

ERIC J. BECK

# Justice and Mercy in the Apocalypse of Peter

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament*

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**Mohr Siebeck**

# Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

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Eric J. Beck

# Justice and Mercy in the Apocalypse of Peter

A New Translation and Analysis  
of the Purpose of the Text

Mohr Siebeck

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*To Jaime*



## Preface

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The journey to completing this project has been long and could not have happened without the years of support and preparation given by all those around me. I am extremely grateful to Professor Paul Foster for supervising my project and for the years of support he gave me in my studies. Not only were our meetings always encouraging times discussing my project, but he also invested in me personally by never failing to ask how I was doing outside of my academic work. My thanks also go to my secondary supervisor, Dr Matt Novenson, whose willingness to read the completed thesis brought an important perspective, which greatly improved the final product.

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Eric J. Beck  
Regensburg  
September, 2019

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## Transliterations and Abbreviations

Transliterations of Gə‘əz Ethiopic follow Priess, Maija. *Lexicon of Gə‘əz Verbs for Students*. Moran Etho 37. Kerala, India: Saint 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> ed. (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2014). 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 study
<i>ASE</i>	<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, GA: Scholars Press, 1988.
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
NGS	New Gospel Studies
<i>ROC</i>	<i>Revue de l'Orient chrétien</i>
SECA	Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha
VOHD	Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland



## Chapter 1

# Introduction

This study 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 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>

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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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

<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

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 fragment claim, “We receive 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 *Extracts from the Prophets* 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>

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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.

<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. Geoffrey A. Williamson (New York, NY: 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*,

### 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 Saint 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 that 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. Vin-dob. G 39756* or the Rainer fragment.<sup>12</sup> These two fragments are from the same manuscript dating to the 5<sup>th</sup> 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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SBLDS 97 (Atlanta, GA: 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.

<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> Montague Rhodes 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> Montague Rhodes James, “The Rainer Fragment of the Apocalypse of Peter,” *JTS* 32 (1931): 278; Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas, *Das Petrus-evangelium 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 I: 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 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 until 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.

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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.

<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.

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 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.

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<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that although this study 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.

<sup>23</sup> Heinrich Weinel, "Offenbarung des Petrus," in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*, 2nd ed., ed. Edgar Hennecke (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 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 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. 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 fragment (ca. 180–200 CE), as well as the possible indirect references in Book 2 of the Sibylline Oracles (ca. 150–250 CE), the *Epistula Apostolorum* (ca. 150–200 CE), and possibly others, the *terminus ad quem* for the writing of the text lies somewhere in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

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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.

<sup>30</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 20–29, 43–48; Jakab, “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. Some of these dates are contestable. Most notably, the Muratorian fragment is often dated into the 4<sup>th</sup> century. For an in depth discussion on the nature and date of this document, see Lee Martin McDonald, *The Formation of the Biblical Canon*, 2 vols. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 2:274–304.

<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

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 of it. Montague Rhodes 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

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Peter,” 664; James 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.

<sup>34</sup> Montague Rhodes James, “A New Text of the Apocalypse of Peter,” *JTS* 12 (1911): 573–583; Montague Rhodes 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.

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 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 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

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<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.

<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.

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

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/*sägādā*) 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/*'aqābā*), and 6) the reference to doubt (δισταζέω/*nāfāqā*).<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.

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

<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.

<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.

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 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 fragment.<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 Lucuas (115–117 CE).<sup>56</sup> Sixth, the tour of hell (Apoc Pet 7–12) was likely drawn from a pre-existent source 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

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<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.

<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.

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

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