

2 Peter

II. AUTHORSHIP¹

a. The Epistle's own claims

There can be no doubt that the author intends his readers to understand that he is the apostle Peter. He calls himself somewhat strikingly Symeon (or Simon) Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ (1:1). He states that the Lord showed him the approach of his own death (1:14). He claims to have been an eyewitness of the transfiguration (1:16–18) and records the heavenly voice which he had himself heard on the ‘sacred mountain’. He mentions a previous epistle which he had written to the same people (3:1) and refers to the apostle Paul in terms of intimacy as ‘our beloved brother Paul’ (3:15), although he admits with refreshing candour that Paul’s letters contain many difficult statements.

Such evidence certainly leaves us with the impression that the author is the apostle Peter. But the veracity of all these statements has not only been called in question, but other internal evidence has been brought forward which is alleged to make the self-claims of the epistle untenable, and these objections will need to be carefully considered. Before doing so it should be fully recognized that we have no choice but to regard 2 Peter as either genuine or as a later work deliberately composed in his name. In other words, if its genuineness is found to be untenable, the only alternative is to regard it as spurious, in the sense of being a forgery.

b. The case against Petrine authorship

(i) *The personal allusions.* The claims of the epistle itself are discounted by the majority of scholars on the grounds that these personal allusions are no more than a literary device to give the appearance of authenticity to a pseudonymous production. Support for this process is found in the mass of pseudepigraphic literature, Jewish and Christian, which flourished before and during the early period of church history, in which some attempt was made to give verisimilitude to the pseudonym. In most of them the literary device is obvious enough and so it is assumed that the author of 2 Peter, in spite of his efforts to identify himself with the apostle Peter, has really betrayed his hand.

1. The addition of the Jewish name ‘Simon’ to the Greek name ‘Peter’ in the superscription (1:1) looks like a conscious attempt to identify the Peter of the epistle with the Peter of the gospels and Acts, where alone the double name is found. But in all the gospels, ‘Peter’ is more common than the compound. The usage in 2 Peter is, therefore, unexpected, especially in view of the absence of ‘Simon’ from the salutation of 1 Peter. If the alternative reading ‘Symeon’ is accepted, the form of the name might be claimed as a further indication of the author’s interest in archaic forms.

2. The reference to the Lord’s prediction of Peter’s death as imminent in 1:14 is generally supposed to be an allusion to John 21:18 f. If this is a case of literary dependence, it clearly rules out the apostolic authorship of 2 Peter, because of the late dating of John. Moreover, how did the apostle know that his end was to be so soon? This

¹Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Series taken from jacket.;, 4th rev. ed.;, The master reference collection Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996, c1990), 811.

is considered to be an attempt to indicate that the letter was written just before the apostle's death.

3. The statement in 1:15 looks like a promise of the publication of literary work after Peter's departure. This is often supposed to refer to the production of Mark's gospel, and it is, therefore, a self-conscious attempt on the author's part to identify his work by means of the apostolic 'source' of that gospel.

4. The references to the transfiguration narrative (1:16 ff.) are considered to be forced. Undoubtedly one of the greatest privileges which Peter enjoyed was to witness the transfiguration of Christ, but it is maintained that the incident is introduced into 2 Peter merely to add verisimilitude to the narrative, as much as to say that this Peter is the Peter who witnessed Christ's glory and heard the heavenly voice. Moreover, the description of the mountain as 'sacred' is generally thought to indicate a time when such places were revered, which is most unlikely in apostolic times.

(ii) *Historical problems.* There are many problems of an historical kind which are cited as adverse to apostolic authorship. The main problems may be grouped as follows:

1. The reference to Paul and his letters (3:15). Several indications are claimed to be found here of a period subsequent to the apostles. A corpus of Pauline epistles is known. Indeed, 'all his letters' may well suggest a time when the complete corpus is known. Further, these letters are placed on an equality with 'the other scriptures', which would seem to indicate a time well after the apostolic age. Quite apart from this, a difficulty is felt over Peter's admission of his inability to understand Paul's writings.

2. Another problem is the reference to the 'second letter' in 3:1. If 2 Peter is pseudepigraphic, it is highly probable that this reference has been included to claim a definite connection with 1 Peter, a process not unknown among pseudepigraphists. That there are difficulties in this assumption will be demonstrated later, but it should be noted for the present that the datum does not necessarily require this interpretation.

3. It is also thought that the occasion reflected in the epistle is too late for Peter's time. It is often confidently affirmed that the situation envisaged in the epistle belongs to the second century, particularly to the period of intense Gnostic activity. If this affirmation is correct, there can be no question of apostolic authorship and the epistle must be firmly dated in the sub-apostolic period. But rather less confidence is now being put in the identification of early Gnostic movements and the evidence, as will be seen later, is not sufficient to declare that 2 Peter's false teachers were, in fact, second-century Gnostics. Nevertheless, if other evidence pointed to a later origin, the connections with Gnostic thought might be corroborative evidence. A further consideration is the mixture of past and future tenses, which is thought to suggest an author who first assumes a prophetic role and then lapses into a description of his own contemporary scene.

4. The statement in 3:4 suggests that the first generation of Christians is now past. 'Ever since our fathers died' would seem to suggest a second—or third-generation dating, which would put the epistle well outside the apostolic period. This, of course, assumes that the 'fathers' are the first generation of Christians, including the apostles, but this interpretation is by no means certain and too much weight should not be placed upon it. At the same time, it is undoubtedly possible to interpret the evidence as supporting a late date.

5. The reference to 'your apostles' in 3:2 is considered strange for an apostolic author. This statement is thought to be too cold and general coming from the apostle Peter.

Moreover, the combination of prophets and apostles is characteristic of second-century writers when referring to Scripture (*e.g.* Muratorian Canon and Irenaeus).

(iii) *Literary problems.* The remarkably close parallels between this epistle and that of Jude cannot be left out of the authorship problem of this epistle. If, as is generally supposed, 2 Peter is the borrower from Jude, the date of 2 Peter would then be directly governed by the date of Jude. The latter date is not usually fixed as early as Peter's lifetime and, therefore, it follows that 2 Peter cannot be by Peter. The difficulty here is the appeal to two factors over which there has been, and still is, some difference of opinion. It is not absolutely conclusive, in spite of an overwhelming majority verdict in favour, that 2 Peter actually borrowed from Jude, neither is it certain that Jude must be dated later than Peter's lifetime. But those who are convinced that these can be asserted without fear of contradiction are quite entitled to point out the difficulty. At the same time the bare use of Jude does not in itself exclude Petrine authorship, as some scholars who have maintained authenticity together with Jude's priority have recognized.

Not only is there literary connection between these two epistles, but also between 2 Peter and the Pauline epistles and 2 Peter and 1 Peter. Unlike 1 Peter, which seems to show definite links with some of Paul's epistles (see pp. 796 f.), this epistle is far less clearly influenced by Paul's thought. Nevertheless, the author is clearly acquainted with a number of Pauline epistles, including one sent to the same readers as his own epistle (3:15). There have been many suggestions regarding the identity of this letter, but it is impossible to come to any conclusion. It was probably an epistle now lost. The main difficulty is in the apparent overlap of apostolic provinces. If Paul had previously written to them, why does Peter now address them? It could be that Paul was dead and Peter is, therefore, taking a pastoral interest in some of the former churches. This difficulty has already cropped up in connection with 1 Peter (see pp. 773 f.), where it was seen that very little weight can be attached to it.

The relationship between 1 and 2 Peter is variously interpreted according to whether the former is regarded as authentic or not. If not, then the decision regarding 2 Peter must follow suit. But if 1 Peter is by Peter, this supplies a standard of comparison, which is of vital importance. In other words, the question must be posed whether the author of 1 Peter could have written 2 Peter, and the verdict given by the majority is in the negative. Those who regard the author of 2 Peter as definitely borrowing ideas from 1 Peter, but putting them in a different way, consider this a strong argument against the authenticity of 2 Peter. The linguistic and doctrinal problems arising from a comparison between the two epistles will be considered under the next two heads. Moreover, the literary question of their different use of the Old Testament needs noting. The first epistle is certainly more full of obvious citations and allusions, whereas the second has no formal quotations and fewer allusions. It is felt, therefore, that we are here dealing with different minds. Chase, for instance, refers to the writer of 1 Peter as 'instinctively and apparently unconsciously' falling into Old Testament language, but this is less obvious in 2 Peter.

(iv) *Stylistic problems.* It has been seen that as early as the time of Jerome the stylistic differences between 1 and 2 Peter were noted and an attempt was made to explain them by referring both epistles to different amanuenses. Those modern scholars who regard 1 Peter as having been written by Silas make any stylistic comparisons with 2 Peter irrelevant. But the Greek of 2 Peter is more stilted than that of 1 Peter. Chase characterized the vocabulary of the writer as 'ambitious' and yet considered its

extraordinary list of repetitions as stamping it as 'poor and inadequate'. The style shows a great dearth of connecting particles and an aptitude for cumbrous sentences.

Nevertheless, after carefully setting out this evidence, Chase admitted that there is nothing which absolutely disproves Petrine authorship, although he thought it was hard to reconcile such authorship with the literary character of the epistle. On the other hand, if the view that the Greek of 2 Peter is an artificial literary language learnt from books is correct, and if it is as far removed from everyday language as is often supposed, the difficulty in attributing it to Peter would clearly be considerable.

(v) *Doctrinal problems.* Much emphasis has been placed on the irreconcilability of the doctrine of 1 and 2 Peter. It is pointed out that many of the major themes in 1 Peter do not occur at all in 2 Peter (e.g. the cross, resurrection, ascension, baptism, prayer). The great emphasis in 2 Peter is rather on the parousia. Käsemann goes so far as to discover an inferior view of Christ (who is no longer regarded as a redeemer); an eschatology not orientated to Christ; and an inadequate ethical outlook in which the major evil is imprisonment in a material existence. Although not everyone who disputes the authenticity of the epistle would go all the way with Kasemann, most would agree that the two epistles differ in outlook. Indeed, many would consider that the change in approach to the parousia presupposes a considerable delay after the publication of 1 Peter. It will be necessary to examine this kind of argument more carefully when putting the case for Petrine authorship, but in order to appreciate its true weight, it should be noted that much of the evidence brought forward in support is due to subjective assessments which naturally appeal differently to different minds.

Another factor which may be mentioned here is the Hellenistic background. Certain expressions seem to suggest acquaintance with Greek modes of thought and this is considered highly improbable for a Galilean fisherman. The idea of ἀρετή (moral excellence) applied to God, of virtue combined with faith, of knowledge, of sharing the divine nature and the term 'eyewitness' (ἐπόπται), which was used in the mystery religions, are the major examples of such Greek expressions. If the use of these terms is indicative of the impact of Hellenistic ideas on the author's mind, it may certainly be difficult to maintain Petrine authorship especially because in 1 Peter they are not so frequent.

When all these considerations are taken together they build up so great an impression of non-authenticity that many scholars do not even discuss the possibility that the tradition of apostolic authorship might after all be correct. But the impartial critic must also examine carefully the foundations for the non-authenticity theory and present in the best possible light the evidence which many able scholars have produced in support of Petrine authorship. It will, therefore, be our next task to examine the arguments stated above and then to produce any positive arguments for apostolic authorship.

c. The case for Petrine authorship

(i) *The personal allusions.* In spite of the widespread custom of appealing to contemporary pseudepigraphic practice in support of the view that the personal allusions are merely literary devices, considerable caution is necessary before this kind of argument can be allowed any weight. It must at once be recognized that there are no close parallels to 2 Peter, if this epistle is pseudepigraphic. The normal procedure was to adopt a fairly consistent first-person style, particularly in narrative sections. This style was not specially adapted for epistles, and this is probably the reason for the paucity of examples

of pseudepigrapha in this form. It is much easier to account for the development of pseudonymous Acts and Apocalypses (as those attributed to Peter), although even these appear to be later developments than 2 Peter (see pp. 853 ff. on the relationship of 2 Peter to the *Apocalypse*). Comparative study of pseudepigraphy cannot, of course, lead to a conclusive rejection of a pseudepigraphic origin for 2 Peter, because 2 Peter may be in a class of its own, but it does lead to the demand that evidences for pseudepigraphic origin should be conclusive. It is against this background that the following examination will be conducted.

1. It must at once seem strange that the author uses the double name Simon Peter, when the name Simon does not appear in 1 Peter, which was presumably used as a model, if 2 Peter is pseudepigraphic. The difficulty is even greater if the form 'Symeon' is the correct reading, for neither in the Apostolic Fathers nor in the Christian pseudepigraphic literature is it used. Indeed, it occurs elsewhere only in Acts 15:14 and is obviously a primitive form. M. R. James, who disputed the authenticity of 2 Peter, admitted that this was one of the few features which made for the genuineness of the epistle. We should certainly expect that an imitator of 1 Peter would have kept closer to his model in the salutation, since in 3:1 he is going to imply that his present letter is in the same sequence as the first. It is not possible in this case to treat the variation as an unconscious lapse on the part of the author, for he would hardly have begun his work with a lapse and, in any case, would not have lapsed into a primitive Hebrew form no longer in use in his own day. The only alternative is to assume that the use of the name Simeon was a deliberate device to give a greater impression of authenticity. In that case it would be necessary to suppose that the author had been studying the book of Acts or else that the form had independently survived orally in the author's own circles. On the whole, the author's name presents much greater difficulty for the pseudepigraphic writer than for Peter himself, who, in any case, would enjoy greater liberty in varying the form. If Zahn is right in holding that the recipients were Jewish Christians, it might be possible to explain the Hebrew form of the name on the grounds that for such readers this would be more appropriate. But Zahn's hypothesis is generally disputed (see discussion below).

2. There is undoubtedly a connection between 2 Peter 1:14 and the saying in John 21:18 f., but there is no need to explain this by literary dependence. If Peter himself wrote 2 Peter and heard with his own ears the Lord's prediction, there would be nothing extraordinary in the connection. The main problem is how Peter would have known that the event was so imminent. The situation would be modified if the word *ταχινή* meant not 'soon' as it is generally rendered, but 'swift', which is the meaning it must sustain in 2:1 of this epistle. There is a strong presumption that it means the same in both places. The emphasis would not then be on the imminence, but on the manner of Peter's death. But in any case, if a pseudepigraphist was making an indirect allusion to John 21:18, where Peter is told that some violent death awaited him when he was old, there would be less point in the *ταχινή* to indicate imminence. It did not require much foresight for an old man to suggest that his end was not far away. Moreover, a pseudepigraphist writing this would not appear to add anything to the information contained in the canonical sources, in spite of writing after the event. This may, of course, be a tribute to the pseudepigraphist's skill, but it could equally well be a witness to the veracity of Peter's own statement.

3. The meaning of 2 Peter 1:15 is problematic. The statement reads, 'And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.' But to suppose that this refers to Mark's Gospel is precarious for there is no evidence to support it. 'These things' are presumably things already mentioned in verse 12, which points back to the doctrinal statements of the preceding verses. Evidently the anticipated document was to be doctrinal in character and it is difficult to see how this was fulfilled in Mark's gospel. It is better to suppose that this projected letter was either never written or has since been lost. Another possibility, which is based on the view of a partition theory for 2 Peter, is that a future writing is in view which was later incorporated into 2 Peter. But the homogeneity of 2 Peter is against this. It can hardly be regarded as an evidence of a pseudepigraphist's hand in spite of Käsemann's suggestion that this allusion was included to give 2 Peter the character of a testament of Peter. Yet there is a great difference between this epistle and Jewish apocalyptic books in testamentary form, which all share the pattern of a discourse addressed to the immediate descendants, but which is really destined for future generations. This latter type of literature proceeded from a review of the past to a prophecy of the future. While both these elements may be found in 2 Peter, the epistle can be clearly understood without recourse to the testamentary hypothesis, which could certainly not be said of the farewell discourses of Jewish apocalyptic.

4. But are the references to the transfiguration narrative natural for the apostle Peter? There is no denying that the pseudepigraphists were in the habit of making passing allusions to known events in the lives of their assumed authors, in order to create the historical setting necessary for their literary productions. But there is no parallel to Peter's allusion to the transfiguration, for the prophetic section does not require such a setting to make it intelligible. Indeed, it is difficult to see why a pseudepigraphist would have chosen this particular incident, especially as it does not, like the death and resurrection of Jesus, play a prominent part in early Christian preaching. The only justification for the choice would be the possibility of using it as an introduction to an esoteric revelation in the same way as the book of Enoch uses Enoch's journey through the heavens. But the author of 2 Peter does not claim to be making any new revelation on the basis of his hero's experiences on the mount of transfiguration. He appeals to it almost incidentally as a verification of the prophetic word he intends to impart. But this is a perfectly natural procedure and does not in itself demand a pseudepigraphic author. Peter himself could just as naturally have referred to his own remarkable experience, as he does in 1 Peter 5:1.

Moreover, the form of this transfiguration account differs from the synoptic accounts in certain details, and this demands an explanation. Is this easier to account for on the authenticity hypothesis than the pseudepigraphic? It would, at first sight, seem strange that any writer, introducing an allusion to an historical incident, would have varied the account. There is no mention of Moses and Elijah; the synoptic 'listen to him' is omitted; an emphatic ἐγώ is added; the order of words is changed; and the words ὃν εὐδόκησα are only partially paralleled in Matthew and not at all in Mark and Luke. Such variations suggest an independent tradition, and as far as they go favour a Petrine authorship rather than the alternative. It is, of course, possible to suppose that 2 Peter is reproducing an account from oral tradition, but it is much more natural to assume that this account is a genuine eyewitness account. It is significant that there is a complete absence of

embellishments, such as are often found in the apocryphal books, and in fact can be illustrated in relation to the transfiguration from the fragment attached to the Apocalypse of Peter.

The idea of the 'sacred mountain' (τὸ ὄρος τὸ ἅγιον) need not be as late a development as some scholars suppose, for the central feature is not the veneration of a locality, but the appreciation of the sanctity of an impressive occasion in which the writer himself shared. The real issue is whether a pseudepigraphist would have singled out this particular mountain for special veneration. There does not appear to be any compelling reason why he should have done so. If he merely sensed that Peter would have regarded the mount as holy because of the theophany, the description might just as well reflect the real reactions of the apostle. As a genuine eyewitness account, it is highly credible; as a pseudepigraphic touch, it would have been a device of rare insight, which for that very reason makes it less probable. If the author is alluding to Psalm 2:6 (LXX), where the 'holy' relates to Mount Zion, this might make it more probable in a non-Petrine writing. But it would still seem more natural as a genuine recollection.

It will be seen from these considerations so far that there is little tangible evidence for non-authenticity from the personal allusions. There is, in fact, nothing here which requires us to treat the epistle as pseudepigraphic.

(ii) *Historical problems.* 1. Many scholars who might be prepared to admit that the preceding evidences are not conclusive but corroborative, consider that the allusion to Paul tips the scales against Petrine authorship. But here again caution is needed. It must at once be noted that Peter's words need not imply the existence of an authorized corpus of Paul's letters. The 'all' in 3:16 need mean no more than all those known to Peter at the time of writing. There is no suggestion that even these were known to the readers. Indeed, the writer is informing them of the difficulties in understanding these letters and it can hardly be supposed that they would have been unaware of this had they been acquainted with them. On the other hand, the epistles in question have had sufficient circulation for the false teachers to twist them from their true interpretation.

Of much greater difficulty for the authenticity of the epistle is the apparent classification of Paul's epistles with the 'other scriptures'. Now this again is a matter of interpretation. It is possible to contend that γραφαί does not mean 'Scriptures' but writings in general. The meaning would then be that these false teachers show no sort of respect for any religious writings and that this attitude was extended to Paul's writings. Such an interpretation is supported by the fact that in 1:21 Old Testament prophecy is clearly regarded as bearing the mark of divine inspiration, whereas the reference to Paul lacks such a distinctive claim. He writes 'according to wisdom', but it is nonetheless a wisdom given to him (3:15). Moreover the writer appears to be classing his own writing on the same level as Paul's, which would point to a time before the accepted veneration of Paul's writings (unless, of course, a pseudepigraphist is doing this to secure authority for his own writing—but see the discussion below, pp. 839 f.).

But the usual New Testament interpretation of γραφαί is 'Scriptures' (i.e. Old Testament) and it must be considered as more likely that that is its meaning here. Is it possible to conceive of Paul's writings being placed so early on a par with the Old Testaments? It is not easy to answer this question with any certainty. Many scholars would answer categorically in the negative on the grounds that allowances must be made for a considerable delay before such veneration of Paul's writings was reached. Indeed,

some would maintain that a period of neglect followed Paul's death and that interest was revived only after the publication of Acts, but this hypothesis is open to serious criticism. When all has been said there is practically no evidence at all to show precisely when Paul's letters first began to be used alongside the Old Testament.

There is no denying that Paul himself considered his own writings to be invested with a special authority and, moreover, that he expected his readers generally to recognize this fact (*cf.* 2 Thes. 3:14; 1 Cor. 2:16; 7:17; 14:37–39). We may either interpret this as the overbearing attitude of an autocrat or else as evidence of the apostle's consciousness of writing under the direct inspiration of God. But if the latter alternative is correct and if it were recognized by the churches generally, there would be less surprise that during the apostolic age writings of apostolic men were treated with equal respect to that accorded to the Old Testament. There can be no doubt that in both 1 and 2 Peter the prophetic and apostolic teaching is placed on a level (*cf.* 1 Pet. 4:11; 1:10–11). That this was characteristic of the primitive period seems to be borne out by the readiness with which the sub-apostolic age treated the apostolic writings with such respect. Admittedly, the Apostolic Fathers do not as explicitly place Paul on the same level of inspiration as the Old Testament, but it may be claimed that this is implicit in their approach. If by 140 Marcion could be sufficiently daring to exalt his Apostolicon to the complete detriment of the Old Testament, at some time previously the orthodox Christian church must virtually have treated them as equal. Marcion was not introducing a *volte-face*, but pushing the natural development to an extreme limit in the interests of dogmatic considerations. Similar developments are found in the growth of second-century pseudepigraphic apostolic literature, which must presuppose an existing body of authoritative apostolic literature. To place 2 Peter in the vanguard of this movement may at first seem a reasonable hypothesis, but it does not explain why this writer is so much in advance of his contemporaries in his regard for Paul's writings. Is it not more reasonable to suggest that in the apostolic period Peter may have recognized the value of Paul's epistles even more fully than the later sub-apostolic Fathers? These latter do not speak of Paul as 'our beloved brother', but in more exalted ways as, 'the blessed and glorious Paul' (Polycarp, A.D. Phil. iii); 'the blessed Paul' (*1 Clem.*, 47. 1; Polycarp, *Ad Phil.* xi); 'the sanctified Paul ... right blessed' (Ignatius, *Ad Eph.* xii. 2). The description in 2 Peter would be almost over-familiar for a pseudepigraphist, although it would be wholly in character with what we should expect of the warm-hearted apostle portrayed in the synoptic gospels. This is either a genuine appreciation on the part of Peter himself or skilful representation by his imitator. The former alternative is rather easier to conceive than the latter.

Another consideration arises here. Would a pseudepigraphist have adopted the view that Peter did not understand Paul's writings? It is strange, at least, that he has such an idea of Peter's ability in view of the fact that he considers it worthwhile to attribute the whole epistle to Peter. The history of Jewish and early Christian pseudepigraphy shows a marked tendency towards the enhancement of heroes and there is no parallel case in which the putative author is made to detract from his own reputation. Rather than pointing to a later origin, this self-candour of Peter's is a factor in favour of authenticity. It is surely not very surprising that Peter, or any of the other original apostles for that matter, found Paul difficult. Has anyone ever found him easy?

2. In evaluating the reference to the 'second letter' in 2 Peter 3:1, the first problem to settle is whether or not this is a reference to 1 Peter. It is generally taken for granted and probability seems strongly to support this contention. Since there is a clear reference to an earlier letter and since 1 Peter already is known to us, it is a natural assumption that the two letters are to be identified. Both Spitta and Zahn rejected this assumption because they held that, whereas 1 Peter was addressed to Gentiles, 2 Peter was addressed to Jewish Christians. Few, however, have followed them in this (see further comments on readers below, pp. 842 f.). In addition they both maintained that in 1 Peter the author does not seem to have preached personally to these people, whereas in 2 Peter he has (*cf.* 1 Pet. 1:12; 2 Pet. 1:16). This distinction may be right, but is not absolutely demanded by the evidence. Bigg maintained that 'nothing more need be meant than that the recipients knew perfectly well what the teaching of the apostles was'. A much more weighty consideration is that 1 Peter does not fit the context of 2 Peter 3:1, which clearly implies that the former epistle is like the present in being a reminder about predictions of coming false teachers. There is much to be said for the view that the former epistle of 2 Peter 3:1 is not 1 Peter, but a lost epistle. On this assumption the reference could not be regarded as a literary device, for it would have no point unless the previous letter were well known. On the other hand, 2 Peter 3:1 does not absolutely demand that both epistles should say the same thing and it may be possible to make 1 Peter fill the bill by appealing to the frequent allusions to prophetic words within that epistle. Since there is room for difference of opinion on the matter, it can hardly be claimed that here is a clear indication of pseudonymity, although it might be corroborative evidence if pseudonymity were otherwise established. There is, in any case, nothing unnatural about the reference if both epistles are Petrine.

3. The next problem to discuss is the occasion reflected in the epistle. It is a legacy from the criticism of F. C. Baur and his school that a tendency exists for all references to false teachers in the New Testament in some ways to be connected up with second-century Gnosticism. In spite of greater modern reluctance to make this unqualified assumption, the idea dies hard that no heresy showing the slightest parallels with Gnosticism could possibly have appeared before the end of the first century. The facts are that all the data that can be collected from 2 Peter (and Jude) are insufficient to identify the movement with any known second-century system. Rather do they suggest a general mental and moral atmosphere which would have been conducive for the development of systematic Gnosticism. Indeed, it may with good reason be claimed that a second-century pseudepigraphist, writing during the period of developed Gnosticism, would have given more specific evidence of the period to which he belonged and the sect that he was combating. This was done, for instance, by the author of the spurious *3 Corinthians* and might be expected here. The fact that the author gives no such allusions is a point in favour of a first-century date and is rather more in support of authenticity than the reverse. (But see the further discussion on these false teachers, pp. 847 ff.)

4. The objection based on 3:4, regarded as a reference to a former generation, is rather more weighty, although it is subject to different interpretations. Everything depends on the meaning in this context of οἱ πατέρες (the fathers). Most commentators assume that these are first-generation Christians who have now died. The meaning of the verse would then be that questions have arisen over the veracity of the parousia, because ever since the first generation of Christians died everything has continued in the created order, just

as it always has done previously. This interpretation would make good sense, but would clearly imply some interval since the first generation and this would at once exclude Petrine authorship. But is it correct? Nowhere else in the New Testament nor in the Apostolic Fathers is *πατέρες* used of Christian 'patriarchs' and the more natural interpretation would be to take it as denoting the Jewish patriarchs, in which case the statement would amount to a rather exaggerated declaration of the changelessness of things. This would certainly give a reasonable connection with the allusion to the creation account and later to the flood.

Either interpretation is possible, but if this is the report of a second-century pseudepigraphist it needs to be explained how he could have thought that Peter would be able to look back on the first generation of Christians from some even earlier age. We should need to assume that he gave himself away through a foolish slip in historical detail, a not uncommon failing among pseudepigraphists. But the explanation is not very substantial since the statement in 2 Peter 3:4 is put into the mouths of the scoffers and would on this hypothesis presumably reflect current opinions. But questions regarding the parousia would be much more natural in the apostolic age than later. The Apostolic Fathers do not betray such concern over the delay in the parousia.

5. Zahn's interpretation of the reference to 'your apostles' was to restrict it to those who had actually worked among the readers and he saw no difficulty in the writer including himself. The point of the *ὑμῶν* is that of contrast with the false teachers who in no sense belong to the readers. The combination of prophets and apostles is, of course, found in Ephesians 2:20, and is no certain evidence of a second-century provenance. (iii) *Literary problems.* Assuming for our present purpose that Jude is prior to 2 Peter (but see the discussion on this on pp. 917 ff.), the problem arises whether the apostle Peter could or would have cited the lesser-known Jude. It has been suggested that no apostle would ever have made such extensive use of a non-apostolic source, but this supposition is fallacious, for it has already been seen from 1 Peter that Peter was the kind of man who was influenced by other writings. But the position in 2 Peter is admittedly of a different character in that it seems to involve the author in an expansion of an existing tract without acknowledgment. If Jude is prior to 2 Peter, therefore, it must be regarded as unexpected that such use is made of it and this would weigh the evidence rather against than for authenticity. At the same time it is equally, if not more, unexpected for a pseudepigraphist to adopt such a borrowing procedure. Indeed, it is quite unparalleled among the Jewish and early Christian pseudepigrapha. The question arises why so much of Jude needed to be incorporated. About the only reasonable suggestion on the late-date theory is to suppose that Jude's tract had failed because of its lack of an impressive name and so the same truths with considerable additions were attributed to Peter. But did no one have any suspicions about this process? It would have been less open to question had the author made his borrowings from Jude less obvious.

Yet perhaps not too much emphasis should in any case be placed on this feature since there is no mention of difficulty over borrowing in any of the comments of Church Fathers concerning the retarded reception of this epistle. If 2 Peter is prior, the difficulty would vanish altogether as far as that epistle is concerned and it would then be necessary only to explain why Jude published an extract of a major part of 2 Peter under his own name. In that case, it would seem that Jude is writing when the situation predicted in 2

Peter has already been fulfilled and his epistle would then be intended to remind the readers of this fact (*cf.* Jude 17).

Nothing need be added to what has already been said on the literary connections between this epistle and Paul's epistles, but the relationship between 1 and 2 Peter is more significant. Several similarities between the epistles exist, but not all scholars are agreed as to the reason for these. If Peter were author of both, there would be a ready explanation. If he were author of 1 Peter but not 2 Peter, direct imitation would need to be postulated, although this is difficult in view of the differences. If both were pseudepigraphic, it would be the first Christian instance of the development of a group of writings attributed to a famous name.

The difference in the use of the Old Testament in the two epistles should not be exaggerated. While the variation in formal quotation must be admitted, it is a remarkable fact that where 2 Peter approaches the nearest to direct quotations, these are made from Psalms, Proverbs and Isaiah, all of which are formally cited in 1 Peter. Indeed Proverbs and Isaiah are particular favourites of both authors. This kind of subtle agreement suggests the subconscious approaches of one mind rather than a deliberate imitation. It is difficult to regard it as purely accidental. Two other factors may be mentioned by way of corroboration. The similar appeal to the history of Noah is suggestive, although this could conceivably have been due to imitation. The estimate of the Old Testament in both authors is remarkably similar, for the statement in 2 Peter 1:20–21 regarding the inspiration of Scripture prophecy through the agency of the Spirit of God is fully consonant with the obviously high regard for the prophetic Scriptures in the first epistle (*cf.* 1 Pet. 1:10–12).

(iv) *Stylistic problems.* It is notoriously difficult to devise any certain criteria for the examination of style and this is particularly true where comparison is made between two short epistles. The area of comparison is so restricted that the results may well be misleading. Moreover, subjective impressions are likely to receive greater stress than is justified. At the same time, no-one can deny that the stylistic differences between the epistles are real enough. Mayor pointed out that the vocabulary common to the two epistles numbers 100 words, whereas the differences total 599. Variations of subject-matter would naturally account for many of the differences and it is not easy to decide what significance is to be attached to the rest. Both epistles have a number of words found nowhere else in the New Testament (59 in 1 Peter, 56 in 2 Peter) and among these there are in both certain words of particular picturesqueness. On the whole these word totals have little importance in view of the small quantities of literature from which they are taken. But the grammatical words are rather a different matter. The fewer particles in 2 Peter than 1 Peter point to a different style, which may indicate a different hand. It may be possible to account for some of this variation by reference to the different mood of each writing. 1 Peter is more calmly deliberative than 2 Peter, which seems to have been produced in a state of strong feeling.

The aptness for repetitions found in 2 Peter has been noted and it is certainly marked. But, although it is rather more noticeable in 2 Peter than in 1 Peter, there are many instances of it in the latter. At times the author of 2 Peter falls into metrical cadences and this has been found a difficulty, but prose writers at times use poetic forms and this need occasion no great surprise.

If the linguistic characteristics are considered too divergent to postulate common authorship between 1 and 2 Peter, the difficulties would, of course, be considerably lessened, if not obviated, by the amanuensis hypothesis for one epistle. If Peter, for instance, were author of 1 Peter, with the assistance of Silas (Silvanus) as amanuensis, and author and scribe of 2 Peter, it would be possible to account for these stylistic differences and similarities. Or, if Jerome's hypothesis is preferred, both epistles might be attributed to different amanuenses. This may be regarded by some as a desperate expedient to avoid a difficulty, but so widespread was the use of amanuenses in the ancient world that it ought not to be dismissed from consideration, at least as a possibility. There is now no means of telling what liberty of expression would be granted by Peter to any amanuensis whom he may have employed. It is in the realm of conjecture to declare that an apostle would or would not have done this or that. Another suggestion which has been made to solve the riddle of the linguistic evidence is that Jude first wrote his own letter and then produced 2 Peter. It is suggested that Jude 3 f. is an allusion to our 2 Peter, which is regarded as an encyclical letter. In this case Jude is to be thought of as Peter's agent, which is claimed to explain the use of the apostle's name.

(v) *Doctrinal problems.* Much New Testament criticism is dominated by an over-analytical approach and this is particularly true in doctrinal comparisons. It is a fallacious assumption that any author of two works must give equal attention in both to the same themes, or must always approach any one theme in a similar way. The fact that 2 Peter deals more fully with the parousia theme than 1 Peter constitutes no difficulty for those who consider this difference to be due to difference of purpose. But is this sufficient to explain the important omissions of Petrine themes from 2 Peter? Could the author of 1 Peter have written an epistle without mentioning the cross or resurrection of Christ? This is an important question which cannot be lightly dismissed. Whereas in 1 Peter there are specific references to the atoning work of Christ (*e.g.* 1:18; 2:21 ff.), there are less specific allusions in 2 Peter. Frequently Christ is called Saviour (σωτήρ). Through him men are cleansed from sin (1:9). He is the sovereign Lord who has 'bought' believers (2:1), and this cannot refer to anything other than a redemptive act in Christ. Apart from the implicit background of the cross, these allusions in 2 Peter would be unintelligible.

The resurrection and ascension of Christ appear to be replaced by the transfiguration, and this is certainly unexpected. But the author's purpose is to authenticate his own personal knowledge of the glory of Christ, which appears to have been more illuminated on the mount of transfiguration than during the resurrection appearances. In the latter the full majesty was veiled. But does the emphasis in 2 Peter betray a degenerate Christology? A fair assessment of the evidence would not support such a contention. The titles applied to Christ are 'Saviour', 'Lord' and 'Master'. He is central in the whole thinking of the believer (*cf.* 2:20; 1:2, 8). To him is ascribed eternal glory (3:18). Käsemann is dominated by the thought of non-Christian religious notions in the text, but these do not proceed naturally from the epistle itself. It should be noted that the great emphasis on the Lordship of Christ in this epistle presupposes the resurrection and ascension, since without these the doctrine could not have developed.

Turning to the eschatology of the epistle, we must enquire whether Käsemann is justified in regarding this as sub-Christian. The hope of the parousia with its practical outcome in providing a motive for holy living is fully in accord with the eschatology of the rest of the New Testament (2 Pet. 3:1 ff.; *cf.* 1 Jn. 2:28; 1 Jn. 3:3). If anything, the

eschatology is more primitive than in some parts of the New Testament and this is a point in its favour. The description of the ἔσχατον ('end'), although dramatic with its accompanying destruction of the heavens and earth by fire, is seen to be extraordinarily restrained when compared, for instance, with the *Apocalypse of Peter*. An important factor for the dating of the epistle is the absence of the second-century Chiliastic interpretation of Psalm 90:4, in spite of the fact that this passage is quoted in 2 Peter 3:8. A second-century pseudepigraphist would have done well to avoid this possible pitfall.

The different terms used in 1 Peter and 2 Peter to describe the Lord's coming have often been noted (ἀποκάλυψις and its cognate verb in 1 Peter and παρουσία ἡμέρα κυρίου, ἡμέρα κρίσεως in 2 Peter), but little weight may be put upon this. Paul in 1 Corinthians and 2 Thessalonians uses both ἀποκάλυψις and παρουσία, and there is no reason why Peter should not have used both words on different occasions.

As to the ethics of 2 Peter, there are exhortations in the epistle which show the ethical appeal to be based on doctrine (*cf.* 1:8 f., where fruitfulness is particularly stressed; 3:11 ff., where Christian behaviour is geared to the eschatological hope). There is emphasis on stability, restraint of passion, righteousness, purity. A variety of moral virtues is enumerated (1:5 ff.). But is the impetus mainly self effort? Käsemann and many others believe that it is. Moreover, the work of the Holy Spirit is mentioned only once (1:21) and then in relation to the inspiration of Scripture. The reason for this may lie in the particular tendencies of the readers. It is evident that the false teachers, at least, do not put much self-effort into their 'Christian' behaviour, and the writer is clearly fearful lest their lax approach should infect the Christian believers to whom he is writing. This would explain the stronger emphasis on individual zeal than is found in 1 Peter. The absence of any close connection between ethics and the doctrine of the Spirit does not mean that the writer did not recognize such a connection, but rather that he saw no need to emphasize it (*cf.* Paul's approach in Colossians where the Spirit is mentioned once only, Col. 1:8).

On the whole it cannot be said that there are any substantial differences in doctrine when this epistle is compared with other New Testament books. Although there are omissions, there are no contradictions. There are no features which are of such a character that they could not belong to the apostolic age. The doctrinal considerations are, in fact, rather more favourable to a primitive than to a later origin for the epistle.

Little comment is needed on the Hellenistic terms used in this epistle, for it is impossible to say what degree of impact on an author's mind environment might be expected to have. It will obviously differ with different minds. The main problem over 2 Peter is whether the apostle Peter, with his Jewish fisherman's background, could reasonably be expected to be acquainted with these expressions. None of the terms is of a type which could not have formed part of the vocabulary of a bilingual Galilean. The difficulty arises only when it is assumed that in 2 Peter they are used in a developed sense as in Greek philosophy or the mystery cults. In that case a fisherman would have to be ruled out. But the bandying about of some such terms as 'knowledge' (γνῶσις) or 'virtue' (ἀρετή) need not suppose acquaintance with current philosophical discussions, any more than it does today. This is the kind of evidence which is most convincing to those who have already concluded on other grounds that 2 Peter cannot have been produced in the first century.

So far the approach to Petrine authorship has been mainly negative in the course of examining the arguments brought against it. But there are a few considerations of a more positive character.

(vi) *Additional considerations.* 1. Similarities with the Petrine speeches in Acts will first be considered. No great weight can be attached to these similarities since they are merely verbal and their significance will naturally depend on the degree of credibility assigned to the Acts speeches. At most they can be corroborative. For instance, the words 'received' (1:1; *cf.* Acts 1:17), 'godliness' (1:6; *cf.* Acts 3:12), 'day of the Lord' (3:10; *cf.* Acts 2:20) and 'punishment' (2:9; *cf.* Acts 4:21) all occur in both books. The incidental character of these parallels could be a point in their favour, since a pseudepigraphist might be expected either to have included more obvious parallels or else to have ignored the Acts source altogether. They might be regarded as echoes of one man's vocabulary, but the argument obviously cannot be pressed.

2. There are certain indirect personal reminiscences which might support Petrine authorship. Words are used (σκηνή, 'tabernacle' and ἔξοδος, 'departure') which are found together in Luke's transfiguration narrative. They are used in a different context in 2 Peter, but this in itself would support the suggestion that they had made a deep impression on Peter's mind and are subconsciously brought into play as Peter muses about the transfiguration (1:17 f.). It may be a subtle psychological support that these two words are used before the transfiguration account is included, but at a point in the epistle where the writer's mind is moving rapidly towards its inclusion.

3. The superiority of 2 Peter over the Petrine spurious books is another point in its favour. A comparison of its spiritual quality with the spiritual tone of the Gospel of Peter, the Preaching of Peter, the Acts of Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter cannot fail to impress even the most casual reader with the immeasurable superiority of the canonical book. This is in itself no conclusive evidence of the authenticity of 2 Peter, for if this epistle is pseudepigraphic it could conceivably follow that this pseudepigraphist excelled himself, while the others did not. But the problem goes deeper than this, for spiritual quality is not a matter of skill, but of inspiration. In spite of all the doubts regarding the epistle, the discernment of the Christian church decided in its favour because the quality of its message suggested its authenticity. It was the same discernment which confidently rejected the spurious Petrine literature.

d. Conclusion

The summing-up of the case for and against authenticity is not easy, because there are strong arguments on both sides. The external evidence, at least, indicates a certain lack of confidence in the book, although the cause is not specifically stated. At the same time the internal evidence poses many problems, not all of which can be answered with equal certainty, but none of which can be said categorically to exclude Petrine authorship. The dilemma is intensified by the difficulties confronting alternative views of authorship. If, in deference to the repeated demands of many modern scholars, the word 'forgery' is omitted from the discussion, we are left as our only alternative to suppose that a well-intentioned author ascribed it to the apostle Peter, presumably in order to claim his authority for what was said, but nevertheless supposing that no-one would have been deceived by it. The latter supposition is difficult to substantiate, but even if it be taken as possible, the writer must have paid minute attention to the process of introducing allusions to give an air of authenticity. If the whole process was a contemporary literary

convention, it is difficult to see why the personal authentication marks were used at all. The fact is that the general tendency among pseudepigraphists as to avoid rather than include supporting allusions to their main heroes. It was enough to allow them to introduce themselves by means of some ancient name.

In addition to this there are difficulties in finding a suitable occasion which might have prompted such a pseudonymous epistle. It is a fair principle to suppose that pseudonymity would be resorted to only if genuine authorship would fail to achieve its purpose. In this case it would require a situation in which only apostolic authority would suffice. In most of the acknowledged Christian pseudepigrapha, a sufficient motive is found in the desire to propagate views which would not otherwise be acceptable. Thus the device was used widely among heretical sects. But in orthodox circles the need would be less pressing, for the whole basis of their tradition was apostolic and any literary works whose doctrine was wholly in harmony with that tradition would not need to be ascribed rather artificially to an apostolic author. The writer of 2 Peter says nothing which the apostolic writers of the other books of the New Testament would not have endorsed. There is no hint of esoteric doctrine or practice. What was the point, then, of ascribing it to Peter? Since the false teachers were showing no respect for Paul (2 Pet. 2:16), would they have shown any more for Peter? If it be maintained that these teachers were using Peter's name against Paul and that this obliged the orthodox church to answer them in Peter's name, would they not be using the very method they would condemn in their opponents? The fact is that no advocate of a pseudonymous origin for 2 Peter has been able to give a wholly satisfactory account of the motive behind it, and this must be taken into consideration in reaching a verdict on the matter. An attempt has been made to explain the pseudepigraphic device as a transparent fiction. Thus it is supposed that if 2 Peter is a testamentary letter which was known to have come from the Petrine circle in Rome, the readers would not have expected Peter to have written it. But this explanation is not satisfactory unless evidence can be produced of what the readers would have expected, and this is impossible with the limited data at our disposal.

The choice seems to lie between two fairly well defined alternatives. Either the epistle is genuinely Petrine (with or without the use of an amanuensis), in which case the main problem is the delay in its reception. Or it is pseudepigraphic, in which case the main difficulties are lack of an adequate motive and the problem of the epistle's ultimate acceptance.

Both obviously present some difficulties, but of the two the former is easier to explain. If 2 Peter was sent to a restricted destination (see discussion below) it is not difficult to imagine that many churches may not have received it in the earlier history of the canon. When it did begin to circulate it may well have been received with some suspicion, particularly if by this time some spurious Petrine books were beginning to circulate. That it ultimately became accepted universally must have been due to the recognition not merely of its claim to apostolic authorship, but also of its apostolic content. Under the latter hypothesis it would be necessary to assume that its lack of early attestation and the existence of suspicions were because its pseudepigraphic origin was known, and that its later acceptance was due to the fact that this origin was forgotten and the epistle supposed to be genuine. While there is nothing intrinsically impossible about this reconstruction, it requires greater credibility than the authenticity hypothesis. The dilemma for pseudepigraphic hypotheses is caused by the fact that attestation for the

book would be expected very soon after its origin on the assumption that some would at once assume from its ascription that it was genuine, This evidently happened in the case of the *Apocalypse of Peter* which is attested in the Muratorian Fragment, but never commanded any further acceptance except in Egypt. But in spite of Harnack's arguments for placing 2 Peter in the late second century, few modern advocates of pseudepigraphic origin place it so late. At a period when the orthodox were on the alert to test the validity of all literary productions, it is difficult to see how an earlier pseudepigraphic production would have gained currency after a considerable interval of time, especially against marked suspicions. The difficulty is not removed by the view mentioned above that it was known to be a transparent fiction, for if such knowledge was widespread and the practice was acceptable, it still does not explain the long delay in attestation.