pet is understood as divine punishment due to its eschatological nature. A more diverse understanding than normal of which crimes and punishments could follow this principle might be at play in a text where most of the torments use divine rather than human agents to enact the punishments.

Rather than meticulously distinguishing between *lex talionis* and mirror punishment, Patrick Miller recommends a broader understanding of *lex talionis* that

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<sup>417</sup> David A. Fiensy, “Lex Talionis in the Apocalypse of Peter,” *HTR* 76 (1983): 256.

<sup>418</sup> Callon, “Sorcery, Wheels, and Mirror Punishment in the Apocalypse of Peter,” 34.

<sup>419</sup> Bernard S. Jackson, “The Problem of Exod. XXI 22–5 (Ius Talionis),” *VT* 23 (1973): 281 n. 1.

<sup>420</sup> Jackson, “The Problem of Exod. XXI 22–5 (Ius Talionis),” 280–282.

encompasses variations in the principle. “At times one is dealing with talion in its literal or precise sense. At other times one encounters a variation of talion or an expression of it symbolically as in what are sometimes called ‘mirror’ punishments.”<sup>421</sup> The three main variations on the talionic principle are, according to Ka Leung Wong:

1. “Punishment of a bodily part which is used directly in the offence;”
2. “Punishment by the same means which the offender used in the crime;”
3. “Punishment determined according to the motivating force which forms the basis of the crime.”<sup>422</sup>

Likewise, Bauckham views *lex talionis* as undergoing refinement in Jewish literature to include the notions “that the instrument of sin should be the *instrument* of punishment” and “the *part of the body* which sinned is the part which should be punished”, but he admits that he is unaware of the former being applied to post-mortem punishments.<sup>423</sup> However, the variations or refinements of the talionic principle do not account for all the punishments in the Apoc Pet. Notably absent are the symbolic punishments, such as the punishment for hypocrites in Apoc Pet 12:1–2. This symbolic understanding of *lex talionis*, which Miller equates with mirror punishment, is precisely what is sometimes at work in the Apoc Pet.

Literally understood, therefore, the Apoc Pet does not function according to the ancient concept of *lex talionis*. However, many of the “like for like” punishments utilised in the text do still contain significant talionic features.<sup>424</sup> While the Apoc Pet

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<sup>421</sup> Patrick D. Miller Jr., *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis*, SBLMS 27 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 104.

<sup>422</sup> Ka Leung Wong, *The Idea of Retribution in the Book of Ezekiel*, VTSup LXXXVII (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 227.

<sup>423</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 214. Italics original. See the below discussion on the punishment for sorcery (12:3–7) for such an example.

<sup>424</sup> Wong, *The Idea of Retribution in the Book of Ezekiel*, 227–228.

could perhaps be described as utilising an expanded form of *lex talionis*, this expansion of the principle is best described as mirror punishment. As such, while a strict distinction between the two terms need not exist, mirror punishment offers a preferable understanding of the punishments in the Apoc Pet as it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the justice pattern in the text. This acknowledges and counteracts the claims of those who adhere to a strict understanding of *lex talionis* and argue that in the Apoc Pet “the *talio* principal is used modestly and cannot be considered the organising principle of these penalties.”<sup>425</sup>

The more symbolic understanding of the principle of *lex talionis* present in mirror punishment allows for symbolism within the punishments themselves.<sup>426</sup> This allows for improved correlation between sin and punishment in those torments which do not correspond literally to the crime committed (cf. Apoc Pet 7:9–11). The use of mirror punishment in the Apoc Pet also “shows that it is not the acts that are punished, but the guilt that sinners have acquired through their transgressions.”<sup>427</sup> This is apparent in the personification of deeds in the text and their role in standing before the wicked in accusation (Apoc Pet 6:3). Finally, Callon’s suggestion that mirror punishments do not require a measured response is important for the Apoc Pet.<sup>428</sup> Even though the references to the eternal duration of the punishments may be later additions to the text, the current manuscript evidence does not support their removal.<sup>429</sup> As long as the text states that the punishments in hell last forever, a literal understanding of the

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<sup>425</sup> Jan N. Bremmer, “The Apocalypse of Peter: Place, Date and Punishments,” in *Maidens, Magic and Martyrs in Early Christianity*, WUNT 379 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 286.

<sup>426</sup> Callon, “Sorcery, Wheels, and Mirror Punishment in the Apocalypse of Peter,” 33–34.

<sup>427</sup> Lanzillotta, “Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?,” 144–145.

<sup>428</sup> Callon, “Sorcery, Wheels, and Mirror Punishment in the Apocalypse of Peter,” 34.

<sup>429</sup> See chapter four.

*lex talionis* principal cannot apply to the Apoc Pet. Because of such deficiencies in a strict understanding of *lex talionis*, the concept of mirror punishments is a better descriptor for the justice pattern at work in the Apoc Pet.

### 3. *The Justice of Mirror Punishment*

Having postulated that the Apoc Pet conceptualises eschatological judgment in accordance with mirror punishment, which recompenses the wicked in accordance with their deeds, it is now necessary to demonstrate how this method of punishment is utilised within the text. Much of this work has been done by scholars previously, but it bears repeating and expanding upon here. If the text is meant to convey an integrated understanding of justice and mercy, then the punishments in hell must be understood as just. The Apoc Pet includes twenty-one punishments in hell. Bauckham believes the number of punishments, seven multiplied by three, may be symbolically significant as an indication of completeness and thus representative of every punishment in hell without necessitating the listing of every sin and punishment. He also admits, however, that no significant numerological grouping of the sins exists in the text.<sup>430</sup> Bauckham's hypothesis is intriguing, but it is equally likely that the text includes twenty-one punishments because that is how many it took to describe all the sins the author wished to include in the text. Each sin will be analysed in order to ascertain both how the punishment may be understood as mirror punishment and how the text maintains that punishment in hell is just.<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 205.

<sup>431</sup> It is important to note that while an analysis of the punishments helps confirm the justice pattern in the text, it is the sins themselves that are of greater importance in the exegesis of the Apoc Pet, particularly as it pertains to a historical reconstruction of the immediate concerns of the community

The first sin listed in the text is blaspheming the way of righteousness, for which the punishment is hanging by the tongue over a fire (Apoc Pet 7:2). Hanging punishments are common in tours of hell and sometimes have the sinner hanging by the body part most involved in the sin committed (cf. *Gedulat Moshe* 13, *Ver. Hist.* II.31, Acts Thom 56).<sup>432</sup> In this instance, blasphemers hang by their tongue because it is with the tongue that they blasphemed the way of righteousness.<sup>433</sup> Following this, in another place, “are those who have rejected righteousness” (Apoc Pet 7:3–4). They are in a large and full pit, perhaps full of burning mire if the Akhmīm text is more original in this regard (Akh Apoc Pet 23). As discussed above, those who reject righteousness are likely not apostates specifically but a general designation for non-Christians, although this is by no means certain. The general nature of this sin may be reflected in the general nature of the punishment: fiery punishment while angels keep watch.<sup>434</sup> The presence of fire and angels is common in the Apoc Pet, so a sin which is common to all the wicked likewise receives a punishment common among the torments in hell.

The following two sins are sometimes combined into one by scholars, due to their similar punishment.<sup>435</sup> However, it is better to keep them separate, as it is not the punishment that distinguishes the wicked in hell but the sin. The first group is women who braid their hair specifically to entice men into fornication (Apoc Pet 7:5–6). These

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within which the text was written. The punishments described are largely traditional, but no two tours of hell contain an identical list of sins.

<sup>432</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 85–92.

<sup>433</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 215; Paul Foster, “The Open Hell: A Study of the Apocalypse of Peter,” in *The Open Mind: Essays in Honour of Christopher Rowland*, ed. Jonathan Knight and Kevin Sullivan, LNTS 522 (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 89.

<sup>434</sup> Foster, “The Open Hell,” 89.

<sup>435</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 308.

women are hung by their hair and cast into the pit which houses those who rejected righteousness. Like the blasphemers, these women receive the traditional punishment of hanging by the offending body part.<sup>436</sup> In this case, it is by their hair that they are hung as their sin was the act of enticing men not the act of having sex with those men. In the same place, the men who succumbed to these women are also hung (Apoc Pet 7:7–8). They are hung by their thighs, which may be intended as a euphemism for the penis.<sup>437</sup> Even if a euphemism is not intended, punishment by means of the offending body part is at work in this instance.<sup>438</sup>

The next punishment is for murderers and their accomplices (Apoc Pet 7:9–11). Their torment is imaginative. They are put into fire where venomous beasts bite them and worms afflict them. Bauckham believes the beasts represent the evil desires of the murders, but this makes little sense.<sup>439</sup> Buchholz offers a better understanding, arguing that this punishment is intended to make them feel the pain they inflicted upon their victims and experience the grave worms which likewise would have fed upon those they sent to an untimely death.<sup>440</sup> The use of venomous beasts is perhaps too specific to intend to inflict a general notion of pain. Instead, it may have a twofold intent. First, the teeth of the beasts will pierce the skin of the murders and their accomplices. This may function symbolically for the various ways they may have stabbed or pierced the skin of their victims. Second, the Apoc Pet uses animals in multiple punishments (Apoc Pet 7:9; 8:9; 9:2; 11:4), but this is the only one where these animals are described as poisonous. Perhaps this mirrors the use of poison as a

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<sup>436</sup> Foster, “The Open Hell,” 90.

<sup>437</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 215; Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 314.

<sup>438</sup> Foster, “The Open Hell,” 90–91.

<sup>439</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 218.

<sup>440</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 315.

method of murder. Buchholz correctly identifies that the murderers and accomplices feel the pain of the victims, but he does not discuss that they feel a particular form of pain that simultaneously mirrors different methods of murder. Henning also suggests that the victims are brought to view the punishment of their murderers to further shame the wicked by bringing them face to face with those whom they have wronged.<sup>441</sup> The language in the passage seems wrong for this view, however, as it is the victims that are made to look upon the wicked and not the other way around.

The punishment for abortion also contains aspects of mirror punishment (Apoc Pet 8:1–4). Women who have had abortions are buried up to their neck in a large, deep pit into which all manner of awfulness flows from everywhere else. They remain there in anguish while their aborted children cry out to God and shoot bolts of lightning into their mothers' eyes. Buchholz, followed by Bauckham, overstates the connection between the excreta flowing into the pit and its role in punishment by claiming it is menstrual discharge and aborted fetuses.<sup>442</sup> The word translated as “excreta” is *ṣəb*, which refers to any manner of bodily discharge from excrement to blood.<sup>443</sup> This word occurs both here in Apoc Pet 8:1 and also in 10:1. In the latter, it does not refer specifically to menstrual discharge or fetuses, as it is used there as punishment for usury. Also problematising Buchholz's interpretation of the excreta specifically referring to aborted fetuses is the placement of the aborted children opposite the women. They cannot simultaneously be both within the pit and opposite to it. Therefore, the excreta is likely a more general aspect of the punishment in hell, but the

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<sup>441</sup> Henning, *Educating Early Christians*, 212–213 n. 131.

<sup>442</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 218; Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 316–317.

<sup>443</sup> Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic)*, 230.

women's submersion in it may have a correspondence to their sin as it seems to resemble the ancient practice of soaking in certain baths in order to cause a miscarriage.<sup>444</sup> The remaining aspects of import are the anguish of the women and the lightning coming from their children. Buchholz suggests that the women feel pain because the excreta is hot, but a far simpler notion is likely at work in the punishment here.<sup>445</sup> The word translated as "anguish" is the Ethiopic word *ṣā'ṛ*, which also refers to labour pains.<sup>446</sup> Therefore, the women here are described as suffering constant labour pains, which is something they would have likely avoided with an abortion. The appropriateness of the lightning which comes from the aborted children and drills into the eyes of the women could have two possible interpretations. First, when understood in conjunction with the next punishment of infanticide where light and life are equated (Apoc Pet 8:7), depriving women of their sight removes their ability to see light just as they denied the light from their children.<sup>447</sup> That their eyes are drilled out with lightning further emphasises this connection between light and life. The second interpretation sees the lightning piercing the mothers' eyes as resembling one of the methods of abortion which used a hook in the eye of the foetus to remove it from the womb.<sup>448</sup> Either of these interpretations adequately links the sin to the torment according to mirror punishment.

Following the sin of abortion is the similar sin of infanticide (Apoc Pet 8:5–10). Men and women who killed their children stand naked above those being punished

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<sup>444</sup> Patrick Gray, "Abortion, Infanticide, and the Social Rhetoric of the Apocalypse of Peter," *J ECS* 9 (2001): 320.

<sup>445</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 317.

<sup>446</sup> Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic)*, 231.

<sup>447</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 318.

<sup>448</sup> Gray, "Abortion, Infanticide, and the Social Rhetoric of the Apocalypse of Peter," 320.

for having abortions while the women's breastmilk congeals and flesh-eating animals come from it to punish them and their husbands. The likely method of infanticide which this punishment mirrors is killing the infants via exposure.<sup>449</sup> As such, the nakedness of the wicked mirrors how they exposed their children.<sup>450</sup> The use of breastmilk in punishing infanticide fits, as this source of nourishment, once denied to their children, now becomes the source of their torment.<sup>451</sup> The beasts which come from the breastmilk may mirror the beasts that likely at times ate the exposed children.<sup>452</sup> Unlike the understandably inarticulate cries of the aborted babies, the victims of infanticide, having been born and thus more fully developed, heighten the justice of the scene by directly accusing their parents of their wickedness.<sup>453</sup> It is also noteworthy that the punishment for infanticide in the Apoc Pet is quoted by Clement of Alexandria, who confirms that he also believes it is just in accordance with the concept of mirror punishment: "*But the milk of the mothers which flows from their breasts and congeals, says Peter in the Apocalypse, shall beget tiny flesh-eating beasts and they shall run over them and devour them*—which teaches that the punishments will come to pass by reason of the sins" (*Ecl.* 49).<sup>454</sup>

The next sin mentioned is persecuting the righteous and handing them over, presumably to be martyred (Apoc Pet 9:1–2). These men and women have half of their bodies on fire, are whipped, and their entrails are eaten by worms. The burning and

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<sup>449</sup> Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 217.

<sup>450</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 319.

<sup>451</sup> Foster, "The Open Hell," 93.

<sup>452</sup> Gray, "Abortion, Infanticide, and the Social Rhetoric of the Apocalypse of Peter," 324–325.

<sup>453</sup> Danuta Shanzer, "Voices and Bodies: The Afterlife of the Unborn," *Numen* 56 (2009): 341.

<sup>454</sup> Duensing and Maurer, "Apocalypse of Peter," 675 n. 1a; Müller, "Apocalypse of Peter," 637 n. 37a. Italics original.

whipping likely reflect the treatment of the persecuted and martyred, and the worms are likely the same grave worms as those used in the punishment of murderers.<sup>455</sup> Near to them “are those who blasphemed and spoke wrongly of the way of righteousness” (Apoc Pet 9:3). This appears to be a repeat of the sin of blasphemy mentioned in Apoc Pet 7:2, but the different punishment they receive suggests this is somehow a distinct group. In this passage, the blasphemers gnaw their lips rather than hang by their tongues, but the true uniqueness comes from the addition that this group “spoke wrongly of the way of righteousness” and have burning iron shoved into their eyes. Perhaps this group is connected in some fashion to the persecutors mentioned previously in that they spoke wrongly about things they saw the righteous doing. Therefore, they are punished in their eyes and lips for blaspheming in regard to the things they saw. Another possibility, as suggested by Buchholz, is that their eyes are poked out “because they were unable to see the true way.”<sup>456</sup> Again, either interpretation adheres to the concept of mirror punishment and thus shows the punishment to be just.

While the Eth Apoc Pet connects the next group with the previous two by mentioning martyrs, the likely more original Akh Apoc Pet describes it as a more general group of false witnesses (Apoc Pet 9:4).<sup>457</sup> Perhaps to not repeat a punishment, this group is described as having their lips cut off and fire put into their mouths, rather than being hung by their tongue. Again, this is an example of mirror punishment

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<sup>455</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 322; Foster, “The Open Hell,” 94.

<sup>456</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 323.

<sup>457</sup> See chapter four as to why Akh Apoc Pet 29 is likely more original than Eth Apoc Pet 9:4.

because the sin of speaking falsely with the mouth receives punishment in the mouth.<sup>458</sup>

The punishment in Apoc Pet 9:5–6 is for the rich who did not care for widows and orphans. They are dressed in rags and roll on sharp, burning stones. Dressing the wealthy in tattered clothes reverses their circumstance in life and mirrors the clothing likely worn by the widows and orphans they neglected. However, the sharp, burning stones have no obvious analogy.<sup>459</sup> Perhaps, as Buchholz suggests, they are meant to allude to the riches, gems or coins, in which the wealthy used to trust.<sup>460</sup>

The tour moves to yet another place full of excreta for the punishment of usurers (Apoc Pet 10:1). Men and women who charged interest are wading up to their knees in this quagmire of filth. Buchholz finds this punishment appropriate as lending with interest is a “filthy business.”<sup>461</sup> This is not a convincing interpretation because the excreta, *ṣəb*, in which the usurers are placed is the same as that which flows into the pit into which women who have abortions are submerged. If the excreta itself was intended to mirror the act of usury, it should be unique in this punishment. Instead, the act of wading through the morass up to their knees is likely the specific punishment which intends to mirror some aspect of the offense. Perhaps a forgotten ancient saying or anecdote is at play here, such as the more modern idea of breaking the kneecaps of those who do not pay their debts. As it stands, however, no known mirror punishment exists in this instance.

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<sup>458</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 217; Foster, “The Open Hell,” 95.

<sup>459</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 218; Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 325; Foster, “The Open Hell,” 96–97.

<sup>460</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 326.

<sup>461</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 327.

The next punishment takes place on a cliff which may overlook the usurers, though this is not clear in the text.<sup>462</sup> From this cliff are thrown men and women who engage in homosexual intercourse. They are then driven back to the top to be thrown off again in a continual cycle (Apoc Pet 10:2–4). Like the previous punishment for usurers, this torment does not clearly adhere to the pattern of mirror punishment. Perhaps, as Bernadette Brooten suggests, the punishment mirrors the reversal of gender roles by making the wicked constantly reverse their direction up and down the cliff.<sup>463</sup> Another suggestion arises by focusing on how the men and women are *thrown*, καταστρεφόμενοι, from the cliff and *driven*, ἠλαύνοντο, back to the top by their tormentors. The passive verbal construction of this punishment may mirror the active and passive sexual dichotomy in the ancient world.<sup>464</sup> Perhaps these men and women are punished by becoming passive participants in their own torment, unable to rest from the cycle of climbing the cliff only to be thrown back down. This fits well with the punishment of the men, only passive males in the relationship are punished, but it does encounter some difficulty in describing the women since both the active and passive participants in the female relationship are punished.<sup>465</sup>

In another place, the angel Ezrael creates a place of fire into which is brought every idol ever made. Whipping themselves with chains in front of these idols are the men and women who made them (Apoc Pet 10:5–6). Everything that was at one time considered a god was burned during the cosmic conflagration in Apoc Pet 6:7–9, so

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<sup>462</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 327; Foster, “The Open Hell,” 98.

<sup>463</sup> Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 306–307.

<sup>464</sup> For an overview of some scholarship on ancient sexuality, see Ruth Mazo Karras, “Active/Passive, Acts/Passions: Greek and Roman Sexualities,” *AHR* 105.4 (2000): 1250–1265.

<sup>465</sup> Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 307–308.

these idol makers would now know that the idols they made were in fact nothing more than the material from which they were crafted. Their punishment is to place themselves before the idols and self-flagellate. As self-flagellation was a common act of worship in the ancient world, perhaps this punishment is meant to contort what was once intended as veneration of the gods into an act of punishment.<sup>466</sup>

The sin which follows is similar to that of making idols, but it particularly pertains to forsaking the way of God and following demons of some kind (Apoc Pet 10:7). The fire in which these men and women are punished is described as the “fire of idol madness”, τῆ καύσει τῶν εἰδωλομανῶν, so the fire is some special fire particularly for those who are crazed after idols. The use of εἰδωλομανής, which only occurs in Christian literature, suggests that this fire is meant to convey a particular form of punishment which mirrors the sin of idolatry.<sup>467</sup> Unfortunately, the use of the unknown word *faqat* problematises this passage so that a more explicit connection between the sin and the punishment cannot be made.

The next section of the text is almost unintelligible. The sinners are those who dishonour their parents by abandoning them, presumably in old age, but the exact nature of their punishment is uncertain (Apoc Pet 11:1–3). James imagines “a narrow bridge over a stream of fire which they keep trying to cross.”<sup>468</sup> Buchholz, at the suggestion of William H. Brownlee, believes the scene depicts a volcano which the

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<sup>466</sup> John Howe, “Voluntary Ascetic Flagellation: From Local to Learned Traditions,” in *The Haskins Society Journal 24: 2012 Studies in Medieval History*, ed. William L. North and Laura Gathagan (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 42–45.

<sup>467</sup> BDAG, s.v. “εἰδωλομανής.” For more on the use of εἰδωλομανής in the Apoc Pet, see Thomas J. Kraus, “Zur näheren Bedeutung der ‘Götzen(bilder)’ in der Apokalypse des Petrus,” *ASE 24* (2007): 147–176.

<sup>468</sup> James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 517.

wicked attempt to summit.<sup>469</sup> Buchholz's interpretation makes better sense of the text than James', but it still does not adequately clarify what is happening in the text. All that the text says for certain is that men and women go up and down something high while burning and trembling occurs around them. Without a clearer picture of what the punishment entails, an understanding of how it mirrors the sin cannot exist.

The next punishment is meted out upon children and virgins who "believe in their error" (Apoc Pet 11:4–5). Buchholz incorrectly thinks the children and virgins of Apoc Pet 11:4 are righteous, but this group is the only possible subject for the punishment in the rest of the verse.<sup>470</sup> The sin of believing in their error is further described as disobeying their parents, not following the instructions of their ancestors, and dishonouring their elders. In doing all three of these things, the children and virgins likely committed any number of sins already mentioned in the tour, but the offence of disobeying those who instructed them not to commit such sins takes precedence. Their punishment is to view all other punishments while they are in anguish, hanged, and devoured by flesh-eating birds. In other words, they undergo many punishments simultaneously as they are shown the particular punishment for each sin in hell. This mirrors their sin because they did not adhere to the teachings of their parents, ancestors, and elders in life, so now in hell they receive a far more grotesque and painful instruction on the consequences of sin. The correspondence of the birds to the sin is uncertain, but it is likely not, as Buchholz suggested, a reflection of the pain felt by parents when their children disobey.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 333.

<sup>470</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 334.

<sup>471</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 335.

With the children and virgins will also be young women who did not remain chaste until marriage (Apoc Pet 11:6–7). The text refers to these women as “ten virgins”, but this is likely an intrusion in the textual transmission from Matt 25:1–13 and the parable of the ten virgins.<sup>472</sup> The original text likely did not specify a number of women in this punishment, nor would it have called them virgins. The sin they committed was specifically not maintaining their virginity. Their punishment is to wear dark clothing while their flesh dissolves. Bauckham compares this punishment with Num 5 and the Mishnah’s discussion of the same passage:

The idea of the flesh dissolving may be borrowed from the punishment of the adulterous wife in Numbers 5:27 (‘her thigh shall fall away’). In that case, the ‘flesh’ of the young women is a euphemism for their sexual parts, and it is that part of their body which sinned that is punished. The black clothes indicate shame, as we can see from the Mishnah’s discussion of the case of the suspected adulteress in Numbers 5: her husband shames her by exchanging her white garments for black (m. Sot. 1:6–7).<sup>473</sup>

Once again, mirror punishment is at work in the text in that the offending body part is punished, thus continuing the affirmation that the punishment of the wicked is just.<sup>474</sup>

The sin mentioned in Apoc Pet 11:8–9 also adheres to mirror punishment, when slaves who disobey their masters perpetually gnaw their tongues. The assumption is that the slaves disobey by speaking back to their masters, therefore they are punished in their mouth.<sup>475</sup>

The penultimate sin is hypocrisy, particularly in almsgiving (Apoc Pet 12:1–2). These men and women are blind, deaf, and dressed in white clothing. They crowd around each other and stumble on flaming coals. The white clothing reflects the

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<sup>472</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 335–336.

<sup>473</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 217.

<sup>474</sup> Foster, “The Open Hell,” 100.

<sup>475</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 218; Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 336.

righteousness these people thought or claimed they had, while the blindness and deafness make them unable to see or speak about this righteousness anymore. Their blindness in hell may also metaphorically reflect their spiritual blindness in life when they thought they were righteous.<sup>476</sup> Bauckham and Buchholz claim these people actually believed they were righteous, rather than merely claiming to be righteous.<sup>477</sup> While this is possible, it is not necessary. Whether they were convinced in their own hypocrisy or not, the punishment of wearing righteous robes while unable to see or speak of their own righteousness is a just punishment that mirrors their sin.

The final sin described in the tour of hell of the Apoc Pet is sorcery (Apoc Pet 12:3–7). Scholars have for some time struggled to explain the correlation between this final sin and its punishment. Some even believe no such correlation exists in this instance.<sup>478</sup> Callon, however, connects this punishment with the use of a wheel, called either an iunx or rhombus, in magic rituals in antiquity. Whirling wheels were typically used in compulsion magic, such as love spells, which would then cause the target of the spell to lose some degree of autonomy. Therefore, hanging sorcerers and sorceresses by a whirling wheel is just according to mirror punishment by punishing them by the tool with which they sinned and in the same manner which they sinned against others; they are caused to lose their own autonomy and must go along with the whirling of the wheel.<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> Foster, “The Open Hell,” 101.

<sup>477</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 218; Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 336–337.

<sup>478</sup> Fiensy, “Lex Talionis in the Apocalypse of Peter,” 257.

<sup>479</sup> Callon, “Sorcery, Wheels, and Mirror Punishment in the Apocalypse of Peter,” 38–46.

#### 4. Conclusion

The majority of the Apoc Pet is devoted to the vision of the cosmic conflagration and tour of hell. In Apoc Pet 4–13, the justice pattern utilised in the text is established and put into action. The tour of hell contains statements at the beginning and end which emphasise that the punishments in hell are in accordance with the deeds of the wicked. At first, only Jesus mentions this aspect of the punishments, but in the end the wicked in hell acknowledge the justice of God’s judgment because it is in accordance with their deeds. This notion of judgment in accordance with deeds in the text is best understood as mirror punishment. Mirror punishment expands upon the concept of *lex talionis* to include not only “eye for an eye” punishments, but also those punishments which utilise the same means by which someone sinned or a symbolic correlation between the sin and punishment. This understanding of the justice pattern in the text allows for a better understanding of how most of the punishments in hell are meant to fit the sin committed.

Functioning with a more literal “measure-for-measure” understanding of punishment in the Apoc Pet, Bauckham only identifies eleven of the twenty-one punishments in hell which, according to his assessment, appropriately adhere to the text’s concept of justice. While he admits subsequent scholars may discover further correlations, he believes it is not possible that all the punishments in hell utilise the same pattern of justice.<sup>480</sup> Callon, however, has convincingly argued that the concept of mirror punishment governs every punishment in the Apoc Pet, even if current scholarship is unable to determine the correlation in each instance.<sup>481</sup> The above

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<sup>480</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 218.

<sup>481</sup> Callon, “Sorcery, Wheels, and Mirror Punishment in the Apocalypse of Peter,” 29–49.

analysis has increased the number of torments in hell which correspond according to mirror punishment to the sin committed from Bauckham's eleven to nineteen. Two still elude explanation: the punishments for usurers (Apoc Pet 10:1) and those who neglect their parents (Apoc Pet 11:1–3). The failure to discern a connection between sin and punishment in the torment of those who neglect their parents is largely a result of the corrupt nature of the text. This leaves the torment for usurers as the only incorrupt passage without a correlation between sin and punishment. Rather than assume the punishment for usurers is the only incorrupt passage which does not function according to mirror punishment, it is more likely that the correlation has yet to be discovered due to some overlooked or lost bit of information regarding ancient culture. Admittedly not every explanation given above for how the sin is punished in accordance with the concept of mirror punishment is equally satisfactory (cf. Apoc Pet 7:3–4; 10:2–4, 7; 11:4–5), but they are sufficient in demonstrating that mirror punishment was the justice pattern utilised in the text. Having established that the punishment in hell are considered just in the text, it is now possible to examine the various responses to judgment in the Apoc Pet.

### B. Responses to Judgment

In studying the use of hell in Greek and Roman cultural education, known as *paideia*, Meghan Henning has shown that narratives of the netherworld use descriptive rhetoric, or *ekphrasis*, to instil upon their readers a particular ethic. They do this by using vivid imagery, or *enargeia*, to lead the readers around, put the scene before their eyes, engage their other senses, and move them to a particular emotional response. When looking at early Christian texts, Henning found this same use of *ekphrasis* at work in

tours of hell. One tool which often aids in *ekphrasis* is the emotional responses of the characters within the text. These emotional responses were used as models for the readers to emulate.<sup>482</sup> While the introduction to the eschatological vision in Apoc Pet 3 shows all the characters described within the vision, the wicked, the righteous, the angels, and Jesus, weeping in emotional distress, it does not report any of the spoken responses to punishment from those within the vision. Nevertheless, the tour of hell gives more detailed insight into how those within the vision will respond to the punishments. These responses are vital for understanding the function of justice and mercy within the text, as well as the response the text intends to evoke from its readers.

### *1. The Punishment for Fornication*

The first response to punishment comes during the torment of fornicators. While these men hang by their thighs, they speak to each other. “And they will say among themselves, ‘We did not know that we would come to be in eternal punishment’” (Apoc Pet 7:8). Interestingly, the text gives no immediate, explicit indication regarding the emotional state of those speaking. They do not lament, petition, or cry out; they say, *bəhla*, this to each other. Readers are likely not meant to assume these men are emotionless in their torment, but they must either supply their own emotional interpretation by imagining themselves in the situation of the wicked or draw on other parts of the text. Placing oneself in the position of the wicked could yield different emotional interpretations, such as anger or grief, but this perhaps runs the risk of an interpretation that says more about the readers than the text.

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<sup>482</sup> Henning, “Eternal Punishment as Paideia,” 42; Henning, *Educating Early Christians*, 211–214.

Rather than place themselves in the position of the wicked to ascertain their emotional state, however, the readers could use the context surrounding the tour of hell to aid their interpretation. The importance of Apoc Pet 3 is shown here by its ability to affirm what many readers may naturally assume: the wicked in hell are grieving. The text has already revealed that the wicked “weep in great affliction and sorrow” (Apoc Pet 3:3), thus the reader may conclude that the wicked continue in this sorrowful state throughout the tour of hell unless given some indication to the contrary. Therefore, the ambiguous language of Apoc Pet 7:8 might not reaffirm the distressed emotional state of the fornicators as foreshadowed in 3:3, but neither does it negate it. The text seemingly assumes what it already stated: that the wicked are weeping in their torment.

What this means for the readers is that they never need to guess at the emotional state of the wicked. Instead, they may know that the text conveys the wicked as in distress. As argued above, the Apoc Pet understands its readers as those established within the church who will not experience the punishments of hell (Apoc Pet 1:3). The text uses *ekphrasis* to vividly put the image of eschatological torment before the readers’ eyes, but they are not intended to emulate the emotional response of those being punished. Instead, because the text aligns the readers with the righteous, they are meant to respond to the distress of the wicked as those who will not share in it. Before the intended response of the reader is revealed, however, the Apoc Pet spends a great deal of time vividly putting the plight of the wicked before its readers.

While the emotional response of the wicked in Apoc Pet 7:8 must be contextually deduced, their verbal response to punishment is explicitly stated: “We did not know that we would come to be in eternal punishment”. This response occurs in a

similar fashion three times in the text (Apoc Pet 7:8, 7:11, and 13:4). Only in Apoc Pet 7:8 do the wicked claim to not have known they would receive punishment. In the two other instances of this response, the wicked knew but did not believe they would receive punishment. Bauckham is likely correct that no real distinction exists in the text between whether the wicked did not know, *'a'mara*, or they did not believe, *'amna*. The lack of knowledge or belief in eschatological punishment is a common theme in Jewish and Christian literature (cf. 4 Ezra 7:126 and 2 Clem 10:4) and perhaps originates with Prov 24:12: “If you say, ‘Look, we did not know this’—does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it? And will he not repay all according to their deeds?”<sup>483</sup>

For the study at hand, the important question regarding this statement of the wicked is what response is it supposed to elicit from the readers. Bauckham believes that “it warns those who may be sceptical about the afterlife of the foolish risk they are running and it makes clear the moral function of teaching about post-mortem punishments: to deter people from sin.”<sup>484</sup> In this claim, Bauckham is assuming the audience of the Apoc Pet are those who do not believe in eschatological judgment. He suggests that the text is asserting the need for punishment in hell as essential in dissuading people from sin in the face of Epicurean influence.<sup>485</sup> However, Bauckham gives no evidence from within the Apoc Pet itself to support his claim. Undoubtedly, people who did not believe in eschatological punishment existed in the second century, but one should not assume the Apoc Pet was written for such people solely because they existed.

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<sup>483</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 226–227.

<sup>484</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 227.

<sup>485</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 227–230.

When looking at the evidence within the text, a reading different from Bauckham's emerges. Returning to Apoc Pet 1, the disciples ask Jesus for the signs of his coming and the end of the world with the desire to pass on this information to those they establish in the church. Their question assumes a belief in the parousia and eschatological judgment. They ask for knowledge to understand when it is coming, not prove that it is coming. Therefore, the audience of the text, those established in the church, would have probably already believed in eschatological judgment as well. If they did not, the Apoc Pet would have skipped over a crucial rhetorical step in its argument by neglecting to defend the actuality of the eschaton before defending the details surrounding it. Someone who does not believe in eschatological punishment would likely find little in the Apoc Pet to persuade them to the contrary. Therefore, the statement from the wicked that they did not know or believe that they would receive eschatological punishment likely does not reflect the thoughts of the audience.

To further prove this point, it is possible to juxtapose this statement of the wicked with a point in the text which does seemingly argue against its audience. The eschatological vision begins in Apoc Pet 4 with the resurrection of the dead. After explaining that every person will be raised in bodily form regardless of how they died, the text gives an extended defence of how this is possible:

For nothing is lost for God and nothing is impossible for him. Everything in this way is his. For everything (will happen) on the day of punishment, on the day of judgment, with the expression of God. And everything will happen in accordance with how he creates. The world and everything that is in it he commanded (to be) and everything was. Thus (it will be) in the last days, because everything is possible for God. And thus it says in the Scripture: "The Son of Man prophesied upon each of the bones saying to the bone, 'Bone to bones in limbs, sinew and muscle and flesh and skin and hair (be) onto it.'" And soul and spirit [and] the great Uriel will give at the command of God. For God established him over his resurrection of the dead on the day of judgment. (Apoc Pet 4:5-9)

It appears as though some within the audience of the text were at least somewhat sceptical of the bodily resurrection. Therefore, the author took time to defend this idea theologically and with the use of Scripture, *maṣṣāḥaf*. This is one of only three places in the text that explicitly refers to a citation as coming from Scripture. The citation here in Apoc Pet 4:7 comes from Ezek 37, either directly or through another text or tradition.<sup>486</sup> The other two references to Scripture occur in Apoc Pet 13 during the ascension. This form of argumentation presupposes disagreement and is precisely the type of textual evidence needed to postulate some degree of resistance in the audience to the ideas of the text. No such evidence exists within the Apoc Pet to support Bauckham's claim that the audience of the text did not believe in eschatological punishment.

It is of course possible to argue that the entirety of the Apoc Pet functions in support of Bauckham's claim. If the Apoc Pet were monitory text, then the statement that the wicked did not know or believe they would receive eschatological judgment could understandably function to further instil fear in a reader who likewise disbelieves in punishment in hell. However, as this thesis continues to show, no sufficient argument exists to understand the Apoc Pet as primarily a monitory text. Instead, the motif of disbelief in eschatological punishment likely serves to further bring the picture of hell before the eyes of the readers. The original readers of the text were surely aware of those who did not believe in punishment after death. The connection of the motif here with fornication is perhaps insignificant, particularly because all the wicked admit to not believing they would receive punishment in hell in Apoc Pet

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<sup>486</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 295–296.

13:4.<sup>487</sup> Thus it is the connection of the statement to the wicked in general that is significant. Putting this statement in the mouths of those in punishment further emphasises the separation between the righteous and the wicked in the text. The righteous, and therefore the readers, already know and believe there will be eschatological punishment, but they do not sin. The wicked, however, do not believe, and therefore they damn themselves. Apoc Pet 7:8 brings the emotional response of the wicked to their plight vividly before the eyes of the readers. However, the specific reaction this intends to elicit in the readers is not yet revealed in the text.

## *2. The Punishment for Murder*

The punishment for murderers and their accomplices is intriguing in its description of a response to judgment because the scene includes both the wicked and the righteous. While the wicked are being punished, their victims are brought to view their killers: “And the angel Ezrael will bring the soul of those they killed, and they will be shown the punishment (of those who) killed them. And they will say to them among themselves, ‘Righteousness and justice is the judgment of God. For, we heard but we did not believe that we would come to this eternal place of judgment’” (Apoc Pet 7:10b–11). Before delving into the details of this section, it is important to delineate who is speaking. The vast majority of English translations understand the victims as speaking here.<sup>488</sup> This is corroborated with the corresponding verse in the Akh Apoc Pet: “And the souls of those they killed stood and gazed upon the punishment of those

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<sup>487</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 226.

<sup>488</sup> Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 604; Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 673–674; James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 515; Müller, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 629.

murderers, saying, ‘O God, righteous is your judgment’” (Akh Apoc Pet 25).<sup>489</sup> This understanding of the text, however, is not without its difficulties in the Ethiopic, because the Eth Apoc Pet includes in the statement the claim that those speaking did not believe they would receive eternal punishment.

Buchholz rightly criticises the predominate translation of the Ethiopic text, as it makes no sense to have the victims say they did not believe in eschatological punishment whereas elsewhere it is only the wicked that make this claim. He also challenges previous translations for their addition of the phrase “those who” to the translation.<sup>490</sup> Buchholz instead proposes a different translation: “And the angel Ezrael brings the soul of those whom they killed and they saw them (get) their punishment. They killed them, and they will say to one another, ‘Justice and righteousness (are) the judgment of God. For we heard and did not believe that we would come into this eternal place of punishment.’”<sup>491</sup> This translation is not without its own shortcomings. He suggests adding the verb “get” to make sense of his own reading of the text, even though one of Buchholz’s main criticisms of the previous English translations is their need to add words to make sense of the section.<sup>492</sup> As such, his translation is no better in this regard than previous ones. Also, his translation of *qätäləwwomu* as “They killed them” is overly wooden in the translation, although this is a critique of much of his “literal” translation.

While agreeing with Buchholz that, at least in the Eth Apoc Pet, it must be the wicked who speak and not the victims, the translation given above still largely follows

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<sup>489</sup> The Greek text reads as follows: αἱ δὲ ψυχὰι τῶν πεφονευμένων ἐστῶσαι καὶ ἐφορῶσαι τὴν κολάσιν ἐκείνων τῶν φονέων ἔλεγον· ὁ θεός, δικαία σου ἡ κρίσις.

<sup>490</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 315.

<sup>491</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 202–203.

<sup>492</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 315.

the previous English versions. The primary difference in the translation offered here is its use of pronouns. Most translations do not include a pronoun in the translation of *wäyəbləwwomu* (cf. “they shall see the torment <of those who> killed <them> and shall say to one another...”), thus conveying that those seeing the torment are also the ones speaking.<sup>493</sup> The translation offered here chooses not only to repeat the pronoun, but also to add a full stop between *qätäləwwomu* and *wäyəbləwwomu*: “they will be shown the punishment (of those who) killed them. And *they will say* to them among themselves....” This brings a degree of ambiguity to the verse. While those speaking could still be the ones who see the punishment of the wicked, the repetition of the pronoun also allows for *wäyəbləwwomu* to have “those who killed them” as its subject. Such ambiguous pronoun use is not uncommon in the Apoc Pet. Another example occurs in Apoc Pet 4:13, “And the earth will give everything back on the day of punishment, for it (the earth) will be required on it (the day of punishment) to be judged at the same time and also heaven with it (the earth).” Therefore, following the translation practice outlined previously, the ambiguity of Apoc Pet 7:10b–11 is maintained in translation to allow for multiple interpretations of the text.

The interpretation followed in this study, however, is that it is the wicked speaking in the Eth Apoc Pet. Disbelief in eschatological punishment is something exclusive to the wicked in the text. If the victims were to disbelieve, they would also be counted among the wicked. Therefore, to put these words in the mouths of the victims requires that their viewing of the punishment of their killers is its own form of punishment for the victims’ sin. Would the sin they committed then be getting murdered in the first place? This makes no sense. Perhaps the Akh Apoc Pet is more

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<sup>493</sup> Müller, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 629. Italics added.

original here in not including the statement of disbelief, but only the statement regarding the righteousness of the punishment. However, while this is possible, it is not required to make sense of the text. The wicked acknowledge the justness of their punishment in Apoc Pet 13, so it is not anomalous for them to do so in Apoc Pet 7. The only anomaly in the text comes if the victims doubt the existence of eschatological punishment. Therefore, if one gives preference to the Eth Apoc Pet over the Akh Apoc Pet in this instance, one should also give preference to the murderers speaking rather than the victims. Conversely, if one gives preference to the Akh Apoc Pet over the Eth Apoc Pet, thereby requiring that the victims speak, one should only include in their speech the statement regarding the righteousness of God's judgment.

With this understanding of the text in mind, it is now possible to further analyse the different responses in the text to the punishment of murderers. In both recensions of the Apoc Pet, the victims of the murderers view the punishment of their killers. Scholars have offered various interpretations of who these victims are in the wider understanding of the text. Lanzillotta calls the victims "seers" and distinguishes them from the righteous, whom he does not clearly define. The seers, in Lanzillotta's usage, are people in the text who view or participate in the punishment of the wicked (Apoc Pet 7:10; 8:3–4, 6–7).<sup>494</sup> The introduction of a third group who are neither righteous nor wicked, however, is not supported by the text for the victims of murder. First of all, disobedient children view all the punishments in hell (Apoc Pet 11:4–5) and the righteous are shown the torment of the wicked in Apoc Pet 13:1–3. This means the

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<sup>494</sup> Lanzillotta, "Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?," 140–141. Lanzillotta, based upon Buchholz's free translation, also views the children and virgins in 11:4 as seers, but this has been shown as an incorrect understanding of the verse during the discussion of the punishment for disobedient children above.

role of spectator within the tour of hell is not something unique to a third group of neither righteous nor wicked people. Second, the punishment in hell for those who reject righteousness (Apoc Pet 7:3–4) appears to be a catch-all category which indicates within the text that if a person is not righteous, they receive punishment in hell for being wicked. Thus, as also argued previously, the Apoc Pet does not acknowledge a third group of people outside of the binary categories of the wicked and the righteous, with perhaps one exception forthcoming in the punishments for abortion and infanticide. The victims of murder should, therefore, either be counted among the righteous or the wicked. As stated above, it makes no sense to consider the victims' role as spectators as a punishment for them in hell, since this would mean they are punished for being murdered. As they do not receive punishment in hell, the logical conclusion is that the victims are counted among the righteous.

Understanding the victims in Apoc Pet 7:10 as the righteous has a significant impact on their portrayal in the text. If one follows the Eth Apoc Pet, the righteous victims view the punishment of their killers, but no indication exists within the immediate context regarding their response to what they see. Lanzillotta views their lack of response as indicating their approval of the punishment.<sup>495</sup> Gilmour also sees in this passage an approval of the punishment of the murderers, but bolsters this interpretation by putting the acknowledgment of the righteousness of the punishment in the mouths of the victims.<sup>496</sup> While the righteous may be understood as signifying their acceptance of the appropriateness of the punishment for the murderers, particularly if one follows the Akh Apoc Pet, both scholars err by contrasting the

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<sup>495</sup> Lanzillotta, "Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?," 140.

<sup>496</sup> Gilmour, "Delighting in the Sufferings of Others," 136.

victims' approval with the compassion of the righteous found in Apoc Pet 3. The righteous who weep upon seeing the punishment of the wicked are the same righteous who are here viewing the punishment of those who killed them. Therefore, the victims in Apoc Pet 7:10 should be understood as weeping in compassion as they look upon the fate of their killers. They may accept the righteousness of the punishment, but they need not like that it happens or feel a sense of *Schadenfreude* from it, as Gilmour suggests.<sup>497</sup> It is possible to accept that something is just and appropriate and simultaneously to not delight in it.

The narrative function of the victims viewing the punishment of the murderers is difficult to ascertain. Other than in Apoc Pet 13:1–3, in which the righteous view all the punishments in hell, the three places during the tour in which the righteous view the torment of the wicked occur when the sin caused the death of the victim.<sup>498</sup> It is unclear whether the viewing of these punishments is meant as a benefit to the righteous, a detriment to the wicked, or assurance that the punishment is just through some other means. Regardless of the narrative function, the rhetorical impact of the righteous victims viewing the punishment of their killers is apparent. The text's view that its readers are counted among the righteous encourages those readers to feel compassion for the wicked in torment. When the victims of murder see the punishment of their killers, they weep at the torment the wicked endure. Likewise, when the audience reads about these torments, they should feel compassion upon those destined for hell.

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<sup>497</sup> Gilmour, "Delighting in the Sufferings of Others," 136.

<sup>498</sup> This is perhaps further evidence that Eth Apoc Pet 9:4 is a corruption in the text in that it describes the sin of causing the martyrs to die with a lie but does not include the killed victims witnessing the punishment.

The statement in Apoc Pet 7:11 concerning the righteousness of the punishment serves to reinforce that mercy is not in contradiction to justice. While weeping in compassion for the wicked, the righteous (Akh Apoc Pet) or the wicked (Eth Apoc Pet) acknowledge the justice of God. These two reactions exist simultaneously and harmoniously. The conflict between mercy and justice exhibited by Peter in Apoc Pet 3 does not seem to exist here. The righteous spectators who weep in compassion while simultaneously recognising the righteousness of judgment exemplify Jesus' encouragement that, by understanding the appropriateness of eschatological punishment, Peter might transform his own excessive sorrow into an integrated understanding of justice and mercy.

### *3. The Punishments for Abortion and Infanticide*

The punishments for abortion and infanticide can be grouped together in this discussion as they both include the child victims as spectators of their parents' punishments. In the punishment for abortion, the children sit across from their mothers and shoot lightning bolts into their eyes. They utter no specific words, but they cry out, *gə'ra*, to God (Apoc Pet 8:3–4). In the punishment for infanticide, the children are also opposite their parents and cry out, *gə'ra*, to God. They do not directly participate in the punishment of their parents, as do the aborted children, but they utter a specific condemnation of their parents while they groan, *nəhka*, to God about them: “These are those who despised and cursed and violated your commandment and died. And they cursed the angel who formed (us) and they hung us up and were stingy with the light. But you gave (it) to everyone” (Apoc Pet 8:5–7).

The punishments for abortion and infanticide are unique in the Apoc Pet in their use of the victims to both enact the punishment and verbally accuse the wicked. They are also unique in locating the victims in a different place than the wicked in punishment while still able to view and interact with those in hell. The victims of murder are presumably brought to hell to view the punishment of their killers, but the victims of abortion and infanticide are in a “place of delight”, *mākanä māḥawz*.<sup>499</sup> The place of delight only appears here in the Apoc Pet, and *māḥawz*, which derives from *hawzä* and translates as pleasure or delight, appears nowhere else in Ethiopic literature.<sup>500</sup> To further complicate the interpretation of the place of delight, the Akh Apoc Pet contains no parallel passage to Eth Apoc Pet 8:5. If the place of delight is a unique location set aside only for dead babies, they may constitute a group which is in some way not considered wholly righteous. Clement of Alexandria seems to interpret the text this way in describing the babies in a sort of pre-righteous state.

For example Peter in the Apocalypse says *that the children born abortively* receive the better part. *These are delivered to a care-taking (temelouchos) angel*, so that after they have reached knowledge they may obtain the better abode, as if they had suffered what they would have suffered, had they attained to bodily life. But the others shall obtain salvation only as people who have suffered wrong and experienced mercy, and shall exist without torment, have received this as their reward.<sup>501</sup>

According to Clement’s interpretation, the place of delight is a location where children who have not lived, and thereby have acted neither righteously nor wickedly, are cared for by an angel until they are able to obtain the full reward of the righteous. If this is

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<sup>499</sup> The manuscript of d’Abbadie 51 reads, *mākanä māhowz* according to Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 204 n. 6.

<sup>500</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 319.

<sup>501</sup> Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 675 n. 1a; Müller, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 637 n. 37a. Italics original.

an accurate understanding of the text, then the role of the babies in enacting the punishment of the wicked and accusing their parents is not something which the readers are meant to emulate. The readers, having lived, do not have the option of acting like the children in the place of delight, who were not able to choose between righteousness and wickedness in life.

Another possible interpretation of the place of delight arises with the possibility that the Apoc Pet may have drawn from 4 Ezra, as some have suggested.<sup>502</sup> In 4 Ezra, the abode of the righteous and the abode of the wicked are opposite each other: “Then the pit of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of Hell shall be disclosed, and opposite it the Paradise of delight” (4 Ezra 7:36).<sup>503</sup> The language used here in 4 Ezra closely corresponds to that in the Apoc Pet. Furthermore, after describing the abode of the righteous, the Akh Apoc Pet introduces hell as opposite to that place: “And I also saw another place opposite that one, gloomy, and it was the place of punishment. And those being punished there and also the punishing angels had on themselves dark clothing like the air of the place” (Akh Apoc Pet 21). By placing the victims of abortion and infanticide in the place of delight opposite to their parents, the Apoc Pet may imply that they are with the righteous. If this is the case, the children may be characters for the reader to emulate in their willingness to participate in God’s judgment of the wicked. This would serve to further emphasise the appropriateness of eschatological punishment, yet not without continuing to acknowledge the sorrow of hell. The children cry out, *gə’ra*, and groan,

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<sup>502</sup> Bauckham, “The Conflict of Justice and Mercy,” 144; Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 664; Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 595.

<sup>503</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:538.

*nəhka*, to God. Both these words convey the emotion of lamentation and sorrow. While the focus of the accusation of the children is on the life their parents stole from them, it is significant that the emotion conveyed is sorrow rather than anger.

The children participate in the punishment of their parents, but they seemingly do not revel in it. This coincides with all that has come before in the Apoc Pet. The victims who view the punishment of their killers are able to acknowledge that God's judgment is just, but in so doing they do not rejoice in the judgment. Instead, the demeanour of all those viewing the torment of the wicked is sorrow. Whether silently viewing the punishments, verbally accusing the wicked, or enacting the torment themselves, the righteous, or perhaps pre-righteous, victims lament the fate of the damned. These examples continually convey to the readers that the appropriate response to the justice of punishment in hell is compassion and sorrow.

#### *4. Final Responses to Punishment*

Apoc Pet 13 is both important and corrupt. As no parallels exist between Eth Apoc Pet 13 and the extant Greek recensions, it is not possible to know precisely what the original Apoc Pet said at this point, but it is possible to identify some of the edited material in the extant text. Similar to the changes made in Eth Apoc Pet 14 (more on this below) the points of corruption in Eth Apoc Pet 13 are likely results of editorial emendation, not a complete rewriting of the text. The changes in both chapters also likely derive from the same motive, which will be addressed further in the discussion on Apoc Pet 14. As a result of a discernible motive for changing the text, some of the emendations in Eth Apoc Pet 13, like Eth Apoc Pet 14, do significantly impact the overall message of the Apoc Pet.

The evidence of corruption begins in the first verse. Angels bring the righteous to view the punishment of the wicked “while they (the righteous) say (*yəblu*), “The clothes of life from above” (Apoc Pet 13:1). In the first publication of the Eth Apoc Pet, Grébaut recognized the oddity of the statement of the righteous. He therefore added “Revêtons-les” (let us put on) to the beginning of their declaration.<sup>504</sup> Rather than adding to the text, later scholars suggested *yəblu* was a corruption in the text that should be corrected. Duensing initially proposed correcting it to *yətläbsu* (they were clothed).<sup>505</sup> However, his and other English translations translated the sentence as though the verb were active with the angels as its subject, thus rendering the verse, “The angels will bring my elect and righteous ... and clothe them with the garments of eternal life.”<sup>506</sup> Buchholz, wanting to keep the righteous as the subject of the verb, emends the verb to *läbsä*, as Duensing suggests, but uses the active form, *yəläbsu* (they put on), rather than the passive.<sup>507</sup> All these emendations are possible, but hypothetical. In order to best represent the text as it currently exists in the extant manuscripts, the translation given in this thesis does not follow any of the proposed emendations, but utilises a less common English gloss for *bəhlä*: “announce”.<sup>508</sup> This removes some of the awkwardness of the verse by changing “the clothes of life from above” from a direct quote spoke by the righteous to the subject of a proclamation made by either the righteous or the angels: “while they announce the clothes of life from above.” The clothes of life are likely the new resurrection bodies of the righteous (cf. 1 Cor 15:35–57). The act of announcing these bodies is still awkward and best

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<sup>504</sup> Grébaut, “Littérature éthiopienne pseudo-clémentine,” 214.

<sup>505</sup> Duensing, “Ein Stücke der urchristlichen Petrusapokalypse,” 72 n. 7.

<sup>506</sup> Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 679.

<sup>507</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 340.

<sup>508</sup> Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge‘ez (Classical Ethiopic)*, 94.

understood as a corruption in the text, but at least it represents the current extant manuscripts.

The corruption intensifies in the subsequent verses, which, as they stand, read, “And they will see those who cursed him while he takes vengeance on them (with) punishment forever, each one according to his work” (Apoc Pet 13:2–3). These verses describe what happens to the wicked while the righteous see them in punishment. In order to discuss the possible corruptions in these verses, it is first necessary to discuss the discrepancy in the manuscripts. Manuscript d’Abbadie 51 reads, *läzä šäl’aləwwo*, which Grébaut emends to *läzä šäl’əwwo* (those who hate him/it), while manuscript Kebrān 35 reads, *läzä šä’alewwo* (those who curse him/it).<sup>509</sup> Most English translations follow manuscript d’Abbadie 51, but add extra content and render the singular suffix as though it were plural: “They shall see *their desire on them* that hated them.”<sup>510</sup> In doing this, they see a parallel between this verse and Pss 54:7 and 59:10.<sup>511</sup> Buchholz convincingly argues that, with the discovery of manuscript Kebrān 35, Grébaut’s emendation of manuscript d’Abbadie 51 incorrectly harmonises the text with Scripture and that *šäl’aləwwo* is merely evidence of a copyist error in writing *šä’aləwwo*.<sup>512</sup> Therefore, taking into account the interchangeability of *š* and *ş*, both manuscripts bear witness to the same reading.

The reading to which both manuscripts witness is “those who cursed him/it.” The verb has a singular suffix, so the common English translation that understands the

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<sup>509</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 224 n. 6; Grébaut, “Littérature éthiopienne pseudo-clémentine,” 207 n. 1.

<sup>510</sup> James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 517. Italics added.

<sup>511</sup> Duensing and Maurer, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 679 n. 1; Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 608 n. 37; Müller, “Apocalypse of Peter,” 637 n. 40.

<sup>512</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 340–341.

wicked as having cursed the righteous is unlikely. Buchholz believes the singular suffix refers to the eternal life which the wicked cursed, but this makes little syntactical sense.<sup>513</sup> Buchholz is understandably referring to the “life from above” in Apoc Pet 13:1 as eternal life. However, life, *ḥəywät*, is in construct with clothing, *’albasä*, in that verse, so it likely does not function as the singular object of the cursing in Apoc Pet 13:2. It is perhaps better to understand the third person singular suffix on *ṣä’alewwo* as referencing a being rather than an object, thus translating it as “him” rather than “it”. This is corroborated with the following phrase, “while he takes vengeance on them.” They cursed “him” so “he” takes vengeance on them. Exactly who the object of their cursing is, however, is not specified in the text. Buchholz suggests the one who takes vengeance on them could be an angel, such as Uriel from Apoc Pet 12:5, or God.<sup>514</sup> An angel or God are perhaps the only two options, but the text is ambiguous on this point. This ambiguity is likely evidence of sloppy editing and a corruption in the text. As seen previously, the Eth Apoc Pet at times switches between antecedents by using verbs with ambiguous subjects, but only in Apoc Pet 13:2 does it entirely lack a distinguishable subject for the verb.

The corruption worsens still further with the use of *yätbeqälomu*, “he takes vengeance on them”. Throughout the Apoc Pet, torment in hell is described as judgment, *kʷənnäne*, or punishment, *däyn*. Only in Apoc Pet 13:2 is torment referred to as vengeance, *bäqälä*. Furthermore, this is the only use of *bäqälä* in the entire Eth Apoc Pet. The description of punishment as vengeance seems to conflate the pattern of mirror punishment throughout the tour of hell with revenge. However, the two are

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<sup>513</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 340–341.

<sup>514</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 341.

not synonymous in the Apoc Pet. The broad concept of retributive justice may overlap in some ways with vengeance, but, as George Fletcher says, “It is obviously not to be identified with vengeance or revenge, any more than love is to be identified with lust.”<sup>515</sup> Aside from this passage, the Apoc Pet never portrays punishment as something desired by those who were wronged. It is merely the inevitable consequence of not observing the commandment of God, and is enacted, as Apoc Pet 13:3 restates, in accordance with the sin committed.<sup>516</sup> While discussing this tension between the justice pattern in Eth Apoc Pet 13 and the rest of the text, Lanzillotta further hypothesises that the Eth Apoc Pet’s references to the eternal nature of the punishments and the increased punishment from the angel in charge of Tartarus when the wicked ask for mercy in Apoc Pet 13:5 are likely evidence of editorial corruptions in the text.<sup>517</sup> As stated previously, while it is possible to detect these parts of the text as likely corruptions, it is not possible to ascertain a more original version of the text without further manuscript evidence. All these possible corruptions in the text nevertheless generate an appropriate caution for the task of analysing the responses to punishment in this chapter.

When taking the likely corruptions into account, an analysis of the responses to punishment in Apoc Pet 13 reveals they are much the same as the responses in previous chapters. The righteous are brought to view the punishment of the wicked, but the chapter gives no indication regarding their reaction upon witnessing the sight. As such, it should be assumed as before that they follow the pattern introduced in

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<sup>515</sup> George P. Fletcher, *Rethinking Criminal Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 417.

<sup>516</sup> Lanzillotta, “Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?,” 145.

<sup>517</sup> Lanzillotta, “Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?,” 152–154.

Apoc Pet 3:3 and weep in compassion for the wicked. The wicked repeat their claim that they did not believe they would receive punishment, but this time they preface it with a plea for mercy: “In one voice all of those who are in punishment will say, ‘Have mercy on us because now we have understood the judgment of God, which he previously proclaimed to us but we did not believe’” (Apoc Pet 13:4). The sorrow of the wicked reaches its peak in this verse when they do not merely lament their own disbelief, but beg for mercy now that their disbelief has been turned into understanding, which some may even call “conversion”.<sup>518</sup> This emphasises that the repeated cries of the wicked concerning their lack of belief in punishment in hell are not indications of their continued incredulity, but manifestations of their remorse. This remorse leads to a universal repentance and plea for mercy, but their repentance perhaps comes too late.

After the repentance of the wicked, an angel speaks for the first time in the tour of hell. Angels have appeared in multiple places during the tour of hell with multiple roles. They punish those who rejected righteousness (Apoc Pet 7:4), victims of abortion and infanticide are given to a caretaking angel (Apoc Pet 8:10), Ezrael burns idols (Apoc Pet 10:5), and Uriel punishes sorcerers and sorceresses (Apoc Pet 12:5). None of these angels speak, and no indication is given within the tour of hell regarding their emotional states while they undertake their respective tasks. However, Apoc Pet 3:3 describes the angels as weeping in sorrow for the wicked, just like the righteous. Therefore, the angels mentioned throughout the tour of hell should be understood as sorrowful while they fulfil their tasks in hell unless the text suggests otherwise. The

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<sup>518</sup> Jeffrey A. Trumbower, “Early Visions of Hell as a Place of Education and Conversion,” in *Hell and Its Afterlife: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Isabel Moreira and Margaret Toscano (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 33.

angel in charge of Tartarus, sometimes transliterated as the name Tartarouchos, is the only one recorded as saying something. “And the angel of Tartarus will come and rebuke them with more punishment. And he will say to them, ‘Now you would repent, when there is no time for repentance and no life has remained’” (Apoc Pet 13:5). The rebuke and punishment he inflicts upon the wicked may be another aspect of the corruption in this chapter, as it diverges from the lack of such a harsh response to similar cries from the wicked (Apoc Pet 7:8, 11) as well as the imminent mercy of Apoc Pet 14.<sup>519</sup> This suggestion nevertheless remains unsubstantiated with the current manuscript evidence. As it stands, the rebuke of this angel enforces that repentance is only valid prior to death, and no amount of pleading on the part of the wicked will grant them access to the life from above that the righteous now enjoy.<sup>520</sup>

Following this rebuke, the wicked once again speak, echoing the words that until now were only uttered by Jesus: “And all of them will say, ‘Just is the judgment of God, for we have heard and understood that his judgment is fair because we have received recompense, each one according to our deeds’” (Apoc Pet 13:6). As mentioned previously, this statement of the wicked gives the ultimate acknowledgment that their punishment is just due to its adherence to the concept of mirror punishment.<sup>521</sup> This is not the first time the wicked have acknowledged the justness of the punishment (cf. Apoc Pet 7:11), but it is the first time the acknowledgment comes with a recognition of how the punishment fits their crime. In

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<sup>519</sup> Lanzillotta, “Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?,” 153.

<sup>520</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 342.

<sup>521</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 196.

putting this acknowledgement in the mouths of those in punishment, the text further solidifies its claim that the punishments are just.<sup>522</sup>

### 5. Conclusion

Following Henning's work on the use of emotional responses from characters in a text as one aspect of the practice of *ekphrasis* used to instil a particular ethic on the readers, this chapter has thus far analysed the emotional responses of the characters within the tour of hell of the Apoc Pet. Beginning with the response of the fornicators to their punishment in Apoc Pet 7:8, the text portrays those in punishment as claiming to not have known they would receive such torment after death. While this claim is not linked with any particular emotion in the immediate context, the description of the wicked in hell in Apoc Pet 3:3 foreshadowed that they are sorrowful. This sorrowful response continues in the punishment for murder (Apoc Pet 7:9–11), where the murderers, if following the Eth Apoc Pet, also claim they did not believe they would receive eternal punishment. Prior to this claim, however, they also acknowledge the righteousness and justice of God's judgment. This simultaneous acknowledgment of God's righteous judgment combined with the sorrowful lament of unbelief hints at the integrated nature of justice and mercy in the text. The wicked do not merely accept the righteous judgment, they cry out in remorse as well.

By having the victims of murder view the punishment of their killers, the text begins to suggest to its readers how they should respond to the scene. Although the victims are silent in the Eth Apoc Pet, Apoc Pet 3:3 describes this group as weeping in compassion for those in punishment. As the readers of the text are meant to align

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<sup>522</sup> Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 231–232.

themselves with the righteous, these righteous victims act as a model for the readers to emulate. Even when the punishment is just, the appropriate response is still compassion for those in torment. This is further emphasised during the punishments for abortion and infanticide (Apoc Pet 8). In these punishments, aborted babies enact part of the punishment of their parents by shooting bolts of lightning into their eyes and victims of infanticide verbally accuse their parents of their crime. While doing these things, the children are described as crying out and groaning to God. Therefore, like the victims of murder, they are shown to be in a sorrowful state while viewing and participating in the punishment of those in hell. This sorrow does not undermine the justice of punishment but exhibits how both justice and compassion can coexist.

While the corrupt nature of Apoc Pet 13 requires a degree of caution in analysing the responses to judgment in this chapter, this pericope nevertheless serves as the climax of the various reactions to punishment. The description of the righteous onlookers is again lacking any immediate indication regarding their emotional state. One can therefore assume they continue in their sorrowful weeping as described in Apoc Pet 3:3. The wicked once again lament their previous disbelief in the punishments they are made to endure, but this time their statement is preceded by a plea for mercy and an expression of repentance. By explicitly combining the third and final use of the motif of disbelief in eschatological punishment with repentance and a plea for mercy, the text indicates that throughout the tour of hell the wicked who make such statements did so with remorse. This repentance seemingly comes too late as the wicked are rebuked by an angel for repenting “when there is no time for repentance and no life has remained” (Apoc Pet 13:5). This rebuke leads the wicked to once again acknowledge the justice of God, this time doing so by recognising the justice of their

punishments in accordance with their actions. By placing the motif of punishment according to deeds in the mouths of those who receive judgment, the text further substantiates its claim that God's judgment is just.

The climax of responses to punishment in Apoc Pet 13 highlights the justice of God. Even when the wicked repent of their sins, they are made to understand that such repentance is ineffectual after death. Once they understand this, they admit that God's judgment is just and fair, seemingly accepting their fate. If this were the end of the tour of hell, one could understandably claim that the singular main theme of the tour is justice. However, one should not overlook that universal sorrow for the fate of the wicked permeates even Apoc Pet 13. This sorrow sets the stage for the final chapter of the tour of hell where the righteous are allowed to respond in their compassion and request mercy for the wicked.

### C. Post-Mortem Salvation for the Wicked

Even though the angel in charge of Tartarus rebukes the wicked for their delayed repentance in Apoc Pet 13, the text continues in Apoc Pet 14 to describe how it is not too late for mercy by offering salvation for the wicked. As the conclusion to the eschatological vision, Apoc Pet 14 brings the reader full circle by emphasising the same theme of mercy as that found in the vision's introduction in Apoc Pet 3. This forms an *inclusio* which, when combined with the sorrowful responses of the righteous onlookers throughout the tour, highlights the importance of mercy to the overall meaning of the text. While many scholars have discussed the post-mortem salvation of the wicked in Apoc Pet 14, few have examined the impact this chapter has on the purpose of the text as a whole. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse how the different

recensions of the Apoc Pet portray the post-mortem salvation of the wicked and show how this chapter finally offers a fully integrated understanding of both justice and mercy, which it attempts to impart to its readers.

### *1. The Rationale of Eth Apoc Pet 14*

While it was argued above that the Rainer fragment contained a more original version of Apoc Pet 14, the full impact of this chapter is perhaps best seen through the changes made to the Ethiopic text. Rather than granting post-mortem salvation to the wicked, Eth Apoc Pet 14 gives the baptism that was originally offered to the wicked to the righteous instead. “And then I will give to my elect and to my righteous ones the baptism and salvation which they have asked of me in the field of Acherusia, which is called Elysium” (Eth Apoc Pet 14:1). By changing the baptism from one given to the wicked to one given to the righteous, the Eth Apoc Pet completely removes any hint of mercy from this chapter. Buchholz believes that post-mortem salvation for the wicked was removed here because, “It is a doctrine which would not be accepted by many people, and there can be no doubt that the references to it were removed from our text because someone had theological objections to it.”<sup>523</sup> Buchholz’s claim, however, does not coincide with the evidence within the text itself, which suggests a different motive behind the editorial changes in Eth Apoc Pet 14. Although the doctrine of post-mortem salvation for the wicked was removed from Eth Apoc Pet 14, it was not entirely removed from the Ethiopic text as a whole.

As discussed previously, the Eth Apoc Pet does not exist as a text on its own. Rather, it is contained within a larger, Pseudo-Clementine work known as The Second

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<sup>523</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 348.

Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead. The transition from the text of the Apoc Pet to the Pseudo-Clementine material is apparent in the text when it says, “And he opened his mouth and said to me, ‘Listen, my son Clement, everything that he created is for his glory.’” At this point, the text introduces Clement for the first time and switches the first-person narrator from Peter to Clement. The sudden change in narrator, setting, and style leaves little doubt that the remainder of the Ethiopic text after this point is not originally part of the Apoc Pet.<sup>524</sup> However, while the Pseudo-Clementine material is a later addition, it should not be viewed as a separate text from the Eth Apoc Pet. Some scholars even claim that to properly speak of an Eth Apoc Pet, one must refer to the entirety of both The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead and the text which follows it, commonly called The Mystery of the Judgment of Sinners.<sup>525</sup> Similarly, Buchholz argues that The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead is a midrash, with the Pseudo-Clementine material functioning as commentary on the Apocalypse of Peter.<sup>526</sup> What both scholars rightly emphasise is that the Eth Apoc Pet is part of a larger work, which at some point in time was understood as a unified text. Therefore, one way to gain insight into why the text of the Eth Apoc Pet was changed is to look to the Pseudo-Clementine material following it.

Even though Eth Apoc Pet 14 was edited to remove the post-mortem salvation of the wicked, this doctrine still exists in The Second Coming of Christ and the

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<sup>524</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 378–380; James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 520.

<sup>525</sup> Bausi, “Towards a Re-Edition of the Ethiopic Dossier of the Apocalypse of Peter”; Roger W. Cowley, “The Ethiopic Work Which Is Believed to Contain the Material of the Ancient Greek Apocalypse of Peter,” *JTS* 36 (1985): 151–153.

<sup>526</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 382.

Resurrection of the Dead. Currently, no English translation of the complete text of The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead exists. Rather than reproduce the Pseudo-Clementine material in its entirety, the following is the translation of only the relevant section of the text, Folio 142 of manuscript d'Abbadie 51, where Jesus tells Peter about the post-mortem salvation of the wicked after he asks for clarification regarding the "second death" that the wicked are made to endure in the afterlife:

... (F142ra) and you were sad. I will tell you what you asked me. Take care concerning this thing which you asked me and understand for yourself and consider for yourself. And be aware, that which I have said is not for others: not for the angels, [and] nor for the righteous, nor for the martyrs, [and] nor for the prophets. There is no one who knows this, my account, except for my father. And I have revealed this mystery to you, oh Peter. You will not reveal (it) to other people except the wise and learned. And place it and hide it in boxes so that foolish people will not see it so that they will not say in the last day, "God will have mercy on us." And they will practice sin toward their neighbour: murder, theft, [and] fornication, [and] fraud, conceit, [and] pride, anger, and slander. And furthermore, they will sin against me by worshiping idols, by not honouring the Sabbath, (F142rb) and not keeping my commandment, and (making) oaths falsely, and disregarding my intention. If the sinners do this, take care yourself. It is not fitting that you will reveal it, so that fools might not sin because of the statement, "He will have mercy on us."

As for mercy, my father is merciful, and I also show mercy, because that which is my father's is mine, and everything which is mine is my father's. And when the sinners who believed in me begged, [and] I also will beg my father with them while I seek mercy for them from my father. And I will say to him, "Have mercy on them, because I have worn their flesh. And as for they who ate my flesh and drank my blood, I bore their suffering and I took their sickness and was crucified for their sake so that the sinners who believed in me might be rescued." And when the sinners see me interceding to my father for their sake, [and] they will beg me, and I also will beg to (F142va) my father for their sake. But as for them, they only see me; I who wore their flesh. And I see my father, because I am one with my father in divinity. Indeed, I myself left from his presence because of my love according to his intention, so that I might perform his will. And therefore, the father will give to everyone life, honour, and a kingdom which will not end, and his judgment which will not be divided, and a crown of honour which is beautiful and shining, and glory. Honour which is wonderful

is honour which is divine. And I will sit on it (a throne) and establish for you and for your brothers twelve thrones and you will judge the twelve tribes of Israel. For the sake of those who believed in me, I came. And also, for the sake of those who believed in me, because of their statement I will show them mercy. And at that time, they swore to one another in openness, and immediately they went into eternal life where there is no end.

And now (F142vb) again, you will not reveal (this) to those who are not able to bear it, so that they might not sin against their neighbour. Because their work will be iniquity one against the other when they hear the judgment of burning fire. They will kill one another and reciprocate violence. And when the sinners hear (this), their conduct will be sinful so that they might be shown mercy. There will not be one who does good works or repentance among all of the sinners who heard and understood. And therefore now, I prohibit you (from revealing) the account, and I am telling you that it is not fitting that all the sinners might see and perceive it so that they will not sin against their neighbour. Then you [by no means] cried and lamented, and I told you that hope should not abandon you. But as for you, prioritise the gift of repentance for sinners and instruct concerning the judgment of burning fire so that they might be afraid and perform righteousness, so that they might not reciprocate violence against their neighbour, and so that they might not oppress the widow and the orphan in their need on account of my mercy.

Listen, I will tell you (F143ra) ...<sup>527</sup>

The existence of post-mortem salvation for the wicked in The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead has significant implications for the transmission of the Apoc Pet. One might assume that throughout its transmission the Apoc Pet was associated with this doctrine. It seems doubtful that the baptism of the wicked was removed from Apoc Pet 14 prior to its inclusion in The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead, because it otherwise would need to be reintroduced into the text through some external means. Instead, it is more likely that the editor of The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead changed Apoc Pet 14 for specific reasons. It is unknown if this change occurred prior to the

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<sup>527</sup> As stated previously, all translations of the Pseudo-Clementine text are my own and use the Ethiopic text of Grébaud, “Littérature éthiopienne pseudo-clémentine,” 309–316, 425–433.

translation of the text into Ethiopic, but it is clear that both the Rainer fragment and the Eth Apoc Pet, as part of the larger Pseudo-Clementine text, include the doctrine of the post-mortem salvation of the wicked.

Buchholz's claim that this doctrine was removed from Eth Apoc Pet 14 because of theological objections, therefore, seems improbable, since it still exists in The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead. The doctrine was not removed from the text, but it was changed. In the text of The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead translated above, Jesus reiterates multiple times that Peter must not reveal it to those who would sin more because of it. This adds a hiddenness to the doctrine which is not present in the Apoc Pet. In addition to changing the doctrine of post-mortem salvation for the wicked into a hidden teaching, the Pseudo-Clementine text also explicitly states an intended monitory use of the tour of hell when Jesus encourages Peter to use the fear of hell to encourage repentance. This emphasis on hidden teaching and the monitory intention for the punishments of hell is further emphasised in the conclusion to the text:

Our saviour, Christ, spoke to Peter, his disciple. And Peter likewise revealed to his disciple, Clement. And he made known to him the account of the mystery so that he might not reveal it but scare them with the judgment of burning fire so that they will repent from the sin.  
“Listen, oh my son Clement, I have told you my truth. Glory to the friend of humankind forever. Amen.”

The Apoc Pet contains neither hidden teachings nor explicit monitory purpose statements. On the contrary, Apoc Pet 14 claims openly that the wicked in hell for whom the righteous pray will receive salvation. Not only is this doctrine not hidden in the Apoc Pet, but, as the additional Pseudo-Clementine material states, this claim could possibly hinder a monitory reading of the text by deterring sinners from repentance through the hope of mercy after death.

The Apoc Pet and The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead disagree on how best to utilise the doctrine of post-mortem salvation for the wicked. They both agree on the validity of the doctrine itself, but the editor of the Pseudo-Clementine text seemingly did not want it to be widely spread for fear of its negative impact on the teaching of repentance. It is likely that this led the editor to emend the text of Apoc Pet 14 to what is now present in Eth Apoc Pet 14. In the Ethiopic text, the tour of hell no longer ends with mercy. Instead, it ends with the baptism and departure of the righteous while the wicked remain in torment forever. This conclusion fits well with the editor's monitory purpose and allows mercy to surface only later as a hidden teaching, but this twofold purpose does not accurately reflect the original text of the Apoc Pet. It appears as though for the Apoc Pet to function even partially as a monitory text, at least according to the editor of The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead, the tour of hell could not end with mercy. Thus, restoring the text to the more original, openly merciful reading found in the Rainer fragment once again problematises a monitory reading of the text.

## *2. The Extent of Post-Mortem Salvation*

The display of compassion in Apoc Pet 3 that opens the eschatological vision is universal. Everyone who sees the torment of the wicked weeps. While Apoc Pet 14 serves as the counterpart to this display of mercy and forms an *inclusio* of mercy around the eschatological vision, it does not use the same explicit universal language. Instead, it leaves a degree of uncertainty regarding who exactly will receive post-mortem baptism.

I will give to my called and my elect whomever they ask of me out of punishment, and I will give them a good baptism in the salvation of the

so-called Acherusian Lake in the Elysian Field, a part of righteousness with my holy ones. And I will depart, I and my elect, rejoicing with the patriarchs to my eternal kingdom. And I will accomplish with them my promises, which I promised to them, I and my father who is in heaven. (Apoc Pet 14:1–3)

In these verses, those who are baptised are the wicked for whom the righteous request mercy. However, the text does not indicate how comprehensive the requests of the righteous will be. This has led to some debate among scholars concerning for whom the righteous will request salvation.

One option is that the righteous only show mercy to those who wronged them.<sup>528</sup> According to Bauckham, the torment of the wicked in hell is something owed to the righteous victims. Therefore, only the victims have the right to forgive those who wronged them. This interpretation generally has four main arguments. First, the punishments for murder, abortion, and infanticide are the only punishments that include spectators during the tour. This seemingly highlights the importance of sins that are specifically committed against another individual in the text.<sup>529</sup> However, not all the sins mentioned that are committed against another person include the victims as onlookers during the tour of hell (cf. Apoc Pet 9:1–2, 5–7). Furthermore, all of the righteous are brought to view everyone in hell in Apoc Pet 13:1–3. While the righteous onlookers in the tour of hell are important, as shown above, they are not universally described as victims, nor do they only view the punishment of those who wronged them.

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<sup>528</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 232–235; Kyrtatas, “The Origins of Christian Hell,” 291.

<sup>529</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 234.

Second, Bauckham argues that the context of persecution behind the text likely brings with it the desire for justice for martyrs and persecuted Christians.<sup>530</sup> His primary argument for this is his belief that the text was written in Palestine during the Bar Kokhba revolt. While the Bar Kokhba hypothesis is not convincing enough to form the basis of an exegetical argument, the Apoc Pet nevertheless shows an awareness of persecution and martyrdom (cf. Apoc Pet 2:10–13; 9:1–2). An awareness of persecution, however, is not enough to prove that the author of the text has a particular concern for the justice owed to martyrs.

Third, the use of the Acherusian lake in Apoc Pet 14 is similar to its use in Plato's *Phaedo* 114.<sup>531</sup> After a year in Tartarus, according to Plato, those who have wronged others are cast into the Acherusian lake and are only allowed to leave if their victims grant them mercy. While noting the similarity between this function of the Acherusian lake in *Phaedo* and its role in the Apoc Pet, Bauckham admits that the two texts contain different conceptualisations of justice. For Plato, justice for those in the Acherusian lake is purificatory, while justice in the Apoc Pet is retributive.<sup>532</sup> While Bauckham rightly points out the different conceptualisations of justice between the texts, it is interesting that the Acherusian lake still functions in a purifying fashion in the Apoc Pet through the baptism of the wicked. The more significant difficulty for creating a link between *Phaedo* and the Apoc Pet is that in *Phaedo* the wicked are cast into the lake prior to receiving mercy from the victims, whereas in the Apoc Pet the

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<sup>530</sup> Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 234.

<sup>531</sup> Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 234.

<sup>532</sup> Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 234–235.

Acherusian lake is used to baptise the wicked after the righteous have requested mercy for them.

Fourth, Augustine, in *The City of God* 21.18, describes how some early Christians held to a similar view.<sup>533</sup> He writes, “For they say that God, in His mercy, will grant them the prayers and intercessions of His saints. For if the saints prayed for them even when they suffered their enmity, how much more readily will they do so when they see them prostrate and humble suppliants!”<sup>534</sup> As will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter, Bauckham has argued that the Christians Augustine here describes were influenced by the Apoc Pet.<sup>535</sup> This suggests, then, that at least some early readers of the text shared the belief that righteous victims will pray for their persecutors and that they may have drawn this belief from their interpretation of Apoc Pet 14.

Perhaps the most significant problem with this interpretation is the lack of any language of forgiveness in Apoc Pet 14:1–3. This interpretation relies on the notion that the victims of those in punishment forgive those who wronged them. However, the text does not say the righteous forgive the wicked. It merely says that the righteous ask that the wicked be delivered out of punishment. The conflation of these two actions is not necessarily warranted in the text. The Apoc Pet never portrays the righteous as forgiving the wicked, but only as having compassion on them. Compassion does not

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<sup>533</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 235; Bauckham, “The Conflict of Justice and Mercy,” 147; Kyrtatas, “The Origins of Christian Hell,” 291 n. 29.

<sup>534</sup> All translations of *The City of God* are from Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>535</sup> Richard Bauckham, “Augustine, the ‘Compassionate’ Christians, and the Apocalypse of Peter,” in *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, NovTSup 93 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 149–159.

necessitate forgiveness. In fact, many of the sins that are punished throughout the tour of hell have no victims to offer forgiveness, but still seemingly elicit compassion from the righteous (cf. Apoc Pet 13:1–3).

Another suggestion regarding for whom the righteous request salvation is their friends and family. This is commonly cited as an option, but it is rarely defended.<sup>536</sup> No evidence exists within the Apoc Pet to support this view, but Jeffrey Trumbower argues in favour of it by pointing out that this theme appears in other early Christian literature.<sup>537</sup> In *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* VII–VIII, Perpetua sees a vision of her brother, Dinocrates, in “a dark place” unable to drink from a pool of water. After praying for him, Perpetua has another vision of Dinocrates “freed from his suffering.”<sup>538</sup> Similarly, in The Acts of Paul and Thecla 29, Thecla prays for Queen Tryphaena’s deceased daughter, Falconilla, that she “may live in eternity.”<sup>539</sup> While both of these examples exhibit the theme of prayer for deceased family members, neither contain sufficient material, beyond the belief in post-mortem salvation, allowing for a link between them and the Apoc Pet. This is why, after listing all the possible connections between the texts, Buchholz concludes that they at most show signs of familiarity with “similar popular material”.<sup>540</sup> Familiarity with similar material, however, does not indicate that specific theological concepts, such as the

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<sup>536</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 348; Kyrtatas, “The Origins of Christian Hell,” 291.

<sup>537</sup> Jeffrey A. Trumbower, “Apocalypse of Peter 14,1-4 in Relation to Confessors’ Intercessions for the Non-Christian Dead,” *StPatr XXXVI* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 307–312; Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead: The Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 49–55.

<sup>538</sup> Thomas J. Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 128–129.

<sup>539</sup> Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 369–370.

<sup>540</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 51–55.

extent of post-mortem salvation, are shared between the texts. Without evidence within the Apoc Pet itself for this interpretation, it remains questionable.

One interpretation that has yet to be suggested but deserves consideration is that the righteous will not ask for anyone out of hell. The ambiguity of the text allows for such an interpretation, and it is not without precedent in the early church. Tertullian, in *De Spectaculis XXX*, uses language similar to the Apoc Pet to describe the Day of Judgment as the day the wicked did not believe would arrive and in which the world will be consumed by fire. He then continues by describing the delight of the righteous at the spectacle of the wicked receiving punishment on that day.<sup>541</sup> If the Apoc Pet shares Tertullian's delight in the torment of the wicked, it would seem logical that, although the righteous could ask for salvation for the wicked, they would not. Gilmour does not discuss this possibility, but it would adhere well to his interpretation of the text as encouraging *Schadenfreude* in its readers.<sup>542</sup> Nevertheless, as argued above, the text consistently portrays the righteous as sympathetic toward the wicked and thus encourages compassion rather than *Schadenfreude* in its readers.

The final potential interpretation concerning for whom the righteous request salvation in Apoc Pet 14 is that they pray for everyone. Buchholz prefers this understanding of the text, because he understands the Apoc Pet as implying that the righteous are unable to obtain happiness while anyone is undergoing torment in hell.<sup>543</sup> Likewise, Lanzillotta notes, "Since our text includes no explicit restrictions with regard to salvation, one might rather expect it to be as comprehensive as the

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<sup>541</sup> Tertullian, *Apology. De Spectaculis. Minucius Felix: Octavius*, trans. T. R. Glover and Gerald H. Rendall, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), 297–301.

<sup>542</sup> Gilmour, "Delighting in the Sufferings of Others," 129–139.

<sup>543</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 348.

compassion of the righteous.”<sup>544</sup> The lack of any restrictions concerning for whom the righteous may request salvation is perhaps the key to interpreting the text. The suggestions that only victims will request salvation for their persecutors or that the righteous will only appeal on behalf of their family and friends limit the text where no limitation exists. Rather, the text emphasises universal compassion for the wicked beginning in Apoc Pet 3. This universal compassion is likely still at play in Apoc Pet 14, thus moving the righteous to request for universal salvation.

The ambiguity in Apoc Pet 14 perhaps serves to allow the readers to make their own decisions concerning for whom they would request salvation. After a detailed tour of the punishments in hell, readers may have particular individuals in their minds that they expect to undergo such torments. By not explicitly stating whom the righteous request out of punishment, the text encourages its readers to decide for themselves whether or not the individuals on their minds deserve salvation or damnation. However, the righteous, whom the readers are intended to emulate, feel compassion for everyone in hell. Such compassion strongly implies, despite the text’s ambiguity, that the appropriate response is to request salvation for everyone. This includes victims forgiving their persecutors and requests for the salvation of family and friends, but it is not limited to either. The text seems to suggest that even the torment of a complete stranger is enough to bring the righteous to tears.

### *3. The Justice of Post-Mortem Salvation*

One of the oddities of Apoc Pet 14 is that the salvation offered to the wicked does not come directly from Jesus, but through the prayers of the righteous. In fact, in addition

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<sup>544</sup> Lanzillotta, “Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?,” 152.

to changing the teaching on post-mortem salvation of the wicked to a secret teaching, the editor of *The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead* also modified it so that their salvation was a direct result of Jesus' mercy with the result that this strange concept was removed from the text. Even with the more original reading found in the Rainer fragment, one might still expect the salvation of the wicked to come directly from Jesus. The prologue emphasises Jesus' mercy with the epithet "the merciful and lover of mercy", and Apoc Pet 3:3 describes Jesus as weeping at the sight of the torments in hell. All this points to the compassion of Jesus being the main reason for mercy in Apoc Pet 14.<sup>545</sup> Nevertheless, it is only through the petitions of the righteous that the wicked are offered salvation from torment. This is an important point in the text for integrating justice and mercy, for it unifies the two aspects of God into a single action.

The first point to recognise is that offering salvation to the wicked through the compassionate petitions of the righteous does not discount the mercy of Jesus. Although the salvation of the wicked is a direct result of the prayers of the righteous, it is equally something granted to the righteous by Jesus himself: "*I will give to my called and my elect whomever they ask of me out of punishment*" (Apoc Pet 14:1a).<sup>546</sup> One might infer that the petitions of the righteous are the means by which Jesus offers salvation to the wicked. In this way, the text does not discount the mercy of Jesus in offering salvation to the wicked, but it adds a further dimension to this offer. That dimension is the justice of God. After describing the baptism of the wicked and the departure of Jesus and the righteous, the eschatological vision concludes, "And I will

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<sup>545</sup> Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 234.

<sup>546</sup> Emphasis added.

accomplish with them my promises, which I promised to them, I and my father who is in heaven” (Apoc Pet 14:3). Buchholz notes that details regarding the promises referred to here are lacking, but he suggests that they might be the promises mentioned in Heb 4:1, 6:12, 8:6, and 12:26, as well as in 2 Pet 1:4 and 3:13.<sup>547</sup> Rather than looking for potential biblical allusions, however, it is possible to look at the wider context of the Apoc Pet to see some of the promises made with the text.

When looking through the promises made in the Apoc Pet, one in particular has already been discussed as an important recurring theme in the text: recompense according to deeds. Although most of the usages of this theme refer specifically to the mirror punishment of the wicked, its first occurrence suggests that recompense according to deeds is universal: “I will come in my glory with all my holy angels when my father will place a crown upon my head that I may judge the living and the dead and recompense everyone according to his deeds” (Apoc Pet 1:7b–8). This promise refers specifically to divine justice in repaying every person in accordance with their deeds. While the eschatological vision of Apoc Pet 4–14 focuses predominately on the actions of the wicked and their reparations, it also acknowledges that the righteous have acted rightly. “But each of the elect *who have done well*, they will come to me and they will not see death by the devouring fire” (Apoc Pet 6:4).<sup>548</sup> Therefore, the justice pattern of the Apoc Pet necessitates that the righteous receive rewards for their deeds just as the wicked receive punishments. Perhaps these rewards are the promises to which Jesus refers in Apoc Pet 14:3. The primary reward of the righteous seems to

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<sup>547</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 359.

<sup>548</sup> Emphasis added.

be departing with Jesus into the eternal kingdom (Apoc Pet 6:4, 14:2), but other rewards likely include granting their petitions.

The culminating petition of the eschatological vision is of course the request for the salvation of the wicked in Apoc Pet 14:1. Throughout the Apoc Pet, the righteous feel compassion for the wicked. Their compassion leads them in Apoc Pet 14 to appeal for mercy. Jesus grants this appeal perhaps because it is something due to the righteous as a reward for their deeds in life. Lanzillotta describes it this way, “As he is aware of the compassion of the righteous, he grants them the possibility of interceding for the damned. Mercy, therefore, can rather be seen as the very culmination of his restitution of righteousness.”<sup>549</sup> In this way, mercy for the wicked is justice for the righteous. This is the perhaps the point Jesus was trying to make in his earlier words of comfort to Peter: “But when you saw the grief which will happen to the sinners in the last days and because of this your heart was sorrowful. But they who have transgressed against the Most High, I will show you their works” (Apoc Pet 3:7). The torments of the wicked are grotesque, severe, and seem to be anything but merciful. Peter, perhaps understandably, protested that it would have been more merciful for the wicked to have never been born than for them to receive such punishment (Apoc Pet 3:4). However, Jesus shows throughout the tour of hell how each punishment is just in its use of mirror punishment. In so doing, he reminds Peter that God’s justice cannot be superseded by his mercy. However, it is also not possible for God’s mercy to be superseded by his justice. As such, God’s justice extends to the righteous as well as to the wicked. Each receives rewards or punishments based upon their deeds. Unlike the wicked, however, the righteous have done well and are

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<sup>549</sup> Lanzillotta, “Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?,” 148–149.

deserving of a reward (Apoc Pet 6:4). By giving the righteous the chance in their compassion to intercede for the wicked, God is justly extending mercy to the wicked for the sake of the righteous.

Another interesting aspect concerning the justice of the salvation of the wicked is that even though they are brought out of punishment, they receive only “a part of righteousness” while Jesus, the elect, and the patriarchs depart for the “eternal kingdom” (Apoc Pet 14:2). The wicked are seemingly left in the Elysian field after their baptism in the Acherusian lake. This further emphasises that the salvation of the wicked is not a result of anything they have done themselves. The angel in charge of Tartarus makes it clear in Apoc Pet 13:5 that their repentance is too late to have any impact on God’s judgment concerning them.<sup>550</sup> As the wicked have done nothing to deserve post-mortem rewards, they are only released from punishment because the righteous in their compassion desire it. Therefore, the wicked still do not inherit any of the promises that Jesus gives to the righteous, because they have done no deeds that merit such rewards. God’s mercy does not override his justice. The reward of departing with Jesus into the eternal kingdom is reserved only for those who were righteous in life. Thus, the granting of partial rather than complete righteousness to the wicked is further evidence that the mercy shown them is implemented solely as a result of justice for the righteous.

#### *4. Conclusion*

The eschatological vision of the Apoc Pet concludes in Apoc Pet 14 with a universal message of mercy. The impact of this chapter on the overall purpose of the text is

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<sup>550</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 234.

especially apparent when analysing the editorial changes made to Eth Apoc Pet 14 within the greater context of the Pseudo-Clementine text that contains the Eth Apoc Pet, The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead. The editor of this larger work seemingly felt that the post-mortem salvation of the wicked was a doctrine that would discourage sinners from repentance. Therefore, it needed to be reserved only for the wise and learned, and the tour of hell in the Apoc Pet should be used to warn people of the dangers of unrepentant lives. Seemingly, in the view of the Pseudo-Clementine editor, the immediate and open expression of mercy originally in the text removes most, if not all, of the fear inherent in the punishment of the wicked in hell. Only by emending the text of the Eth Apoc Pet was this able to be avoided. Once restored with the Rainer fragment, however, Apoc Pet 14 functions together with Apoc Pet 3 to form an *inclusio* around the eschatological vision, which emphasises the text's focus on mercy.

The objects of this mercy are ambiguous in the text because it does not clearly state for whom the righteous will request salvation from hell. While it could be only prayers of victims for their persecutors or prayers for friends and family, the universal compassion of Apoc Pet 3 suggests that the righteous will request for everyone to be removed from torment. At the same time, the ambiguity of Apoc Pet 14 may serve as a pedagogical tool by allowing readers to make their own decisions about whom they would request to be released from torment. That decision can then be weighed against the response of the righteous throughout Apoc Pet in order to ascertain the success or failure of the text in its task of encouraging readers to emulate the universal compassion of the righteous through the use of *ekphrasis*.

Even with its emphasis on mercy, Apoc Pet 14 does not disregard justice. Rather, mercy for the wicked is only permitted to fulfil the demands of justice for the righteous. In this way, justice and mercy are fully integrated in the text. The righteous have done well in life (Apoc Pet 6:4) and are thus given rewards on the day of judgment in accordance with their actions (Apoc Pet 1:7–8, 14:3). One of those rewards is the chance to request that the wicked be released from torment (Apoc Pet 14:1). Upon granting this request, the righteous are given their full reward of departing with Jesus and the patriarchs into the eternal kingdom, while the wicked, now free from torment, remain in the Elysian field (Apoc Pet 14:2). By using the righteous as the mediators of mercy, the text is able to hold together God’s mercy and justice without conflict. It is not a case of mercy triumphing over justice or vice versa, but of both coexisting. It is only because of the compassionate pleas of the righteous that God is able in his justice to show mercy to the wicked.

#### D. Conclusions

The Apoc Pet utilises a theory of justice known as mirror punishment. It summarises this concept multiple times with the idea that judgment will “recompense everyone according to his deeds” (Apoc Pet 1:8). Although the text primarily applies this notion of recompense in accordance with deeds to the wicked, it is also applicable to the righteous. While mirror punishment is similar to *lex talionis*, the concepts differ in important ways as they relate to the Apoc Pet. First, mirror punishment allows for a greater use of symbolism in punishment than the typical “eye for an eye” understanding of *lex talionis*. Second, mirror punishment focuses on the guilt obtained through sin rather than on the sinful act itself. Third, mirror punishment does not

require a balanced response in punishment as does *lex talionis*. For these three reasons, it is best to describe the justice pattern in the Apoc Pet as mirror punishment rather than *lex talionis*. By reading the text according to mirror punishment, it is then possible to identify the correlation of sin to punishment in nineteen of the twenty-one punishments in the Apoc Pet. The only two punishments left unidentified are either corrupt (Apoc Pet 11:1–3) or likely a result of some lost reference to ancient culture and customs (Apoc Pet 10:1). Therefore, the Apoc Pet views all its punishments as appropriately just.

On multiple occasions, the tour of hell describes the responses of the characters in the narrative to the punishment of the wicked. The wicked show remorse for their actions and also acknowledge the justice of their punishments. Their remorse ultimately leads them to repent and ask for mercy in Apoc Pet 13:4. However, they are rebuked by the angel in charge of Tartarus and told that the time for repentance has passed. At the same time, the righteous are shown all the punishments in hell and hear the request of the wicked for mercy. Within the tour itself, the text never reveals the emotional state of the righteous. However, it is important that in Apoc Pet 3:3 the righteous are described as weeping in sorrow at the punishment of the wicked. Without an explicit statement in contradiction to this in the tour of hell, the compassionate state of the righteous described in Apoc Pet 3 should be read as pervading the entire narrative. As such, when the righteous are described as seeing the punishment of those who murdered them (Apoc Pet 7:10) and every other punishment in hell (Apoc Pet 13:2–3), they are weeping at the sight. It is this compassionate tone that the readers are meant to emulate and carry over into the climax of the narrative: the post-mortem salvation of the wicked.

Even though the editor of Eth Apoc Pet 14 removed the post-mortem salvation of the wicked, the doctrine remained in the Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead, within which the Eth Apoc Pet is contained. The evidence suggests the change was made in order to turn post-mortem salvation for the wicked into a secret teaching and use the tour of hell as a warning against sinning. This is not, however, the original intent of the text. This doctrine is not a secret in the Apoc Pet. Instead, it is the very answer to the mystery, first introduced in the prologue and further expounded upon in Apoc Pet 3, of how justice and mercy are integrated. The concept of justice in the Apoc Pet requires that all people receive recompense according their actions. The righteous receive, as their reward for their faithfulness in life, the opportunity to request mercy on behalf of the wicked. In this way, mercy for the wicked is justice for the righteous. The text is admittedly ambiguous regarding for whom the righteous will request salvation. However, due to the universality of the compassion of the righteous throughout the text, it is probable that the request for mercy will likewise be universal.

## Chapter 7: The Purpose of the Apocalypse of Peter

After a summary of the preceding study, this final chapter will discuss some ways in which the primary purpose of the Apoc Pet may impact its readers. Therefore, the purpose of this conclusion will be to bring the results of this research into further conversation with previous scholarship on the text and encourage additional research.

### A. Summary of Research

The aim of this study was to challenge the scholarly assumption that the Apoc Pet is a text meant to warn people not to sin by using frightening images of punishment in hell. That is, it questions the monitory understanding of the text. The first chapter described how, following the discovery of the Akh Apoc Pet in the winter of 1886/87 and the subsequent discovery of the Eth Apoc Pet in 1910, a great deal of scholarship on the text focused on questions of intertextuality and historical provenance. After this period of initial interest, there followed a relative hiatus in research. Then, after half a century of near neglect, the text gained renewed popularity through the work of two scholars, Buchholz<sup>551</sup> and Bauckham.<sup>552</sup> However, this renewed popularity did not result in many new questions being asked. While numerous scholars have commented on the purpose of the Apoc Pet, thus far only Gilmour<sup>553</sup>, Helmer<sup>554</sup>, and Lanzillotta<sup>555</sup> have offered detailed reflection on the intention of the text. Helmer's discussion on the

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<sup>551</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*.

<sup>552</sup> See especially Bauckham, "The Two Fig Tree Parables"; Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter: An Account of Research"; Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, NovTSup 93 (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

<sup>553</sup> Gilmour, "Delighting in the Sufferings of Others."

<sup>554</sup> Helmer, "That We May Know and Understand."

<sup>555</sup> Lanzillotta, "Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?"

purpose of the Apoc Pet was tangential to his primary study and thus overlooked many important aspects of the text. The analyses of Gilmour and Lanzillotta contain multiple misinterpretations of the Apoc Pet, primarily due to faulty translations and unfamiliarity with the various recensions of the text.

### *1. The Importance of Context to Afterlife Torment Texts*

In order to address this deficiency in scholarship, the present study began by defining the key terms of apocalypse and afterlife torment text and discussing the strengths and weaknesses of various methodological approaches utilised in this thesis and in scholarship on the Apoc Pet more broadly.<sup>556</sup> It then surveyed ten afterlife torment texts that share a cultural and temporal proximity to the Apoc Pet. Each of these ten texts are variously of Greek, Jewish, or Christian origin and have a possible date range which includes the first three centuries CE. The purpose of this survey was to present the importance of narrative and dialogical context in the interpretation of afterlife torment texts as well as the pedagogical diversity of the genre. Scholars tend to assume these texts are monitory and serve as a warning against inappropriate behaviour primarily due to their grotesque imagery.<sup>557</sup> This assumption, however, was shown to ignore the narratives and dialogues within which these texts are typically contained and their resulting diversity.

Although most of the texts surveyed did fall into the monitory category, the various warnings they conveyed were more diverse than scholarship tends to admit.

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<sup>556</sup> The definition of apocalypse used in this thesis is that given initially by John Collins, Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," 9, and later supplemented by Adela Yarbro Collins, Yarbro Collins, "Introduction: Early Christian Apocalypticism," 7.

<sup>557</sup> Cf. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, 280.

Texts like the Testament of Isaac seemingly highlight the importance of right action, particularly by showing mercy, in addition to, and perhaps over and above, not acting in a wicked way. In this way, some afterlife torment texts are not warnings against sinning, but encouragements to act righteously. This is a small, but significant nuance among texts that convey a monitory purpose. Some texts may use the warning of punishment in the afterlife to discourage undesirable behaviour, others may use the warning to encourage desirable behaviour, and still others may do both. Therefore, while it is correct to say that most, but not all, afterlife torment texts are monitory, it is incorrect to universally equate a monitory reading with a warning against sinful behaviour.

The survey of these ten afterlife torment texts demonstrated that without narrative or dialogical context, the purpose of an afterlife torment text is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain. These texts primarily reveal the intention of their afterlife torments, sometimes explicitly, in the surrounding context. Furthermore, the survey also revealed that not all afterlife torment texts are monitory. The two clearest examples of variety in the genre among those surveyed were Plutarch's *On the Daimonion of Socrates* and Lucian's *True Histories*. Within the study of Classics, the concept that these texts are not monitory and that afterlife torment texts contain a wide variety of pedagogical purposes is widely accepted.<sup>558</sup> It is, therefore, only necessary to allow for this understanding to gain acceptance in the study of early Christianity. The analysis of the purpose of the Apoc Pet offered in this thesis will aid in this task.

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<sup>558</sup> Cf. Hardie, "Plutarch and the Interpretation of Myth," 4775.

## *2. A New Translation and Edition of the Apocalypse of Peter*

In order to undertake the proposed analysis of the Apoc Pet, it was first necessary to offer a new translation of the text. This need arose from the shortcomings in both Gilmour's and Lanzillotta's publications mentioned above. However, while supplying a new translation of the Eth Apoc Pet would by itself aid scholarship in correcting errors in previous translations, it would do little to aid in the much-needed dissemination of knowledge concerning the different recensions of the text. As a way to address both problems, the translation given in this study is also the first attempt in scholarship to compare all the available manuscripts of the text primarily on a 'verse by verse' basis. Following James' arguments regarding Ethiopic priority, scholarship has largely deemed the Akh Apoc Pet as an unreliable witness to the earliest version of the Apoc Pet.<sup>559</sup> The arguments for the priority of the Eth Apoc Pet, however, predominately refer to its reliability in length and verb tense when compared to the Akh Apoc Pet. These arguments remain convincing, but they have little impact on the reliability of the actual content of the Eth Apoc Pet in places where the Akh Apoc Pet contains similar material. By changing the verb tense of the Akh Apoc Pet to match that in the Eth Apoc Pet, some of the primary arguments in favour of Ethiopic priority were maintained while allowing for the construction of a composite text which utilised every available recension of the Apoc Pet.

Presenting a single translation of a composite text of the Apoc Pet rather than separate translations of each recension allows for continued scholarship on the Apoc Pet without necessitating detailed knowledge of the relationship between the various extant manuscripts. This benefits scholarship by preventing mistakes such as not

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<sup>559</sup> James, "A New Text of the Apocalypse of Peter," 573–583.

showing an awareness of the post-mortem salvation of the wicked in the Rainer Fragment.<sup>560</sup> The notes following the translation discuss every instance where a different recension was preferred over the Ethiopic, as well as a discussion as to why the prologue was likely part of the earliest form of the text. In addition to supporting certain theories regarding the Eth Apoc Pet, such as the intrusion of the concept of eternal punishment in the text, the side by side analysis of the various recensions suggests that the majority of the content of the Akh Apoc Pet is likely a better witness to the earliest form of the text than corresponding sections of the Eth Apoc Pet. It is hoped that this new composite text will serve as a major contribution to and research tool for future studies on the Apoc Pet.

Surprisingly, 24 of the 34 verses in the Akh Apoc Pet were determined in some respect to be more reliable than the parallel material in the Eth Apoc Pet. Of the ten verses that were not included in the composite text, two were also found in the superior Bodleian Fragment (Akh Apoc Pet 33–34), and four were so similar to the Ethiopic that the default decision to prioritise the Ethiopic text was the only deciding factor (Akh Apoc Pet 23–24, 26, 31). The remaining four verses that were not utilised in the composite text (Akh Apoc Pet 1–3, 21) were left out because they did not adequately correspond with verses in the Eth Apoc Pet to allow for comparison. The consistent reliability of the Akh Apoc Pet was entirely unexpected and demands further analysis. However, a more detailed comparison of individual words in each text that such an analysis would require was beyond the scope of this thesis. Regardless, in addition to correcting certain errors in previous translations, the translation introduced in this

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<sup>560</sup> Simkovich, “Universalist Testament Literature,” 1–32; Woodcock, “Images of Hell in the Tours of Hell: Are They True?,” 17–19.

study is the first attempt in scholarship to present the earliest recoverable form of the Apoc Pet based upon all the available manuscript evidence.

### *3. Reading Apocalypse of Peter 7–14 in Context*

After introducing a new translation and edition of the Apoc Pet, the thesis presented detailed exegesis of the Apoc Pet using the narrative framework surrounding the tour of hell as the hermeneutical key that reveals its purpose. Beginning in the prologue, the text reveals that its primary topics of concern are the parousia and the eschatological fate of the wicked. This suggests that even though the Apoc Pet contains a vision of paradise, it is not considered of great importance to the text from the prologue's perspective. The emphasis on the fate of the wicked rather than the fate of all people thus functions to prepare the reader to focus on the eschatological vision of Apoc Pet 4–14. The prologue also conveys the purpose of the text to the reader, "that he might understand the mystery of the Son of God, the merciful and lover of mercy." The mystery which Peter, and therefore the reader, is meant to understand is somehow connected to the parousia and the fate of the wicked, and it elicits from the author an epithet reverencing Jesus' mercy. As the text progresses, this mystery is seen to be the relationship between divine justice and mercy. As such, the focus on justice followed by a reference to the mystery of the merciful Son of God sets the overall tone of the text and prepares readers for the climax of post-mortem salvation in Apoc Pet 14.

The first two chapters after the prologue focus on the signs of the parousia. These chapters identify the audience of the text, as well as the text's unrealistic perspective of them. When the disciples ask Jesus to reveal to them the signs of his return, they explain that they wish to know so that they might understand it themselves

and explain it to those whom they will establish in the church (Apoc Pet 1:2–3). With this explanation, the author reveals his intention that the text be used to educate those within the church. In a text that maintains a clear distinction between the righteous and the wicked, the intent of the text to serve as education for those within the church suggests that the audience is meant to identify with those described as righteous in the text. As the description of the parousia continues, the text's identification of its Christian audience with the righteous becomes clearer, as it consistently portrays those in the church as not being deceived by false messiahs and remaining faithful to Jesus in the face of martyrdom (cf. Apoc Pet 2:7–13). The confidence with which the text portrays the faithfulness of those in the church may be unrealistic, but it nevertheless reveals that the perspective with which the reader is meant to identify is that of the righteous Christian who does not sin.

Once the signs of the parousia and the faithfulness of the righteous are established, the text turns to its primary concern: the eschatological fate of the wicked. While introducing the eschatological vision of Apoc Pet 4–14, the narrative of the text reinforces the tone of mercy established in the prologue. It does this by describing the universal sorrow elicited by the punishment of the wicked. Naturally, the wicked themselves are described as weeping in their torment, but even the other characters described in the vision, the righteous, the angels, and Jesus, weep in compassion for the wicked (Apoc Pet 3:2). This sorrowful compassion is then picked up by Peter, who laments the fate of the wicked in the form of a challenge against the mercy of God (Apoc Pet 3:4). Jesus rebukes him for making such a claim and reaffirms that God is more merciful than Peter by creating the wicked. He then explains that once Peter understands the eschatological justice of God, he will find comfort (Apoc Pet 3:5–7).

This is a strange thing for Jesus to say. After all, it is precisely the judgment of the wicked that Peter finds distressing. By simultaneously affirming the mercy and justice of God and implying that an understanding of justice will bring comfort to Peter in his desire for mercy, Jesus is here suggesting that the concepts of justice and mercy are somehow integrated in the text.

When attempting to read the tour of hell through this narrative framework, it was first necessary to understand the concept of justice at work in the text. The Apoc Pet utilises a notion of justice known as mirror punishment, described in the text five times as punishment according to deeds (Apoc Pet 1:8; 6:3, 8; 13:3, 6). After surveying every punishment in the tour of hell, all but two were shown to be just in accordance with the concept of mirror punishment. One verse is too corrupt to recreate a coherent picture (Apoc Pet 11:1–3), while the other may contain a cultural reference no longer known (Apoc Pet 10:1). Notwithstanding these two verses, the tour of hell functions according to the concept of mirror punishment in which each torment in hell corresponds to the sin committed. In this way, every punishment, no matter how severe, is considered just.

Even though the punishments in hell adhere to a common concept of justice, the characters described in the eschatological vision still maintain a tone of sorrow and compassion throughout the text. The wicked lament multiple times that they heard but did not believe they would receive such punishment (Apoc Pet 7:8, 11; 13:4, 6). Their cries increase as the tour progresses, ultimately resulting in repentance and a plea for mercy. Their repentance, however, is met with rebuke by the angel of Tartarus, who tells them the time for repentance is past (Apoc Pet 13:5). Alongside this progressive lament of the wicked, the righteous are brought to view the punishment of the wicked.

First, the victims of murder see their murders (Apoc Pet 7:10). Then, the victims of abortion and infanticide gaze upon, and participate in the accusation and punishment of, their parents (Apoc Pet 8:3–7). Finally, all the righteous are brought to see the punishment of the wicked and their plea for mercy (Apoc Pet 13:1–2). In each of these instances, the text leaves out a description of the emotional state of the righteous. However, the introduction to the vision (Apoc Pet 3) previously revealed that everyone who sees the punishment of the wicked will weep. This description of sorrowful compassion, therefore, foreshadows that throughout the tour of hell the righteous will weep in compassion when they look upon the torment of the wicked.

The compassionate sorrow of the righteous climaxes in Apoc Pet 14 where Jesus offers salvation to the wicked through the prayers of the righteous. This offer of post-mortem salvation completes an *inclusio* of mercy around the eschatological vision that begins in Apoc Pet 3. It also reveals the mystery of how justice and mercy are fully integrated in the text. The concept of justice in the Apoc Pet is that people receive recompense in accordance with their deeds. This is primarily displayed in the tour of hell through the use of mirror punishment. However, it equally applies to the righteous. The righteous receive a reward for their faithfulness in life. Part of that reward, according to Apoc Pet 14, is the opportunity to act upon their compassion for the wicked and request their salvation. In this way, the mercy of post-mortem salvation for the wicked is enacted via the justice of an eschatological reward for the righteous. Peter's distress in Apoc Pet 3 arose from his desire to save the wicked from punishment. However, Jesus offers him comfort that God is just and therefore is justified in the punishment of the wicked, but his justice will likewise allow him to have mercy on the wicked on account of the compassion of the righteous.

## B. The Impact of the Apocalypse of Peter on its Readers

A primary focus of the exegesis of the Apoc Pet throughout this study was on the depictions of the characters within the narrative. While these depictions are consistently portrayed as sorrowful and compassionate, it remains to be explained how such depictions might impact the readers' understanding of purpose of the text. As Henning has argued, afterlife torment texts use *ekphrasis* to evoke emotion in their audience for didactic purposes.<sup>561</sup> In the Apoc Pet, one of the ways this pedagogical intent is expressed is by inviting the readers to identify with the righteous.<sup>562</sup> However, the ways in which readers might identify with the righteous in the text are immensely varied. By way of concluding this study, it is necessary to discuss a few ways the Apoc Pet as here described may impact its audience.

### 1. Persecuted Christian Readers

As discussed previously, some scholars believe the Apoc Pet was originally written in 132–135 CE in response to Christian persecution under Shimon Bar Kokhba.<sup>563</sup> While this specific dating and provenance is suspect and should not be used as a hermeneutical key for the interpretation of the text, it is nevertheless profitable to speculate how the purpose of the text as presented in this thesis may have impacted readers in such a historical context.<sup>564</sup> Gilmour used the Bar Kokhba hypothesis to posit that readers in such a context would find encouragement for *Schadenfreude*.

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<sup>561</sup> Henning, *Educating Early Christians*, 54–64; Henning, “Eternal Punishment as Paideia,” 33–38.

<sup>562</sup> Henning, *Educating Early Christians*, 211–214; Henning, “Eternal Punishment as Paideia,” 42.

<sup>563</sup> Bauckham, “The Two Fig Tree Parables”; Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 176–194; Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 408–412.

<sup>564</sup> Tigchelaar, “Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?”

However, his interpretation has been shown above to be unlikely for multiple reasons. Instead, it is likely the text would still convey its message of compassion even to those undergoing persecution.

Christians reading the Apoc Pet while under persecution would likely identify with the righteous in the text. After all, it is the righteous who are described as not being deceived by the false messiah and being martyred as a result (Apoc Pet 2:7:13).<sup>565</sup> Also, some of the wicked in punishment are the persecutors of the righteous (Apoc Pet 9:1–2).<sup>566</sup> Far from showing pleasure at the suffering of the wicked, however, the righteous have compassion on them (Apoc Pet 3:3) and pray for their salvation from torment (Apoc Pet 14:1). Readers identifying with the righteous would find no support from the characters in the text to feel anything but sorrow at the punishment of the wicked. Thus, if the Apoc Pet were written to a community undergoing persecution, its message to them is to have compassion on those persecuting them. This is a difficult lesson, but by no means unique within Christianity (cf. Matt 5:44).

## *2. Augustine's Compassionate Christians*

As explained in Chapter 2, this thesis engages sparingly with intertextuality in order to let the Apoc Pet have its own voice and avoid possible misinterpretations that may result from homogenising it with other early Christian sources. Even though it should not be utilised as a primary interpretive tool and is thus beyond the bounds of this thesis, contextualising the Apoc Pet within early Christian thought is nevertheless an

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<sup>565</sup> Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 188–189.

<sup>566</sup> Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 184.

important scholarly pursuit. The belief in the post-mortem salvation of the wicked, in various forms and through various means, is a common feature in the doctrine of *apokatastasis*, the universal restoration of all things or people to God, so the function of the Apoc Pet as proposed in this thesis has many parallels in early Christian thought.<sup>567</sup> While most of these parallels still lie outside the bounds of this study, one in particular found in the writings of Augustine deserves discussion.

In book 21 of *The City of God* Augustine attacks various groups who hold to understandings of hell and the afterlife other than his own. One group in particular bears a striking resemblance to the views of the Apoc Pet. Augustine describes their view as follows.

There are even some – and I have had experience of such people through conversation with them – who, though they seem to venerate the Holy Scriptures, are nonetheless persons of deplorable morals. When these people plead their own case, they attribute to God a far greater degree of mercy towards the human race than do those of whom I have just spoken. For they say that what the Divine Word foretells is true: that wicked and unbelieving men are worthy of punishment; but they also say that, when judgment comes, mercy will prevail. For they say that God, in His mercy, will grant them the prayers and intercessions of His saints. For if the saints prayed for them even when they suffered their enmity, how much more readily will they do so when they see them prostrate and humble suppliants! For we cannot, they say, believe that the saints will lose their bowels of compassion when they have achieved the most full and perfect holiness. We cannot believe that, whereas they prayed for their enemies in the past, when they themselves were not yet without sin, they should not pray for their suppliants now that they no longer have any sin. Or will God not listen to so many of His beloved children, now that they have come to such a condition of holiness that He will find no reason for not answering their prayers? (*Civ.* 21.18)

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<sup>567</sup> For a comprehensive account of the doctrine of *apokatastasis* in early Christianity, see Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena*, VCSup 120 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

Bauckham has suggested that the likely source of this perspective was the Apoc Pet.<sup>568</sup> This hypothesis is further strengthened by Sozomen's account in his *Ecclesiastical History* that the Apoc Pet was read in some churches up through the writing career of Augustine in the fifth century.<sup>569</sup> It is therefore possible to discuss how the Apoc Pet may have impacted readers like Augustine's "Compassionate Christians".

Augustine describes this group as believing that the wicked will plead for mercy, the righteous will respond by praying for the wicked, and God will then grant salvation to the wicked due to the prayers of the righteous. This is precisely the teaching of the Apoc Pet. He further describes this group in quite negative terms as living with practically no morals: "Their human mercy is moved only towards men, and they plead chiefly their own cause. They hold out a false hope of impunity to their own abandoned morals in the form of what they take to be God's mercy towards the whole race" (*Civ.* 21.18). This statement is an ad hominem attack and therefore likely not a wholly accurate depiction of the group, but it is nevertheless telling that Augustine thought that he could levy such a claim against them. The danger of continuing in a sinful lifestyle upon learning about post-mortem salvation is precisely the reason that the Pseudo-Clementine editor of *The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead* gave for wanting to hide the doctrine. Perhaps Augustine's Compassionate Christians are an example of a group who read the Apoc Pet, and thought that the mercy they had for the whole human race would excuse them from living a righteous life.

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<sup>568</sup> Bauckham, "Augustine, the 'Compassionate' Christians, and the Apocalypse of Peter."

<sup>569</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 39–40; Jakab, "The Reception of the Apocalypse of Peter," 182.

### 3. *Disconcerted Readers*

The final readers that deserve some discussion are those readers that continue to read the Apoc Pet as a monitory text. Although this thesis has argued that the primary purpose of the Apoc Pet is to teach about the integration of divine justice and mercy and by this encourage its readers to show compassion to the wicked, it is possible that, for some readers, this purpose does not entirely eliminate the capacity of the text to serve as a warning against sin. Gilmour admits to something similar when he discusses the possibility that his interpretation of the text as maintaining the hope of justice in the afterlife in the face of persecution may not make sense to modern readers. He says, “The author’s attempt to depict what it would look like, even holding out an invitation to readers to enjoy the scene, may be distasteful to modern sensitivities and incomprehensible for those reading from a privileged perspective, but this does not in itself prove it to be immoral.”<sup>570</sup> Readers who do not share the perspective of the text will often have different understandings than those intended by the work itself.

This thesis has argued that the Apoc Pet is not primarily a monitory text. However, as an afterlife torment text, it may very well be that a monitory reading is always inherent in these documents regardless of their primary purpose. No one who reads the Apoc Pet lives a sinless life, nor has anyone likely committed only a single sin among those described. The text is not meant to describe real people.<sup>571</sup> This means that some readers may struggle to fully identify with any of the characters in the narrative, despite the text’s encouragements. Likewise, regardless of the offer of post-mortem salvation in Apoc Pet 14, the wicked are still made to endure grotesque

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<sup>570</sup> Gilmour, “Delighting in the Sufferings of Others,” 139.

<sup>571</sup> Henning, “Meghan Henning.”

torments prior to their baptism in the Acherusian lake, and they only receive a portion of the salvation bestowed upon the righteous. In this way, the wicked are still worse off than the righteous in the afterlife. It therefore follows that one should strive to be righteous and avoid the sins described in the text. All these implications remain in the Apoc Pet regardless of its primary purpose, and it is entirely possible that for some readers these monitory implications will overshadow any attempts by the text to highlight mercy and compassion. Such interpretations are entirely valid from a reader response perspective, but they should not be equated with the primary purpose of the text.

### C. Conclusion

Afterlife torment texts are vivid depictions of the punishment of the dead with a wide array of didactic intentions. However, this diversity is largely neglected in scholarship. This study only examines in detail one of many such texts that deserve a robust analysis of their primary purpose. The Apoc Pet is perhaps unique in that it uses its tour of hell to present an eschatology that views divine justice and mercy as an integrated whole in order to encourage its readers to have compassion on the wicked. Such an interpretation of the text challenges the common belief among many scholars that all afterlife torment texts are primarily meant to serve as a warning against ethical misconduct. In support of this argument, this thesis has offered a new translation and edition of the Apoc Pet as well as the first detailed exegesis of the purpose of the text. Hopefully both these contributions to scholarship will spark new discussions on the

text as there is much more work to be done on what Bauckham understandably calls  
“the most neglected of all Christian works written before 150 CE.”<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>572</sup> Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” 160.

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