

Kalina Wojciechowska / Mariusz Rosik

A Structural Commentary on the So-Called *Antilegomena*

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

Part 2. Eschatological Hermeneutics (2 Pet 3)



Eastern and Central European Voices

Studies in Theology and Religion

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List of abbreviations

Bibliographic abbreviations

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

Biblical texts and translations

ESV	English Standard Version
LXX	Septuagint
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NETS	A New English Translation of the Septuagint
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
USCCB	New American Bible available at the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Apocrypha

1 En	First Book of Enoch (Ethiopian)
2 En	Second Book of Enoch
3 Macc	Third Book of Maccabees
4 Ezra	Fourth Book of Ezra
4 Macc	Fourth Book of Maccabees
ApBaSyr/2 Ba	Apocalypse of Baruch (Syrian)

ApEl	Apocalypse of Elijah
ApPet	Apocalypse of Peter
AscIsa	Ascension of Isaiah
EpAp	Epistle of the Apostles
Jub	Book of Jubilees
PssSol	Psalms of Solomon
SibOr	Sibylline Oracles
TBenj	Testament of Benjamin
TDan	Testament of Dan
TIss	Testament of Issachar
TJud	Testament of Jude
TLev	Testament of Levi

Dead Sea Scrolls

1QH	<i>Hymns</i> (11Q5/11QPs ^a)
1QM	<i>War Scroll</i>
1QpHab	<i>Peshar on Habakkuk</i>
1QS	<i>Community Rule</i>
1QS ^a	<i>Rule of the Congregation</i> (1Q28a)
4QpIs ^b	<i>Peshar on Isaiah</i> (4Q162 – Isa 5:5–6.11–14.24–25.29–30, 6:9)
CD	<i>Damascus Document</i>

Ancient non-Christian writings

<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antiquitates Judaicae</i> by Josephus Flavius
<i>Bell. Iud.</i>	<i>De Bello Iudaico</i> by Josephus Flavius
<i>De migrat.</i>	<i>De migratione Abrahami</i> by Philo of Alexandria
<i>De vita Mois.</i>	<i>De vita Moisis</i> by Philo of Alexandria
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i> by Justin Martyr
<i>Gen. Rabb.</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i> (<i>Midrash to The Book of Genesis</i>)
<i>Leg. alleg.</i>	<i>Legum allegoriarum</i> by Philo of Alexandria

Early Christian writings

<i>1 Clem.</i>	<i>First Epistle</i> by Clement of Rome
<i>2 Clem.</i>	<i>Second Epistle</i> by Clement of Rome (<i>An Ancient Christian Homily</i>)

<i>Adv. Haer.</i>	<i>Adversus Haereses</i> by Irenaeus of Lyon
<i>Barn.</i>	<i>Epistle of Barnabas</i>
<i>Diogn.</i>	<i>Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus</i>
<i>HE</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i> by Eusebius of Caesarea
<i>IgnEph</i>	<i>Epistle to the Ephesians</i> by Ignatius of Antioch
<i>IgnMagn</i>	<i>Epistle to the Magnesians</i> by Ignatius of Antioch
<i>IgnRom</i>	<i>Epistle to the Romans</i> by Ignatius of Antioch
<i>MartPol</i>	<i>Martyrium Policarpi</i>
<i>PolPhil</i>	<i>Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians</i> by Polycarp of Smyrna

Grammar abbreviations

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

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

Preface

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

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

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

Chapter 3 of the Second Letter of Peter forms, as it were, a separate part of the study, since it begins with a transition (2 Pet 3:1) which contains a reference to another letter: “I am writing you this second letter”. This formula suggests that an earlier letter was written and sent. Its identification, however, is rather difficult. It has sometimes been pointed out that it is 2 Pet 1:1–21 that should be considered the first letter of the sender, while 2 Pet 3 is the second letter. However, if 2 Peter is a coherent text, then three writings can be identified as the first letter: (a) the canonical First Letter of Peter; (b) the canonical Letter of Jude; (c) a lost letter unknown to contemporary New Testament readers, but well-known to the recipients of 2 Peter.

Regardless of the hypothesis adopted, 2 Pet 1–2 and 2 Pet 3 clearly differ in terms of their theme. In chapter 3, the author of the letter focuses on the proper interpretation of eschatological prophetic and apostolic teaching using an appropriate hermeneutics based on texts taken from Jewish tradition and construed as predictions and typologies of eschatological events. Therefore, volume 2 of this study is

entitled *Eschatological Hermeneutics*. In explaining its principles, the author of the letter drew on the creation narrative, which Jewish apocalypticism read inversely. Thus, the eschatological hermeneutics was rooted in the prophetic tradition. The emphasis on the creative and destructive power of God's word and God's sovereign will for the creation of the world and, by analogy, for its destruction and the subsequent emergence of "a new heavens and a new earth", is a development of the letter's fundamental theological theme – the certainty of judgement.

The eschatological hermeneutics is an element, and even a condition, for the correct interpretation of texts in which eschatological content is implicit, or which were never considered primarily as doctrine about the end times. The division of this commentary into two parts allows the reader of the English version to take a closer look at the hermeneutical principle. It should be recalled here that in the structure of the entire letter the content of the eschatological teaching is marked as element D, while its interpretation is marked as element E. Eschatological scepticism, a result of a failure to see the eschatological potential of the text, was the main theme of volume one. Volume two shows, with the support of an appropriate interpretative key, how this eschatological potential can be extracted even from non-eschatological texts and interpreted in such a way as to prove that judgement is bound to come and that the alleged delay in the fulfilment of eschatological predictions is due to God's patience, mercy and salvific will. Thus, the readers are given an answer to the seeming delays of the judgement and the prolonged waiting for the parousia. In addition, the author of the letter includes a piece of advice on how to fill this waiting time.

Introduction – Transition (2 Pet 3:1)

D₂. Prophetic and apostolic teaching (2 Pet 3:2):

- Sources of doctrine: prophetic transmission, teaching of Jesus, apostolic transmission.

E₂. Interpretation of prophetic and apostolic teaching (2 Pet 3:3–4):

α. False interpretation (2 Pet 3:3–4):

I. Waiting for God's promises to be fulfilled according to human will; attempting to influence God's sovereign will regarding the fulfilment of the promises.

D₃. Prophetic and apostolic teaching (2 Pet 3:5–7):

- Creation of the world by God's word and its destruction by the same word through the Flood as a prediction of the events of the end times.

E₃. Interpretation of prophetic and apostolic teaching

(2 Pet 3:8–10a):

β. Interpretation proper (2 Pet 3:8–10a):

i. The clarity of eschatological predictions resulting from the interpretation modelled on D₃ (2 Pet 3:8a);

ii. God's sovereign will regarding the coming of judgment – a perspective of divine chronometry (2 Pet 3:8b–9a);

iii. God's sovereign salvific will as the reason for the alleged postponement of the fulfilment of eschatological predictions (2 Pet 3:9b);

ii'. God's sovereign will regarding the coming of judgment – the day of the Lord like a thief (2 Pet 3:10a).

D₄. Prophetic and apostolic teaching (2 Pet 3:10b–11a):

- An account of the annihilation – a summary of the prophetic narratives.

E₄. Interpretation of the prophetic and apostolic teaching (2 Pet 3:11b–15a):

β. Interpretation proper – soteriology (2 Pet 3:11b–15a):

iii'. A call to holiness in anticipation of the coming of the day of the Lord.

D₅. Prophetic and apostolic teaching (2 Pet 3:15b–16b):

- Sources of eschatological teaching – Paul's letters

E₅. Interpretation of apostolic teaching (2 Pet 3:16c–17):

α. False interpretation (2 Pet 3:16c–17):

I. Characterisation of eschatological sceptics as unlearned interpreters of Paul's letters and other inspired writings.

C'. Synthesis of faith and knowledge (2 Pet 3:18a).

Doxology (2 Pet 3:18b).

The juxtaposition of central elements deriving from the structure of Volume 1, *Eschatological Scepticism*, and Volume 2, *Eschatological Hermeneutics*, makes it possible to point out the basic theological message of the entire the Second Letter of Peter: judgement is bound to come (II – 2 Pet 2:3b–4, cf. Volume 1); its postponement is due to God's salvific will, His patience and mercy (iii – 2 Pet 3:9b); the proper attitude towards the predictions of judgment present from the beginning in the inspired narratives and towards God's patience and mercy is repentance and sanctification (iii' – 2 Pet 3:11b–15a).

In order to facilitate the reader's handling of the commentary, at the beginning of Volume 2 the authors and editors decided to repeat the most important elements of the Introduction: an analysis of the structure of the letter and the structural interpretation of the text. Volume 1 contains other introductory issues, such as textual witnesses, canonicity, lexis, authorship, Peter's authority, and information

not only on Peter's milieu, but also on Peter's discourse in contemporary biblical studies, which allows the reader to understand the similarities and differences between 1 and 2 Peter, connections with the Letter of Jude, literary genre, sources, and recipients. In order to capture a comprehensive picture of the Second Letter of Peter, the authors and publishers recommend reading both volumes together.

2. Structural commentary (continuation of vol. 1)

2.7 Transition (2 Pet 3:1)

¹Beloved, I am writing to you a second letter in which, by way of a reminder, I am reawakening/stirring up/arousing your pure/uncontaminated/wholesome/sincere thinking/reasoning/mind.¹

After presenting examples of correct and false interpretations of the scriptures, which result in true or false teaching and ultimately lead either to salvation in eschatological times and the eternal kingdom or to destruction and a terrible end, the narrator decides to recall once again the purpose of the letter. This decision may stem from the realisation that amidst the typological examples, and especially after the suggestive portrayal of the conduct and fate of the false teachers, the readers may have forgotten the core message of the text. By using transition, the narrator thus seeks to refocus the attention of the recipients and to remind them of the true prophetic and apostolic teaching on the parousia and final judgment. Therefore, some of the themes touched upon in chapter 2 (e. g. the typology of the Flood – 3:6 and destruction by fire – 3:7) will be finally clarified. Moreover, the thesis of 2:3b will also be explicitly proven: “the judgment/sentence is not idle, and their destruction is not slumbering”, with an explanation of why the contrary seem true (3:8–9). Furthermore – with reference to *exordium* – the narrator will encourage piety and a holy lifestyle (3:11), so that the coming Lord will find the faithful without blemish and without spot (3:14).

In fact, the narrator prepared the readers for a conclusion from verse 2:19 onwards, through the accumulation of exordial themes related primarily to the development of baptismal gifts, living a godly life and escaping corruption (1:3–11). In this verse he returns to the theme initiated in 1:12–13 with the phrase *διεγείρειν ὑμᾶς ἐν ὑπομνήσει* reminiscent of *διεγείρω ἐν ὑπομνήσει*. This lexical similarity seems not coincidental. For it indicates not only the transitive character of verse 3:1, but also its function as an *aphodos* (ἄφοδος), that is a return to the main theme after a rather lengthy digression on the behaviour and motivations of the false teachers

1 The authors wish to offer their own translation of the Second Letter of Peter, so all quotations from 2 Peter follow their proposal. The other biblical texts are quoted after the USCCB translation: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible> [accessed: 3.01.2024]. All the quotations are taken from cited sources; if texts are only available in the Polish language, the translator offers her own translation proposal.

(2:9b–22).² Thus, on the one hand, 3:1 summarises what has already been said; on the other hand, it focuses attention on the most important message of the letter, which in the last part will be edited in a similar convention as before, with a structure comparable to that used in chapter 2.³ The main theme remains the prophetic and apostolic teaching about the parousia and the judgement, which can be interpreted falsely or truthfully with all its consequences. Whereas 2 Pet 1:16–2:22 mainly included examples and warnings of false interpretation, 2 Pet 3:2–17d emphasises examples and encouragement of true interpretation, pointing the way to the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of the letter, which is to continually remind present and future generations of Christians of the doctrine concerning the second coming of Jesus, his eschatological judgement and power over the world, was first set out in the final part of *exordium* – 2 Pet 1:12–22. This teaching, which includes both practical and theoretical aspects, is based on a Christological and eschatological reinterpretation of the prophetic teaching as well as on the testimony of the apostles. As Craig A. Blasing noted, there must have been a vivid image in the early Christian tradition of the apostle Peter making a Christological reinterpretation of the words of the prophets. It was used, for example, by the author of the Acts when he reconstructed Peter’s speech delivered on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17–36) and the apostle’s speech to the Jews (Acts 3:12–26), both based on quoting Old Testament texts that refer to the person of Jesus.⁴ This image is also evoked by the author of 2 Peter in 1:12–21 and in 3:1–2.

The transition in 2 Pet 3:1 is emphasised by the use of the addressive form ἀγαπητοί ‘loved ones’, perhaps taken from the Letter of Jude.⁵ Earlier, although the narrator addressed the recipients directly in the second-person plural, such phrases were not used. In the conclusion of the letter the narrator seems to make up for this scarcity, so that vocativus ἀγαπητοί appears three more times here (2 Pet 3:8.14.17).⁶ On the one hand, this may indicate a certain stylistic difference between 1:1–21 (or even 1:1–2:22) and 3:1–18, a different relationship to the recipients, and thus provide one argument for the stylistic complexity and inconsistency of 2 Peter.⁷ On

2 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, Grand Rapids 2012, p. 203; J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries, London 1982, p. 352; R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (Word Biblical Commentary 50), Waco 1983, p. 282; D.J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, Collegeville 2003, p. 284.

3 See Introduction (vol. 1).

4 C.A. Blasing, *The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1–18*, “Bibliotheca Sacra” 169 (2012), no. 676, p. 388.

5 J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 354.

6 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 947.

7 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:1.

the other hand, the use of ἀγαπητοί as an apostrophe may be a rhetorical device, *captatio benevolentiae*, that element of the epilogue which, as Aristotle notes in the *Rhetoric* (1419b), is intended, among other things, “to dispose the hearer favorably [...] to excite the emotions of the hearer”.⁸ Moreover, a persuasive purpose is also evident here; by introducing the addressives, the narrator wants to highlight three things. Firstly, how meaningless it is to calculate the exact date of the parousia (3:8). Secondly, how important it is to actively await the parousia, which ensures that the Lord will find his believers “unblemished and without spot” (3:14). Thirdly, it is an encouragement to be strengthened in true faith (3:17). Michael Green also draws attention to the appeal to do something or their semantic equivalents.⁹ In 2 Pet 3:1 it would be an appeal to recall words (“Beloved, that you may recall the words”), in 3:8, an encouragement to learn something (“This one thing let not escape you/Be not ignorant of this one thing, beloved”), in 3:14 a call to action (“beloved, be diligent/strive earnestly”), in 3:17 a call to vigilance (“beloved, beware”).

The term ἀγαπητοί ‘beloved’ is used by family members to show confidentiality and the emotional bonds with siblings (e. g. Tb 10:13) and parents¹⁰ (cf. also the declarative formulas in Matt 3:17, 17:5, Mark 1:11, 9:7, Luke 3:22). From the familial language the phrase was borrowed by Christianity. It began to be used when a preacher/apostle addressed an audience and gave doctrinal or moral instruction.¹¹ In this way, it was emphasised that the Christian community is organised on the model of the family, whose head is God the Father (Eph 5:1), and everyone who does God’s will is brother and sister in it (Mark 3:34–35) and should give each other brotherly love (cf. 2 Pet 1:7).¹² This model of relationship is also evident in early Christian epistolography. The sender of *1 Clem.* repeatedly addresses the recipients as “brethren” (e. g. *1 Clem.* 4:7, 13:1, 14:1, 33:1, 37:1, 41:1.4) or “beloved” (*1 Clem.* 7:1, 12:8, 21:11, 24:1, 35:1.5, 36:1, 47:6, 51:1.5, 53:1, 56:2.16) or “dearly beloved” (16:17). Similarly, the narrator of *2 Clem.* prefers the term “brethren”, and – less frequently – the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, who confesses: “For, my brethren, the habitation of our heart is a holy temple to the Lord” (*Barn.* 6:15).

Gene L. Green further argues that the recipients of 2 Peter felt appreciated because the use of this familial phrase ἀγαπητοί meant they were considered part of the family, as opposed to the heretics. This, however, seems far-fetched, for nowhere

8 Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0060%3Abekker+page%3D1419b> [accessed: 3.01.2024].

9 M. Green, *The Second Letter General of Peter and the General Letter of Jude*, Grand Rapids 1987, p. 268.

10 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 947.

11 Rom 12:19, 1 Cor 10:14, 15:58, 2 Cor 7:1, 12:19, Phil 2:12, 4:1, Heb 6:9, Jas 1:16.19, 2:5, 1 Pet 2:11, 4:12, 1 John 2:7, 3:2.21, 4:1.7.11, Jude 3.17.20; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 947.

12 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:7.

does the narrator advocate the disciplinary exclusion of heretics from the community. Moreover, in 2:1 the narrator announced that the heretics would be active “among you”, and thus their activity will be an intra-community activity (cf. Jude 4, where false teachers from outside the community make their way into the local church).¹³ On the other hand, the narrator speaks/writes to the community from the position of an older, more experienced brother (cf. 2 Pet 1:10) who lovingly and caringly instructs his siblings,¹⁴ and reminds the brothers and sisters of the importance of those elements of Christian doctrine and life which the false teachers question and will continue to do question in the future, ever more intensely and aggressively.

The transition in verse 3:1 takes on the function of an aphodos, which on the one hand allows one to return to an interrupted thread, and on the other may signal a summary.¹⁵ Indeed, the narrator refers back to what has been communicated to the audience earlier, namely faith, knowledge (1:1–2) and baptismal theology (1:3–11), and returns to the doctrine of the parousia interrupted by a commentary on the relationship between guilt and punishment with a description of the behaviour of false teachers. This return takes the form of a very synthetic recapitulation.

By using the reminder formula in 3:1 as an element of the aphodos, the narrator of 2 Peter comes close to those New Testament and early Christian writers who often placed hypomnemic formulas in the middle or towards the end of the letter (Rom 11:25, 1 Cor 8:1, 10:1, 12:1, 1 Thess 4:13, 1 Clem. 53:1). It may be noted that these Christian reminders refer, on the one hand, to the doctrine and/or Scripture and, on the other – analogous to Greek literature – to moral instruction.¹⁶ In 2 Peter the narrator combines these functions. Reaffirming the recipients ἐν ὑπομνήσει by reminding them of properly interpreted prophetic and apostolic teaching about the parousia is closely related to moral requirements.

2 Pet 3:1 begins with the mention that this very letter is a second letter addressed to the same recipients. This mention is introduced by the phrase ταύτην ἤδε δευτέραν γράφω ἐπιστολὴν “I am writing to you a second letter”. Various variants of the formula οὗτος ἤδε δεύτερος (or elements of it) can be found when enumerating (e. g. Gen 27:36), but also when marking the recurrence or permanence of an event (e. g. Matt 15:32, 17:12, Mark 8:2, John 9:27, 21:14.16).¹⁷ Often this involves the

13 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *A Structural Commentary on the So-Called Antilegomena*, vol. 2: *The Letter of Jude: Expecting Mercy* (Eastern and Central European Voices 3.2), Göttingen 2021, p. 98–99 (We will continue to use the shortened title: *Expecting Mercy*).

14 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

15 J.L. White, *The Form and Function of Greek Letter: A Study of Letter-Body in the Non-literary Papyri and in Paul the Apostle*, Missoula 1972, p. 42–43.

16 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:12.

17 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 948–949.

confirmation by the second – δεύτερος – element (event) of the existence of the preceding element (event)¹⁸ (e. g. Matt 26:42, John 4:54, 9:24, Acts 7:13, 10:15, 2 Cor 13:2, Titus 3:10, Heb 8:7, 9:28). In 2 Peter, this formula not only confirms the fact of writing and sending of an earlier letter, but above all authenticates the content of both writings. On the one hand, the issues raised in the first letter remain binding and normative for the recipients and are therefore recalled. On the other hand, the problems mentioned in the second letter are legitimised and gain importance as a reminder of what had already been written and sanctioned as apostolic teaching. G.L. Green¹⁹ points out that the narrator of 2 Peter refers to the first letter as he refers to other authoritative texts – the prophets, the Scriptures or Paul's letters – which may provide some guidance in identifying this writing.

The identification of the letter referred to by the narrator of 2 Peter in 3:1 is the subject of much controversy and debate.²⁰ Four main hypotheses are usually given. The letter referred to is: (a) the canonical Letter of Jude; (b) 2 Pet 1:1–21; (c) the canonical First Letter of Peter; (d) a text that is lost today but known to the original audience.

The first hypothesis is based on the similarity between 2 Peter and the Letter of Jude.²¹ One of the leading promoters of this view, John A.T. Robinson, argues that the affinity between 2 Peter and Jude is much closer than between the First and Second Letters of Peter. They can be seen both in lexis, style, motifs and in relation to similar (perhaps even the same) external circumstances, i. e. the threat of heresy. The weakest point in this hypothesis is the attribution of the two letters to a single author, especially since both senders introduce themselves and give their names in the prescripts. Robinson attempts to resolve this in the following way: the author of the Letter of Jude (according to Robinson, it is Jude himself, brother of James) wrote both a letter signed with his name and a pseudonymous letter in which he appears as a representative of the apostle Peter, i. e. the Second Letter of Peter. In 2 Peter he introduces himself as Simeon (Συμεών), such as Peter was called in the milieu of Jude and his brother James (Acts 15:14).²² 2 Peter would then be this letter that the narrator of Jude mentioned in verse 3a²³: “although I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation”. The hagiographer (Jude) temporarily postponed his intention to write a letter about “our common salvation” and, due to external circumstances, take up another subject – a call “to contend for

18 Ibid., p. 949.

19 Ibid.

20 See Introduction (vol. 1).

21 J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, London 1976, p. 195.

22 See Introduction (vol. 1) and analysis of prescript to 2 Pet 1:1.

23 J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, p. 195.

the faith that was once for all handed down to the holy ones”.²⁴ After writing a letter encouraging the struggle for the faith, he returned to his original plans and indeed wrote a text “about our common salvation”, i. e. 2 Peter. In 2 Pet 3:1, he mentioned his first letter, i. e. Jude.

Criticising this theory, Richard Bauckham notes that the author of 2 Peter did not use Jude in the way the author of both texts would.²⁵ As could be seen, the material used in Jude is subjected by the narrator of 2 Peter to numerous transformations and additions. Of course, it cannot be ruled out that these are modifications made by the author. However, it would be difficult to explain them if both texts were sent to the same audience. If, on the other hand, the author of Jude adapted the material to the competence of the recipients, then the thesis that both texts were intended for the same audience cannot be sustained.²⁶ Additionally, the question of the pseudonymous character of 2 Peter, or even of the two letters, 2 Peter and Jude. If the same literary convention was used in both texts – introducing oneself and speaking on behalf of Jude in one letter and on behalf of Peter in the other – then audiences would, in line with this convention, attribute the two letters to two different authors. Revealing the narrator of 2 Peter as the author of Jude would undermine the credibility of both letters in the eyes of the recipients.

The second hypothesis refers to the complexity and a certain stylistic inconsistency of the letter. As early as in the seventeenth century, H. Grotius formulated the thesis that 2 Pet 3:1–17 was originally a separate letter. In the nineteenth century, other researchers established that 2 Pet 2 would be a later interpolation dependent on Jude, which led to the conclusion that 2 Pet 1:1–21 was the First Letter of Peter.²⁷ In the 1960s, Martin McNamara revised this thesis and further elaborated on it.²⁸ He pointed out that 2 Pet 1:15 (σπουδάσω δὲ καὶ ἐκάστοτε ἔχειν ὑμᾶς μετὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ἔξοδον τὴν τούτων μνήμην ποιῆσθαι “I will be diligent/strive earnestly that you may always and after my departure remind one another of these [things]/have remembrance of these to keep”) can be read as a kind of foreshadowing of the second letter that was to begin precisely in 2 Pet 3:1. This fragment was originally a separate letter, announced by μνήμη “reminder”.²⁹ There is also no denying that 2 Pet 3:1 is reminiscent of epistolary exordial formulas in which previous correspondence is recalled. “More than once I have written to you to come and introduce me so that I

24 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 89–90, 92.

25 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 285.

26 See Introduction (vol. 1).

27 M. McNamara, *The Unity of Second Peter: A Reconsideration*, “Scripture” 12 (1960), p. 14.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 13–19; see also Introduction (vol. 1).

29 M. McNamara, *The Unity of Second Peter*, p. 18–19; McNamara argues that there could have been more such reminders; they would have addressed various, not only eschatological, aspects of the apostolic teaching.

may get out of my present idleness”, wrote Polycrates, a canal builder in Egypt, to his father in the third century BC.³⁰ “According to what you have written to me, we have prepared for the arrival of Chrysippus”, reported Ameneus to an official in Faiyum.³¹ This can be supported by the different attitude to the recipients: more detached in 1:1–21 and more familiar, with the repeated apostrophe ἀγαπητοί, in 3:1–17.

The weakness of this hypothesis lies in that it ignores the rhetorical devices³² and the structure of the letter, which is foreshadowed in 2 Pet 1:16–21 and consistently applied in chapters 2 and 3 of the letter: the narrator first refers to the teaching of the prophets and apostles and then to the true or false interpretation of that teaching, which entails eschatological and soteriological implications. Furthermore, as we have already seen, *exordium* is also reflected and developed in 2 Pet 2, not only in 2 Pet 3. This hypothesis fails to take into account the narrator’s predilection to expand *exordium* (1:3–15), which may also translate into the expansion of the epilogue (3:1–18), and the intertextual references and even dialogue with the Letter of Jude that is noticeable in both the second and third chapters.

The third hypothesis has been accepted by most supporters.³³ The letter referred to by the narrator in 3:1 would be the canonical First Letter of Peter. This hypothesis is based on the thematic affinity between 1 and 2 Peter. To prove it, it is pointed out that 2 Pet 3:2 – the exhortation to remember “the words spoken earlier by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour [given by] your apostles” – evokes the themes of 1 Peter. This would imply that the themes of 1 Peter focus on the prophecies (1 Pet 1:10–12) and on the eschatological parousia-related reinterpretation of their teaching and the perception of the parousia as one of the motivations for leading a particularly moral and virtuous life (1 Pet 1:13–17, 4:3–5.7.17, 5:4). Both hagiographers even use the same term – ἀναστροφή – when describing this life. Moreover, the prophets are perceived as inspired persons, communicating God’s word (1 Pet 1:10–12 and 2 Pet 1:19–21).³⁴ Duane F. Watson, Terrance Callan³⁵ note that the prescriptive salutatory formulas are identical in 1 Pet 1:2 and 2 Pet 1:2; in both one can find the optative mood that is rare in the NT – χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ

30 *Kłopoty młodego Polikratesa*, Polish transl. J. Schnayder, [in:] *List antyczny*, p. 5.

31 *Przed przyjazdem namiestnika prowincji*, Polish transl. J. Schnayder, [in:] *List antyczny*, p. 15.

32 J.L. White, *The Form and Function*, p. 42–43; D.F. Watson, *Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter* (SBL Dissertation Series 104), Atlanta 1988, p. 141–142; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 943; P.H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter*, p. 569–570.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 570; F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra* (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny NT 18), Częstochowa 2018, p. 308.

34 J.F. Hultin, *The Literary Relationships among 1 Peter, 2 Peter and Jude*, [in:] *Reading 1–2 Peter and Jude. A Resource for Students*, ed. E.F. Mason, T.W. Martin, Atlanta 2014, p. 42; the author emphasises that these are the only NT passages where the nature of inspiration is reflected upon.

35 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 201.

εἰρήνη πληθυνθείη “grace to you and peace be multiplied”. Although expanded with additional, different expressions, they are intended to make the recipients sensitive to further lexical and motivic parallels between Peter’s letters. Among the most significant parallels intended to testify to the affinity between 1 and 2 Peter are first and foremost the words and phrases that rarely appear in other NT books or are even counted among Peter’s *hapax legomena*: the noun ἀρετή ‘virtue’ in 1 Pet 2:9 and 2 Pet 1:3.5; the verb χορηγέω ‘to supply’, ‘to provide’, ‘to add’, ‘to furnish’ in 1 Pet 4:11 and ἐπιχορηγέω (also ‘to supply’, ‘to provide’, ‘to add’, ‘to furnish’) in 2 Pet 1:5.11; the verb ἐποπτέω ‘to perceive’, ‘to notice’ in 1 Pet 2:12, 3:2 and the noun ἐπόπτης ‘eyewitness’ in 2 Pet 1:16; the phrase ἄμωμος καὶ ἄσπιλος ‘unblemished and spotless’ in 1 Pet 1:19, in an inverted order in 2 Pet 3:14 (ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμώμητοι), and in 2 Pet 2:13 as σπίλοι καὶ μῶμοι ‘with a spot and blemished’; he motif of fallen angels related with the story of the flood and the rescue of Noah in 1 Pet 3:18–20 and 2 Pet 2:4–5.³⁶ This last point is developed by Jeremy F. Hultin.³⁷ The author of 1 Peter narrated how, in the days of Noah, Christ preached – ἐκήρυξεν – the doctrine to the imprisoned spirits who did not obey (1 Pet 3:19). In turn, the author of 2 Peter called Noah a herald – κήρυξ – of righteousness (2 Pet 2:5). Both hagiographers mention eight people saved during the flood and both strongly emphasise God’s patience – μακροθυμία, although here the context is no longer identical. In 1 Pet 3:20, Noah and his family were saved thanks to God’s patience; in 2 Pet 3:9, God’s patience is the reason for the delay of the parousia, because God wants people to repent and be saved in the last days (2 Pet 3:9). Since the flood is an anticipation and a type of eschatological destruction, it can be assumed that both texts point to God’s salvific patience manifested throughout creation history. Bauckham³⁸ even argues that the motif of patience in 1 Pet 3:20 and 2 Pet 2:5, 3:9 is the only real point of contact between these letters.

As can be seen, the similarities are not numerous, and they do not seem convincing enough to prove the close affinity of the two letters on their basis. Moreover, as noted earlier, many biblical scholars argue that more elements “divide” than “unite” the two letters. Some even ironically say that, apart from the mention in 2 Pet 3:1, the letters actually have nothing in common.³⁹ Even ancient writers pointed out significant stylistic differences between the two letters and a small number – especially when compared to Jude – of borrowings of ideas and motifs from 1 Peter in 2 Peter. One cannot help but notice that 2 Peter resembles much more the Hellenistic style and vocabulary than 1 Peter does, which, according to the prescript, is addressed “to the chosen sojourners of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia,

36 Ibid., p. 202.

37 J. Hultin, *The Literary Relationships*, p. 44.

38 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 146.

39 J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 352.

and Bithynia". The use of examples from the ST in the two letters is also different – the author of 1 Peter quotes texts, while the author of 2 Peter refers only to those narratives and traditions that were well known in the Second Temple period and constituted a set of *topoi* showing the relationship between guilt and punishment and the inevitability of punishment. Finally, the differences in the main theme of the two letters are apparent: 1 Peter focuses on the attitude of Christians towards persecution, 2 Peter on the attitude towards a false teaching that rejects *parousia* and judgement, based on a misinterpretation of the prophetic and apostolic message.

Commenting on the differences between 1 and 2 Peter, Bauckham, who supports the third hypothesis, states that there is no need to look for closer thematic similarities between the two letters. Indeed, the mention of the first letter in 2 Pet 3:1–2 only serves to loosely link 2 Peter with the well-known and commonly accepted 1 Peter and to recall the purpose of 2 Peter, rather than to formulate a synthesis of the themes addressed in both letters. Here Bauckham puts forward the important question of the authorship of the two texts. For he argues that the lack of thematic convergence and stylistic distinctiveness are due to the fact that the author of 2 Peter not only was not the author of 1 Peter, but he was not even so strongly influenced by 1 Peter to adopt it as a literary model for him.⁴⁰ This would mean that, as a pseudonymous author, the narrator of 2 Peter refers first to the figure of the apostle, thus establishing credibility, and then to his letter, which he treats as a source of Christian doctrine, just like the Scriptures (prophecies) and Pauline letters as a further element of credibility.⁴¹ And if the pseudonymous narrator really wanted to draw on some letter of Peter enjoying authority in Christian circles because of its author, then verse 3:1 seems most appropriate; it allows the narrator to return to the testamentary convention of writing, dominant according to Bauckham, interrupted by an extended vituperative digression in 2:10–22, and to introduce a prophecy concerning the end times in 3:3–4.⁴² In other words – the narrator reminds the audience that he is writing on behalf of the apostle Peter. Thus, he abandons the present tense prevalent in 2:10–22 and returns to the future tense, referring to both

40 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 286; Bauckham, however, concedes that both hagiographers may have come from a similar or even the same milieu – the so-called Petrine circle in Rome; if so, 1 Peter may in some respects have been some inspiration for the author of 2 Peter.

41 Differently, P.H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter*, p. 571, who doubts that the author of 2 Peter refers to 1 Peter in order to authenticate himself; 1 Peter is so different from 2 Peter that it cannot lend credibility to the latter writing, since the readers are familiar with both texts. Furthermore, in 3:2 the narrator of 2 Peter refers to a group of apostles, not just Peter, which may suggest that the prophecy in 3:3–4 is made on behalf of the whole group.

42 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 286.

1:12–15 and 1 Peter. In this way, he lets the audience know that the text they are to read should be received like Peter's prophecy.⁴³

Although the author of 2 Peter did not author 1 Peter – as Bauckham argues – it is likely that they both wrote to the same audience.⁴⁴ 2 Pet 3:1 suggests that the first and second letters were written ὑμῖν “to you”, which presupposes that the recipients of 2 Peter were familiar with 1 Peter previously addressed to them. However, there are noticeable parallels between the recipients of 1 and 2 Peter. It has already been mentioned that 2 Peter has much more Hellenistic features than 1 Peter, although it is 1 Peter that addresses communities, presumably Helleno-Christian, in Asia Minor. It is more difficult to establish who the recipients of 2 Peter are, and although it is not ruled out that they could belong to any of the communities mentioned in 1 Peter, it is impossible to identify this community.⁴⁵ A fact that is often repeated in 1 Peter, though absent in 2 Peter, is that Christian refugees in Asia Minor suffer severe persecution (1:6–7, 2:12.20–21, 3:9–18, 4:1–2.4.12–16.19, 5:6–7.9–10).

In the nineteenth century, a view emerged based on 2 Pet 1:12,16 that the sender of 2 Peter had some personal contact with the letter's recipients, in contrast to the sender of 1 Peter, who most likely did not know them personally (1 Pet 1:12). Contemporary views are not so clear-cut. The prevailing view is that it is impossible to decide from the epistolary data whether either of the senders knew their recipients personally; moreover, both seem unlikely to have had any previous contact with them.⁴⁶ Although part of the arguments seems convincing (especially the one concerning the credibility of the pseudo-epigraphic narrator), the weakness of the whole hypothesis is the thematic distinctiveness of 1 and 2 Peter, neglected by Bauckham, and, above all, the different situation of the recipients to whom the two letters were addressed.

According to the fourth hypothesis, which is gaining an increasing number of supporters today,⁴⁷ the first letter mentioned in 2 Pet 3:1 is a letter now lost but known to the recipients. To prove that this is not an isolated situation, one cites the correspondence of Paul,⁴⁸ who recommends that the Colossians should read the letter to the church in Laodicea (Col 4:16). The letter, known to the Laodiceans

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 353; P.H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter*, p. 572.

46 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 286; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 951; P.H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter*, p. 570.

47 Ibid.

48 M. Green, *The Second Letter General of Peter and the General Letter of Jude*, p. 269–270.

and Colossians, is probably lost.⁴⁹ Also in 1 Cor 5:9, the apostle refers to an earlier, unknown letter to the Corinthians.⁵⁰

The first letter mentioned by the narrator of 2 Peter was probably addressed to the same audience and tackled similar issues, presumably related to prophetic and apostolic teaching on eschatological topics. This does not mean, however, that it was penned by the author of 2 Peter. Here, the lost-letter hypothesis generates similar discussions about the meaning of the now unknown text and its authorship. Perhaps the letter attributed to Peter, different from the canonical 1 Peter, was considered (at least in some circles, including the recipients of 2 Peter) to be authoritative and normative, rivalling the importance of the Scriptures (prophets) and Paul's letters. The pseudonymous author of 2 Peter, acting on behalf of Peter, chose to invoke it in order to make himself credible. This does not exclude a second possibility, namely that both letters were written by the same author, who adopted the same convention of pseudepigraphy in both texts and, in order to lend credibility to his teaching, adopted Peter's name. In this variant, it should come as no surprise that the author treats his own writing as meaningful and authoritative for his audience, since already in 2 Pet 1:12–15 the narrator expressed his desire that what he writes should be recalled ἀεί – 'always', 'constantly', even after his passing (death).

Critics of the lost-letter theory mainly accuse it of invoking a hypothetical writing whose existence has not been proven.⁵¹ However, this is not unusual in NT biblical studies. In addition to the examples from the Corpus Paulinum cited above, it is enough to point to the two-source hypothesis and its derivations, where one of the *a priori* assumptions is the existence of source Q, whose content is not only reconstructed but also subjected to exegesis.⁵²

Regardless of what topics beyond eschatology were addressed in Peter's lost letter and who was its author, the purpose of that letter undoubtedly coincided with that of 2 Peter – διεγείρω ὑμῶν ἐν ὑπομνήσει τὴν εἰλικρινῆ διάνοιαν "by way of a reminder of [the prophetic and apostolic teaching about the parousia and judgment] I am reawakening/stirring up/arousing your pure/uncontaminated thinking//reasoning/mind". In defining this purpose, as noted, the narrator has used a hypomnemic formula similar to the one he used in 1:13. He gave the formula

49 Tertullian believed this to be an epistle to the Ephesians (*Adversus Marcionem* V:11–17). Another well-known heterodox epistle to the Laodiceans (and the epistle to the Alexandrians) are mentioned in Muratorian Canon as written on Paul's behalf, but conveying a doctrine similar to that of Marcion; see R. Rumianek, *List do Laodycejczyków*, [in:] *Apokryfy Nowego Testamentu. Listy i apokalipsy chrześcijańskie*, Kraków 2001, p. 51–54.

50 M. Rosik, *Pierwszy List do Koryntian* (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny NT 7), Czestochowa 2009, p. 212–213.

51 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 285.

52 See, for example, A. Paciorek, *Q – Ewangelia galilejska*, Lublin 2001.

ἐν ὑπομνήσει – which is one of his favourite intentional constructions with ἐν – an instrumental meaning. It is no coincidence that he used the verb διεγείρω in ind. praes. act., which can be understood as “I awaken” and/or “I stimulate”. In both cases, the idea is to constantly reinforce correct thinking through constant reminding.

Recalling in various settings and contexts was a constant component of ancient mnemonic culture.⁵³ It may well be the case, as Watson and Callan assume,⁵⁴ that this refers not only to the general eschatological content of the first epistle, but even to the recitation or literal reading of an established formula about the parousia and judgment. This, too, would belong to an element of mnemonic culture, in which the repetition of formulas was an important means of facilitating the permanent memorisation of meaningful content. If one accepts Watson and Callan’s assumption, then the last part of the letter, introduced in 2 Pet 3:1, could be seen as a commentary on the conventionalized formula, in which the narrator makes the recipients aware of the importance not only of the repetition of the prophetic and apostolic teaching, but also of its proper (external) interpretation leading to εὐλκρινῆς διάνοια ‘untainted, pure thought, understanding’.

The noun διάνοια is quite difficult to define unambiguously; it means ‘thought’, ‘thinking’, but also ‘understanding, giving meaning, inferring’ not so much as a process, but rather as an effect of the process of thinking. This distinction, pointed out by Peter H. Davids,⁵⁵ seems relevant here. For in the author’s reflections so far on 2 Pet, the process was indicated by the noun ἐπίγνωσις, now it is the effect of this thinking. It is to remain εὐλκρινῆς.

The adjective εὐλκρινῆς can also have different meanings and indicate something ‘simple’, ‘singular’, ‘unmixed’, and in a moral sense ‘sincere’, ‘honest’, ‘untainted’, ‘pure’.⁵⁶ In Wis 7:25 the term refers to God’s glory. Plato in the *Phaedo* (66a) speaks of “pure, absolute reason”, which is free from sensuality and as such attempts “to search out the pure, absolute essence of things, and who removes himself, so far as possible, from eyes and ears, and, in a word, from his whole body, because he feels that its companionship disturbs the soul and hinders it from attaining truth and wisdom”. In a similar way, in the same dialogue (81a), he describes a “pure, uncontaminated” soul that is not burdened by corporeality. Platonic meanings are echoed in the texts of Philo, who in *Leg. alleg.* I XXVIII:88–89 the mind, the reason originally given to man by God in the act of creation is described as “purer and more immaterial, having no participation in any perishable matter, but having received

53 P.H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter*, p. 573.

54 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 201.

55 P.H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter*, p. 574.

56 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 287.

a purer and more simple constitution” καθαρωτέρας καὶ εἰλικρινεστέρας.⁵⁷ This “pure mind [...] he places it among the virtues which are firmly rooted and budding well, that it may cultivate and guard them”. In other words – Philo’s “pure mind” has not only a cognitive dimension, but also a practical one. In *De migrat.* XXXIX 222 Philo accentuates the cognitive competence of such reason; he addresses it directly, encourages perseverance and promises – like the narrator of 2 Peter – proper understanding:

O my mind, [...] even if any thing does appear difficult to be discovered by contemplation, still opening the seeing faculties that are in thyself, look inwards and investigate existing things more accurately, and never close the eyes whether intentionally or unintentionally; [...] by assiduity in investigation it is granted to thee to arrive at a correct conception of the objects of thy search.⁵⁸

In intertestamental Jewish literature, the adjective εἰλικρινής can be found in TBenj 6:5 in a meaning close to nobility, sincerity, integrity, honesty:

The good mind admitted not the glory and dishonour of men, neither knoweth it any guile or lie, fighting or reviling [...]. The good mind hath not two tongues, of blessing and of cursing, of insult and of honour, of sorrow and of joy, of quietness and of trouble, of hypocrisy and of truth, of poverty and of wealth.

Similarly, in the New Testament, where this lexeme is used by the apostle Paul; depending on the context, it can indicate sincerity (2 Cor 2:17), purity in a metaphorical sense, with the image indicating the absence of an admixture of an element that would cause dirtiness (1 Cor 5:8), or purity in a moral-soteriological sense, similar to 2 Pet 3:14 (Phil 1:10). The use of εἰλικρινής in early Christian literature does not deviate from this: “Repentance out of a sincere heart” ἐξ εἰλικρινοῦς καρδίας (2 Clem. 9:8).

In 2 Pet 3:1 the phrase εἰλικρινής δiάνουα is translated by Douglas J. Moo as “wholesome thinking”.⁵⁹ “Unhealthy” thinking is thinking and reasoning tainted by the views of false teachers. Similarly, Gene L. Green emphasises opposition to the thinking of heretics and claims that⁶⁰ the narrator of 2 Peter would have in mind the purity and straightforwardness of reasoning, which should not be in any way

57 Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* I, <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book2.html> [accessed: 3.01.2024].

58 Id., *On the Migration of Abraham*, <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book16.html> [accessed: 3.01.2024].

59 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, Grand Rapids 1996, p. 162; T.R. Schreiner, p. 370.

60 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 954.

limited and stained, tainted by a heretical mode of proof. Thus, it can be thought that it is a matter of re-contrasting fanciful myths and the apostolic teaching on the parousia based on simple, clear foundations: the testimony of the apostles and the prophetic message (2 Pet 3:2). In other words – the narrator hopes that the understanding/reasoning of the audience has not been and will not be distorted by the teachings of the heretics.⁶¹

Undoubtedly, the formula ειλικρινής διάνοια can be seen as a polemic against the teaching and life choices of the false teachers, especially those described in 2:20. This is also supported by the aforementioned distinction between the processual term ἐπίγνωσις and the resultative term διάνοια. False teachers in the process of gaining knowledge ἐπίγνωσις failed to reach a sincere, true understanding, a constation. This can be understood in two ways. First, the process of gaining knowledge remained unfinished, interrupted by a return to the old way of life, albeit with a new para-Christian argumentation that allows all carnal lusts. Secondly, during the process of gaining knowledge, the pseudo-scientists and their followers drew false conclusions about the parousia, so they did not arrive at a pure, uncontaminated understanding of ειλικρινής διάνοια, but at a contaminated understanding, polluted most likely by elements of Cyrenaic and/or Epicurean philosophy, and therefore by a concession to sensual, carnal pleasures and eschatological scepticism.

In the context of the previous arguments based on the structure of the whole letter, it is worth highlighting two more elements related to the meaning of ειλικρινής διάνοια. Firstly, the reference to 1:20–22 and the proper inspired teaching of the prophets and apostles, rather than self-interpretation of their teaching, which is linked to sapiential as well as Platonic and Philonic implications. Secondly, the reference to 1:12–13 and to being “grounded/stable/firmly established in the present truth”.

In analysing 2 Pet 1:20,⁶² attention was drawn to the ambiguity of the elliptical formula πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ἰδᾶς ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται “no prophecy of Scripture happens/comes into being by its own interpretation”. First of all, it implies the prophet never interferes with the message from God (internal interpretation). However, it has not been ruled out that it also refers to the interpretation of an already existing, written prophecy (external interpretation). The latter variant seems to be developed here. According to Peter, the interpretation of the prophetic message and apostolic teaching cannot be one’s own private arbitrary interpretation. It should lead to a “pure uncontaminated thinking/reasoning”. Given the sapiential, Platonic and even Philonic suggestions that purity reflects the divine element in human thought/intelligence, one can see here the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In

61 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 287.

62 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:20.

other words, it is the Holy Spirit who makes the interpretation of prophetic and apostolic teaching lead to uncontaminated thinking/pure reasoning consistent with the inspired message of the prophets and apostles (1:20–21).

Philo pointed out that pure, simple mind makes it possible to cultivate and practise the virtues. This corresponds with Peter's understanding of faith, knowledge and truth not only in theoretical and cognitive terms, but also in practical terms. This practical aspect of ειλικρινῆς διάνοια is revealed particularly clearly in the juxtaposition of 3:1 and 1:12–13:

	2 Pet 3:1	2 Pet 1:12–13
activity	reawakening/stirring up/arousing διεγείρω	stirring up/arousing (verse 13) διεγείρειν ὑμᾶς
measure	reminder ἐν ὑπομνήσει	reminding (verse 13) ἐν ὑπομνήσει
purpose	your pure/uncontaminated thinking/reasoning/mind	grounded/stable/firmly established in the present truth (verse 12)
	ὑμῶν τὴν ειλικρινῆ διάνοιαν	ἐστηριγμένους ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ ἀληθείας

In 2 Pet 1:12⁶³ πάρουσα ἀληθεία was defined as acquired knowledge (faith), in which truth is present. In the exordial baptismal context, being strengthened in the truth meant first and foremost the active manifestation of faith and thus the development of baptismal gifts and dispositions. Now, this understanding can be juxtaposed with “pure/uncontaminated thinking/reasoning/mind” and ειλικρινῆς διάνοια can be construed as an inspired interpretation of prophetic and apostolic teaching that motivates and makes possible a godly life, an escape from the corruption in the world caused by lust, and consequently a participation in the divine nature and entry into the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ.⁶⁴

2.8 D₂. Prophetic and apostolic teaching (2 Pet 3:2)

²[That you] may recall the words spoken earlier by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour [given by] your apostles.

⁶³ See analysis of 2 Pet 1:12.

⁶⁴ Oecumenius expresses a similar thought in his *Commentary on the Second Epistle of Peter*: “A man with a sincere and pure mind is one who has listened to the message proclaimed by the prophets and apostles. He keeps this message in his heart and the fervour of the spirit”; *Ojcowie Kościoła komentują Biblię. Nowy Testament*, vol. 9: *List św. Jakuba, I-II List św. Piotra, I-III List św. Jana, List św. Judy*, Polish transl. and ed. D. Sztuk, Ząbki 2014, p. 143.

After presenting the purpose of the reminder in transition 3:1, the narrator moves on to the object of this reminder: “the words spoken earlier by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour [given by] your apostles”. He wants the recipients to draw conclusions from this teaching, which would not be derived from philosophical influences, let alone the views and (im)moral behaviour of false teachers. In describing the object of the reminder, Peter goes back to the Letter of Jude and quotes phrases from Jude 17 in almost unchanged form. However, as is his custom, he makes additions that allow him to build his own argumentation on the basis of Jude’s lexis.

Jude 17	2 Pet 3:2
Μνήσθητε τῶν ῥημάτων τῶν προειρημένων	Μνησθῆναι τῶν προειρημένων ῥημάτων ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων προφητῶν καὶ τῆς
ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων	τῶν ἀποστόλων ὑμῶν ἐντολῆς
τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος
Recall words spoken earlier	That you may recall words spoken earlier
by the apostles	by the holy prophets and [given by] your apostles
Our Lord Jesus Christ	the commandment of the Lord and Saviour

The affinity between 2 Pet 3:2 and Jude 17 is manifest not only at the lexical level, but also at the semantic level, above all in the understanding of the key terms here: προειρημένα ῥήματα ‘the words spoken earlier’, ἀπόστολοι ‘the apostles’, and ἅγιοι ‘the saints’ – taken from Jude 3.

Like in Jude, Peter wrote about “the words spoken earlier” τῶν προειρημένων ῥημάτων. In both cases, the attributive order is used in this expression, but differently interpreted. Jude assigned “the words spoken earlier” to the apostles. He understands the term “apostle” as a function rather than a title. Apostles are not only the closest disciples of Jesus – the Twelve, not even only the missionaries of the Church who evangelised and founded new local communities. Apostles in general are all those who act as representatives/messengers and speak on behalf of Jesus Christ.⁶⁵ Jude seems to narrow this group down to preachers of the Gospel. However, it must be taken into account that the early Christocentric hermeneutics also allowed prophetic texts to be read as a message about Christ. Ignatius of Antioch in the *Epistle to the Philadelphians* 5:2 exhorts “And let us also love the

65 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 329.

prophets, because they too have proclaimed the Gospel, and placed their hope in Him, and waited for Him”, while Polycarp in the *Epistle to the Philipians* 6 refers to the command of Jesus himself and the apostles and prophets “who preached the Gospel unto us” (cf. also 2 *Clem.* 14:2). This conviction and this hermeneutic is shared by the author of the Letter of Jude, so it can be assumed that the term “apostles” used by him includes both Old and intertestamental messengers of God and proclaimers of the Old Testament Gospel of Jesus Christ, as well as missionaries and evangelisers of the New Testament era.⁶⁶ This intention was accurately read by the narrator of 2 Peter, but he adapted Jude’s message to his own conception and argumentation. He developed the metaphors, as in 2 Pet 2:17a, to make them more specific and precise. Jude called the Old Testament messengers of Jesus Christ – prophets, while the New Testament messengers – ἀπόστολοι, but specified their message as the “commandment of the Lord and Saviour”.

It is likely that the narrator of 2 Peter also borrows from Jude the adjective ἅγιοι ‘saints’ and its meaning (Jude 3 mentions “faith given once for all to the saints”; cf. Jude 20 and “most holy faith”). According to the author of the Letter of Jude, the term includes the Old and intertestamental writers and prophets, the disciples of Jesus, the apostles, missionaries, evangelists and evangelizers, i. e. all those to whom the revelation has been given and all those who guard it and pass it on unchanged (those who have previously been called apostles). Moreover, it also includes those to whom this revelation was given and who received it.⁶⁷ The narrator of 2 Peter narrows this broad meaning, and he calls the prophets “saints” as those who transmit the revelation received from God faithfully, uncontaminated by their own biased interpretation (cf. 1:20–21). He is not alone among hagiographers in such phraseology; the phrase “holy prophets” appears several times in the NT (Luke 1:70, Acts 3:21, cf. also Wis 11:1).

In the description of the object of recollection, the narrator of 2 Peter once again uses a hypomnemic formula. He refers to 1:12–13 and the two-element formula with a verb phrase with ὑπομνήσκειν (inf. praes. act.) and a prepositional phrase ἐν ὑπομνήσει. 3:1–2 includes a similar device, although the order of these elements is reversed: the expression ἐν ὑπομνήσει appears in 3:1, while the verb in the infinitive μνησθῆναι (inf. aor. pass.) in 3:2. A chiasm may be seen here:

- A. ὑπομνήσκειν (1:12)
- B. ἐν ὑπομνήσει (1:13)
- B'. ἐν ὑπομνήσει (3:1)
- A. μνησθῆναι (3:2).

66 Ibid., p. 329–330.

67 Ibid., p. 95–96.

Undoubtedly, through this lexical similarity and the use of chiasm, the narrator wants to link the contents of 1:12–21 and 3:2. In 1:16–18, he referred to the testimony of the apostles provided by eyewitnesses, which was reinforced by a Christocentric and eschatological and parousia-related reinterpretation of the inspired prophetic teaching (1:19–21). Now – also on the basis of chiasm – the order is reversed. First the teaching/predictions of “the holy prophets” is mentioned (3:2a), and then “the commandment of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ [handed down by] your apostles” (3:2b):

- A. apostolic teaching (1:16–18)
 - B. prophetic teaching (1:19–21)
 - B'. prophetic teaching (3:1a)
- A' apostolic teaching (3:1b).

The reference to 1:16–18 and 1:19–21 explains why Jude’s general, capacious, inclusive term ἀπόστολοι is separated into προφηταί and ἀπόστολοι. However, this does not mean that the narrator of 2 Peter abandons inclusivism. On the contrary, the aorist form of the verb μνησθῆναι in 3:2 indicates that the invitation to recall a previous letter refers to the holistic, complete doctrine of the parousia and the judgement, which encompasses the words of the prophets and the teaching of Jesus transmitted by the apostles.

The phrase προειρημένα ῥήματα, as already noted, is taken from the Letter of Jude. The term ῥῆμα appears relatively frequently in the ST and NT. In the LXX, it can refer to the prophetic word (Jer 6:10, 26:2), the temporal and eschatological judgements of God (Isa 15:1, 17:1, 22:1), to the word of God (Isa 40:8, Ps 56[55]:11), a divine command or commandment (Ps 68[67]:12, Isa 66:5, Jer 7:23); the word of God that is fulfilled (Isa 38:7, 55:11); the prophetic word that initiates a book (Jer 1:1, 5:14). It obviously has prophetic connotations, although they are based on the contexts. In the NT, likewise, it indicates a general message (John 8:20, Acts 2:14, 10:44, Rom 10:18) and a prophetic message (Matt 26:75, Mark 9:32, 14:72, Luke 1:38, 2:29, 9:45, 18:34, 22:61, 24:8, Acts 11:16).⁶⁸ In 2 Pet 3:2, this prophetic feature implied by ῥήματα is emphasised by part. perf. act. προειρημένα. The perfective form makes the audience aware that the implications of the words once spoken by the prophets are not only still valid, but they are now fulfilled.⁶⁹ A certain prophetism is also inscribed in the semantic field of the verb προλέγω itself, which denotes previous, past preaching, foreshadowing, warning with the implication of the present fulfilment of a prediction or the coming of a foretold calamity or

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 324.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 325.

doom. Herodotus uses *προλέγω* in this sense in *Histories* (I 53:3): “Such was their inquiry; and the judgment given to Croesus by each of the two oracles was the same: namely, that if he should send an army against the Persians he would destroy a great empire”. Josephus Flavius uses it to describe prophetic prophecy:

And who is there that does not know what the writings of the ancient prophets contain in them? and particularly that oracle which is just now going to be fulfilled upon this miserable city. For they foretold [earlier] (*προεῖπον*), that this city should be then taken, when some body shall begin the slaughter of his own countrymen (*Bell. Iud.* VI 2:1).

It is also used by New Testament writers when they refer to the prophetic aspects of Jesus’ teaching (Matt 24:25, Mark 13:23) or Christocentric or Gospel-centred interpretations of the words of the Old Testament prophets (Acts 1:16, Heb 4:7, Rom 9:29)⁷⁰. The narrator of 2 Peter in 3:2a emphasises thrice the prophetic character of Christian doctrine: firstly, by using the noun *ῥήματα*; secondly, by referring to it as *προειρημένα*; thirdly and finally, by attributing *ῥήματα* to “the holy prophets”.

Although there are calls among commentators on 2 Peter to identify “the holy prophets” as the New Testament prophets (Acts 15:32, Eph 3:5, 4:11),⁷¹ in the light of the whole letter, and especially in connection with 2 Pet 1:19–21, there is little doubt that the words “holy prophets” should be understood as a reference to the message of the Old Testament prophets with prophetic authority in the intertestamental times.⁷² This is confirmed by the use of the adjective “holy” in the same broad sense as in Jude 3.

The attempt to make the content of the prophetic teaching more precise, a problem similar to that in 1:19a arises – whether the prophetic teaching means the overall ST message or exclusively the prophetic books, or some specific elements of the prophetic message. An interpretation of the genitive case *τῶν προειρημένων ῥημάτων* offers some insight. This case may be a result of a typical case government of *μυνησκομαι* ‘to recall’, which governs the genitive or accusative case, but it can also be construed as gen. partitivus. When applying gen. partitivus to both “the words of the prophets” and “the commandment of the Lord and Saviour”, it becomes clear that it is not the entire teaching that is in question, but rather its selected aspects related to eschatology and parousia. One may further wonder whether the narrator had general eschatological themes in mind (such as those in Isa 2:2–4, Joel 3:2–5, Mic 4:3),⁷³ or whether they should be further narrowed

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ See E.M. Sidebottom, *James, 2 Peter, Jude*, Grand Rapids 1980, p. 118.

⁷² P.H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter*, p. 575.

⁷³ G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 957; P.H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter*, p. 576 argues that the narrator refers generally to the Old Testament message, and anyone familiar with it knows that it also contains

down to prophecies heralding the appearance of scoffers who mock the judgment and the day of the Lord. Richard Bauckham suggested that the latter possibility is indicated by the formula $\rho\omicron\upsilon \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\upsilon\nu$ “where is” in 2 Pet 3:4, which occurs frequently in Old Testament accounts of eschatological scepticism, especially the denial of the punishment to be meted out to the ungodly (Isa 5:18–20, Jer 5:12–24, Amos 9:10, Mal 2:17).⁷⁴ He acknowledged, however, that a broader – eschatological – understanding of “the words of the prophets” is equally legitimate.⁷⁵ All the more, if one treats 3:2 as the opening sentence of a summary of the entire eschatological and parousia-related prophetic and apostolic teaching in 3:3–15.

The second element of the object of recollection is $\eta \tau\omega\nu \acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\omicron\lambda\omega\nu \upsilon\mu\omega\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\omicron\lambda\eta \tau\omicron\upsilon \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\omicron\upsilon \kappa\alpha\iota \sigma\omega\tau\eta\rho\omicron\varsigma$ “the commandment of the Lord and Saviour [given by] your apostles”, which should be treated in the same way as “the words of the prophets” – on the one hand selectively, on the other quite generally and – paradoxically – collectively, as indicated by the singular number of the noun $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\omicron\lambda\eta$ ‘commandment’. Such a collective meaning has already been pointed out in the analysis of 2 Pet 2:21, where the phrase $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\acute{\alpha} \acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\omicron\lambda\eta$ ‘holy commandment’ appears, understood as synonymous with the Law and the ethical teaching of the prophets.⁷⁶ First and foremost, the eschatological teaching of Jesus should be recognised here, in which there are indeed calls (commandments, injunctions) to watchfulness (cf. 2 Pet 3:10) and constant readiness for His coming, which entails maintaining the highest moral and religious standards (2 Pet 3:14).

The noun $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\omicron\lambda\eta$ is placed between two genitive cases indicating three aspects of apostolic teaching: its source, its content and its mode of transmission. The narrator of 2 Peter emphasises that it is a teaching/commandment coming from the Lord and Saviour. This means that the function of the genitive case of $\tau\omicron\upsilon \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\omicron\upsilon \kappa\alpha\iota \sigma\omega\tau\eta\rho\omicron\varsigma$ is not only possessive; it can also be interpreted as gen. subiectivus and gen. originis. The invocation of Jesus legitimises the apostolic teaching. Once again, the parallels between 1:16–21 and 3:2 are revealed. Previously, the authentication was part of a polemic against accusations that Christian teaching means “following devised myths”. Now, too, the narrator places it in the context of a polemic against false teachers and scoffers (3:3–4). He then not only marks the divine/Christian origin of apostolic teaching, but also discredits the opponents by suggesting that it is their views that have nothing to do with God and Christ, but are based on human will and imagination. The genitive case $\tau\omicron\upsilon \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\omicron\upsilon \kappa\alpha\iota \sigma\omega\tau\eta\rho\omicron\varsigma$ interpreted as obiectivus points to the second aspect of apostolic teaching – that is, its content.

a message about judgment, so there is no need to enumerate the passages the narrator of 2 Peter had in mind.

74 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 287.

75 Ibid.

76 See analysis of 2 Pet 2:21.

This would be the teaching of the Lord and Saviour, i. e. soteriology whose integral and indelible element is the second coming of Jesus in judgment in the end times.

The third aspect of Christian doctrine is emphasised by gen. τῶν ἀποστόλων ὑμῶν, placed in 3:2b in the initial position. It has both a possessive and an instrumental meaning. The possessive meaning accentuates the fact that “the commandment of the Lord and Saviour” was entrusted to the apostles. The instrumental meaning, on the other hand, draws attention to the role of the apostles in the transmission of “the commandment of the Lord and Saviour”. On the basis of 2 Pet 3:1, one can surmise that the apostolic message – in contrast to the teaching of the false teachers – was faithful and free from self-interpretation (cf. 1:20), which could lead the faithful to an incorrect conclusion. As a result, the qualitative function of the genitive case τῶν ἀποστόλων – “the commandment [handed down by] the apostles” translates into a faithful and uncontaminated transmission.

Attention is drawn to the personal possessive pronoun τῶν ἀποστόλων ὑμῶν⁷⁷ “your apostles”. John Norman Davidson Kelly considers it a clue as to the time of the letter’s composition: the narrator living in post-apostolic times would have been referring to the teaching of the first generation of apostles,⁷⁸ primarily the message of the Twelve. However, it would be unnatural to refer to the Twelve as “your” apostles, as it might suggest that Peter, on whose behalf the narrator writes the letter, does not belong to this group.

Although in the first/second century one can encounter the use of the term “apostles” as an honorific title reserved for the Twelve, Paul, Barnabas and Silas, it seems more likely that the term denotes its broader, functional meaning, as in the Letter of Jude. In 2 Pet 3:2b, “apostles” thus indicate those emissaries of the Church, the missionaries who first brought Christian teaching to the recipients of the letter (“to you”).⁷⁹ Whether they were among the direct disciples of Jesus or among the later preachers of the Gospel, the earliest Christianity referred to them as apostles (Acts 14:14, Rom 16:7, 1 Cor 4:9, 15:5.7, 2 Cor 8:23, Gal 1:17, Eph 3:5, 4:11, Phil 2:25, 1 Thess 2:7). In a similar sense – the missionaries and founders of the local church – the phrase “our apostles” was used by Clement of Rome in 1 Clem. 44:1: “Our apostles καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἡμῶν also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate”.

Dauids seeks confirmation of this broad and general meaning of the term ἀπόστολος by juxtaposing it with the titles of Jesus. Both the titles κυρίος ‘Lord’ and σωτήρ ‘Saviour’ were taken from the language of politics and, before they entered the Jewish and Christian sociolects as divine titles, were attributed to the emperor.

77 Very few manuscripts have the pronoun ἡμῶν in this place.

78 J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 354.

79 M.J. Kruger, *2 Pet 3:2, The Apostolate, and a Bi-Convenantal Canon*, JETS 63 (2020), no. 1, p. 9; the author addresses the question whether this is an oral or written transmission?

One of the imperial powers was to delegate messengers acting on behalf of the emperor.⁸⁰ Thus, the apostles who were sent on behalf of Jesus communicated once to the recipients of the 2 Peter Jesus's commandment, that is, Jesus's teaching and the teaching about Jesus. The latter makes it possible to suppose that even the apostle Paul may have been among "your apostles", as suggested by Bauckham⁸¹ and Watson and Callan,⁸² quoting 2 Pet 3:15. However, this seems unlikely especially in light of the prescript and conclusion of *exordium*. In 2 Pet 1:1, the author referred to the teaching brought to the recipients by the anonymous, most likely Hellenistic Christian apostles and stated that as a result of this teaching the elect acquire the same dignity and are endowed with baptismal promises and gifts. Later, referring to the knowledge previously acquired by the recipients presumably from "their apostles", the narrator merely recalled eschatology as part of this knowledge.

In juxtaposing 3:2b and 1:16–18, it is apparent that, for the narrator, the message proclaimed by himself, by other eyewitnesses, or by other apostles in the broadest sense of the word, is of equal value because its source is the person of Jesus Christ and, consequently, God Himself. It seems that the narrator of 2 Peter accepts the conclusions made by Clement of Rome in *1 Clem.* 42:1–2: "The apostles have preached the gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ [has done so] from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments, then, were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God". This would correspond with the conviction that the primary source of any credible message, whether apostolic or prophetic, is God's will and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:20–21).

2.9 E₂. Interpretation of the prophetic and apostolic teaching: α. – false interpretation (2 Pet 3:3–4)

³This, first of all, knowing that there will come in the last days scoffers/mockers following/going according to their own desires/lust⁴ and saying: where is the promise of His coming/parousia? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things have remained the same /continued as they were since the beginning of creation.

On recalling "the words spoken earlier by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour [handed down/given by] your apostles", the narrator of 2 Peter moves on to reflect on the false and correct interpretation of prophetic and

80 P.H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter*, p. 576; F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 310.

81 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 287.

82 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 204.

apostolic teaching. He reverts to the typical apocalyptic style he used in 1:12–2:3b, with the characteristic future tense. He thus places himself at one with the prophets and all the apostles who preached a similar eschatological message: on the one hand, he recalls the content of Christian teaching; on the other, as an apocalypticist, he develops his own visions fully compatible with the message he refers to. He even discreetly tries to convince his audience that his words should be treated in the same way as the old inspired prophetic message.

In the introduction, therefore, the narrator used the same formula as in the description of the divine inspiration of the prophetic message in 1:20: τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες “knowing first of all”. One may assume that he also treated his apocalyptic and eschatological message as inspired, completely in accordance with God’s will, free from his personal internal interpretation, based on the prophecies without his own erroneous external interpretation.⁸³ Obviously, the expression τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες and especially the adverb πρῶτον can also have a limiting, epideictic or hierarchical function (cf. Matt 6:33, Acts 3:26, Rom 1:16, 2 Cor 8:5, 1 Tim 2:1). It points to those elements of prophetic and apostolic eschatological teaching which the narrator recommends to the recipients: paradoxically, it is precisely the occasional appearance of heretics undermining the judgment and the parousia that is one of the signs that the second coming of Jesus and the judgment will certainly take place.⁸⁴ In order to classify the appearance of false teachers into this particular category, the audience should already know, for the participle γινώσκοντες ‘knowing’ refers to the knowledge they have, not to the new information the narrator intends to provide (cf. Rom 6:6, Eph 5:5, 2 Tim 3:1).⁸⁵ But the participle can also be translated as ‘understanding’, ‘inferring’ – with reference to 2 Pet 3:1 and pure, uncontaminated reasoning based on the acquired knowledge, i. e. the prophetic and apostolic teaching.

In describing the appearance of the heretics, the narrator of 2 Peter made use of Jude 18:

83 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:20–21.

84 Similarly, M. Luther, who addresses his contemporaries in his commentary on the Second Letter of Peter, interprets the text outside its historical context: “Therefore this shall be a sign of the last day that it is near, when the people shall live as they list, according to all their lusts, and such talk goes about among them as this: ‘Where is the promise of his coming? the world has stood so long and continued to abide, is it now for the first time to be otherwise?’ Thus Peter warns us that we should not be surprised, and that we have a sure sign that the day will soon come”; *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude Preached and Explained by Martin Luther III* (V.3, 4).

85 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 964 interprets this participle as equivalent to the imperative.

2 Pet 3:3	Jude 18
ἐλεύσονται ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐν ἐμπαιγμονῇ ἐμπαῖκται κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν πορευόμενοι	ἐπ' ἐσχάτου χρόνου ἔσονται ἐμπαῖκται κατὰ ἐαυτῶν ἐπιθυμίας πορευόμενοι τῶν ἀσεβειῶν
there will come in the last days the scoffers in scoffing according to their own desires/lust following	in the end times there will be scoffers following their desires for ungodliness

This time Peter only introduced minor changes to the source material.⁸⁶ He thus remained faithful not only to the content of the prophetic and apostolic teaching, but also to its form. Since neither in Jude nor in 2 Peter direct quotations are used, it is to be presumed that the point is to synthesise the conviction, characteristic of Christianised intertestamental Jewish apocalypticism, of the increased activity of false teachers, false prophets, deceivers, liars at the end time.⁸⁷ But the similarity of expressions ἐπ' ἐσχάτου χρόνου/ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν ἔσονται ἐμπαῖκται κατὰ ἐπιθυμίας πορευόμενοι “there will come in the last days scoffers/mockers following according to their own desires/lust” that appear in Jude 18 and in 2 Pet 3:3 may indicate that they were part of literary eschatological formulas well known to the recipients of both letters.

Jude's formula, however, acquires in Peter a prophetic touch. The narrator of 2 Peter uses a polyptoton for this purpose, which imitates an etymological figure common in Hebrew and literally translated in the LXX: ἐν ἐμπαιγμονῇ ἐμπαῖκται “the scoffers in scoffing”.⁸⁸ Thus, on the one hand, the formula ἐν ἐμπαιγμονῇ ἐμπαῖκται can be regarded as a Septuagintism (or even a Semitism),⁸⁹ which is intended to refer to the style of inspired Old Testament hagiographers (cf. Gen 31:30, Exod 21:20, Deut 7:26, 13:16, 20:17). On the other hand, through its intensifying function, it is an irony based on wordplay, appropriate to a vituperative convention: those who mock eschatological events the most, do not realise that they themselves

86 J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 355.

87 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 332; see also M.S. Wróbel, *Znaki końca czasów w Apokalipsie Ezdrasza (4 Ezdr)*, [in:] *Apokaliptyka judaizmu i wczesnego chrześcijaństwa*, p. 133–141.

88 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 204 see only paronomasia here; R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 289 argues that this inaccurate imitation betrays that the narrator merely imitates the Semitic way of thinking for stylistic purposes.

89 J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 355; R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 289.

become a sign of the end times⁹⁰ and thus strengthen the recipients of the letter in their belief that God's promises and prophecies are being fulfilled.⁹¹

Instead of Jude's auxiliary word in ind. fut. ἔσονται, Peter uses the future verb form ἔρχομαι – ἐλεύσονται 'will come', thus giving the whole formula a framework structure bounded by the verbs denoting walking: ἔρχομαι and πορεύομαι, which is undoubtedly a mnemonic device: "There will *come* – in the last days the scoffers in scoffing according to their own desires – following/*going*". This mnemonic framework also explains – at least on a syntactic level – why the stylistically awkward addition from Jude τῶν ἀσεβειῶν was omitted.

Peter's temporal expression is slightly different. Instead of the rare, typical of Jude ἐπ' ἐσχάτου χρόνου – "in the last time" or "at the end of times",⁹² the much more common ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν literal – "in the last days" (also with the predicative word order) is used. Such or similar expressions (with the attributive word order) appear frequently in prophetic texts. In the LXX it is a translation of the Hebrew באחרית הימים (Isa 2:2, Jer 23:20, 25:19, 37:24, Ezek 38:16, Dan 2:28, 10:14, Hos 3:5, Mic 4:1); they can be found in Jewish intertestamental apocalyptic literature (ApBaSy 6:8, 41:5, CD 6:11). Not surprisingly, New Testament and early Christian writers also use them, drawing on apocalyptic and eschatological topoi (e. g. Acts 2:17, 2 Tim 3:1, Heb 1:2, Jas 5:3, 2 Clem. 14:2, Barn. 12:9, 16:5, Shepherd, Similitude 11:12). "In the last days", "at the end of time", "in the end times" – according to these texts – the forces of evil will become particularly active⁹³ (4 Ezra 5:1–2, TIss 6:1, TJud 18:11–2, TLev 14:11, TDan 5:5, 1 Tim 4:1–3, 2 Tim 3:1–9), and one type of this activity will be the spread of immorality and false teaching.

On the basis of the formula ἐλεύσονται ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν "they will come in the last days" and the future tense in 2 Pet 3:3, Bauckham attempts to reconstruct the narrator's temporal perspective. The signs of the end times are a future from the point of view of the apostle Peter on whose behalf the narrator is speaking. However, from the point of view of the pseudepigraphic writer as an internal author – it is rather the present. The actual sender of the letter and its first recipients belonging to the second and/or third generation of Christians observed the mentioned phenomena on a daily basis,⁹⁴ which would also be evidenced by the present

90 T. Fornberg, *An Early Church in a Pluralistic Society: A Study of 2 Peter*, Lund 1977, p. 61; R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 288; D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 204; D.J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 284.

91 J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 355.

92 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 332.

93 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 965.

94 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 288.

tense prevalent in 2:10b–22. Describing them now using a future tense lends credibility to the narrator as a representative of the first generation of Christians. It should be noted that this authentication would not be very consistent, especially if one considers the thesis shared by Bauckham that “the fathers” mentioned in 2 Pet 3:4 are the first generation of Christians, contemporaries of the apostle Peter.⁹⁵ This would mean that in 3:3 the narrator writes from the perspective of Peter and the first generation of Christians, and in 3:4 he forgets his identity and reveals that he belongs to the second or even third generation. Such a statement seems unconvincing.

Rather, one should return to the suggestion mentioned when the elements of Peter’s biography in 2 Pet 1:12–15 were reconstructed.⁹⁶ Due to the apocalyptic convention, the internal author only mentions generally the scoffers who will appear in the end times. Since the appearance of heretics, scoffers, false teachers and false prophets was a regular feature of this convention (cf. e. g. Matt 7:15, 24:11.24, Mark 13:22, Acts 13:6, 1 John 4:1, Rev 16:13, 19:20, 20:10, AscIsa 3:22, *Dial.* 35:5),⁹⁷ it is possible that the actual sender of the letter had in mind an indefinite future rather than the present. All the more so since he addressed his letter not only to his contemporaries, but also to future generations of Christians, to those who had not lived to see the parousia and to those who, he expects, would finally see the parousia. This would mean that both the narrator introducing himself as Peter and the actual (internal) author of the letter regard the end times and the signs pointing to them as the future.

The false teachers are named in verse 3 after Jude 18 as “scoffers” who, as further specified, will come “in scoffing”. By means of the etymological figure mimicking a Septuagintism, the narrator of 2 Peter wants to refer not only to the direct source, but also to the primary source. He adopts Jude’s Christocentric and eschatological interpretation of Isa 3:4 – the judgment on Judah and Jerusalem, the only passage in the LXX where the noun ἐμπαϊκται⁹⁸ occurs. At the same time, by referring to Isaiah and borrowing his lexis, Peter achieves his goal of placing himself in line with the other prophets proclaiming the coming of judgment. The continuation of the Greek text from Isaiah (Isa 3:8–13) is in fact a confirmation of Peter’s earlier assertions concerning the false teachers, including the conclusion that judgment awaits them:

95 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:4.

96 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:12.15.

97 See analysis of 2 Pet 2:1.

98 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 336.

Isa 3:8–13 (LXX NETS)	2 Pet
their tongues are joined with lawlessness (verse 8).	2:3a.18
being disobedient toward things of the Lord (verse 8).	2:1d.10.12a.14.15.20.21
their glory has been brought low (verse 8).	2:16
And the shame of their face has risen up against them (verse 9).	2:1cd.12b.19c.22
they have proclaimed their sin like that of Sodoma (verse 9).	2:6–8
Woe to their soul! Because they have given evil counsel against themselves (verse 9).	2:1cd.3b.10a.13b–15
they shall eat the fruit of their works (verse 10).	2:1cd.13a.22.
Woe to the lawless one! Evil things will happen to him according to the works of his hands (verse 11).	2:1cd.13a.22
O my people, those who congratulate you mislead you and confuse the path of your feet (verse 12).	2:1c.2–3a.18–19a
But now the Lord will stand up to judge (verse 13).	2:3b.9b.21

While the noun ἐμπαίκτης is not used in the LXX except for Isa 3:4, the occurrence of the verb ἐμπαίζω is relatively frequent. It can have a completely neutral meaning ‘to amuse’, ‘to rejoice’ (Gen 39:14.17, Ps 104[103]:36, Isa 33:4, Na 2:4, Ba 3:17), but sometimes its connotation is negative as ‘mockery’ or ‘scoffing’ (1 Sam 31:4, 1 Kings 10:4, 2 Kings 26:16, Prov 27:7, Ezek 22:5, Zech 12:3, Hab 1:10). Like Jude, Peter prefers the latter meaning, but the connotations with amusement, entertainment, debauchery and luxury of false teachers may be noticeable (2 Pet 2:13–14). This also connoted with foolishness (Prov 1:22, 24:9), arrogance (Prov 21:24), pride (Isa 29:20), which are based on the Hebrew concept פָּחַד.⁹⁹

An essential component of the term ἐμπαίκτης is ‘disgrace’, ‘mockery’ (cf. nouns ἐμπαυγμός, ἐμπαῖγμα, ἐμπαυγμονή (Isa 66:4, 2 Macc 7:7, 3 Macc 5:22, Wis 12:25, Sir 27:28, Ps 38[37]:8, PssSol 2:11, 17:12, Ezek 22:4). Such negative characterisation

99 Ibid., p. 336–337.

will be encountered in Greek literature, e. g. in Herodotus *Histories* IV 134:2, where the Scythian army is suspected of disrespecting and deriding the Persians. Contempt, mockery, insult, dishonour often include not only the verbal aspect, but also elements of psychological and physical violence – abuse, as can be seen in the texts describing the passion of Jesus (Matt 27:29.31.41, Luke 23:11).¹⁰⁰

As can be seen, mockery as understood by Peter largely corresponds to blasphemy/slander (2 Pet 2:10.12). This synonymity is also noticeable in Jewish literature. The Qumran “arrogant man” is first and foremost a blasphemer and a liar who rejects God’s commandments: “these are the arrogant men who are in Jerusalem. They are the ones who ‘Have rejected the Law of God and mocked the word of the Holy One’ (4Q162/QpIs^b 2:6–7).¹⁰¹ This characterisation largely corresponds to Peter’s portrait of the false teachers who, firstly, rejected the Law and deviated from the path of righteousness (2 Pet 2:2,15.21), acting immorally; secondly, despised the word of the Lord, i. e. the prophetic word on eschatological judgment, but also, as Neyrey notes,¹⁰² the word of promise concerning the equipping of Christians to live a godly life (2 Pet 1:3–4).

The courage of scoffers stems primarily from a sense of impunity. Already Aristotle noted that he who slights “has no idea that the other is likely to hurt him” (*Rhetoric* 1378b). False teachers tend to reject the coming of the final judgement, so they do not believe in the possibility of any future punishment. Previously Peter explained this eschatological scepticism of the heretics from the philosophical perspective, in 2 Pet 3:5–7 he adds the historical perspective.¹⁰³ By constantly recalling the prophetic and apostolic teaching on the question of judgment and the parousia, he shares and fulfils the postulate of Epictetus who in the *Enchiridion* XXII advised what attitude to adopt towards scoffers: “keep steadily to those things which appear best to you, as one appointed by God to this particular station. For remember that, if you are persistent, those very persons who at first ridiculed will afterwards admire you”. It is not, of course, a matter of arousing admiration for the prophetic and apostolic teaching and its advocates, but of defending it in the conviction that it is in accordance with the will and revelation of God.

This very complex perception of scoffers as false teachers, fools, antinomians with a very casual lifestyle, and above all as blasphemers was taken by Peter from Jude.¹⁰⁴ This is not the first time that the meanings of key terms are transferred from Jude to Peter’s letter (cf. also κυριότης – 2:10, δόξαι – 2:10, ἀπόστολος – 3:2, ἅγιος

100 J.H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 227.

101 F.G. Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated. The Qumran Texts in English*, English transl. W.G.E. Watson, Leiden 1994, p. 187.

102 J.H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 228.

103 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:5–7.

104 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 337–338.

– 3:2). It is known, however, that the narrator of 2 Peter sometimes changes Jude’s terminology to make it denote what is suitable to his argumentation. This is the case with the addition κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν πορευόμενοι “following/going/walking according to their own desires”. This phrase differs slightly from the source κατὰ ἑαυτῶν ἐπιθυμίας πορευόμενοι τῶν ἀσεβειῶν “according to their own godless desires will follow”. The rhetorical reasons for the omission of τῶν ἀσεβειῶν have already been mentioned. These are overlaid with contextual reasons. In Jude 18, the noun ἀσέβεια in the final position performs a summarising function; it synthesises the previously described manifestations of ungodliness, and lexically refers to those passages in the letter where this concept – one of the key concepts in Jude – is also used.¹⁰⁵ In 2 Peter ἀσέβεια does not play such an important role, it is rather replaced by ἀσέλγεια ‘promiscuity’ and ἐπιθυμία ‘desire’, ‘lust’.

The expression κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας πορεύομαι “to follow desires/lusts” appears – albeit infrequently – in the LXX (Sir 18:30), in intertestamental literature (TJud 3:2: “And walk not after your lusts, nor in the imaginations of your thoughts in haughtiness of heart”) and in NT letters (Eph 2:3, 1 Pet 4:3). The narrator of the Letter of Jude uses it twice – in Jude 16 and 18. In both cases, the noun ἐπιθυμία is indefinite with the pronoun ἑαυτῶν, which serves primarily to antagonise God’s will and human desires. The desires/lust themselves are not limited to bodily needs; on the contrary, it is clear from the context of the entire letter that it is a desire to recognise the false teachers as persons chosen by God and having a special relationship with Him; this involves a desire to take leadership and control of the teaching in the community and a desire for fame, respect and power.¹⁰⁶ The narrator of 2 Peter has already used the noun ἐπιθυμία three times (2 Pet 1:4, 2:10.18). In the first instance, the term appeared in a very general sense – as a source of corruption in the world. In the following two passages the term was made more specific: in 2 Pet 2:10, it is a matter of following the flesh because of a desire of impurity (“impure lust”) ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ μiasμοῦ; in 2 Pet 2:18, it is a matter of enticing “by the desires of the flesh” ἐν ἐπιθυμίαις σαρκός. This means that the concept of ἐπιθυμία was associated primarily with corporality, the unlimited satisfaction of all somatic needs and desires, from sexuality to comfort, superfluity and luxury. In a similar ethics-oriented way, ἐπιθυμία in 3:3 should be understood, especially since the phrase “to follow one’s desires/according to one’s desires” is often used with moral statements or injunctions.

It must be taken into account, however, that in 3:3 “desires” are complemented with the adjective “own”. This is not only a replacement of Jude’s pronoun ἑαυτῶν with its equivalent ἴδιος, but also a reminder of the text in which the adjective ἴδιος

105 Ibid., p. 339.

106 Ibid., p. 312.

already appeared – 2 Pet 1:20. This makes the expression “to follow one’s own desires” to be understood on two levels with differently distributed emphases. First – in the aforementioned ethical dimension, overlapping with the previous understanding of ἐπιθυμία, where the emphasis falls on the meaning of the noun. Secondly, in the theological and inspirational dimension, marked by the use of ἴδιος in 1:20, where the emphasis falls on the adjective. In 2 Pet 1:20, ἴδιος indicated the interference of false prophets in the transmitted word of God. A similar function may be detected here: false teachers shape the prophetic and apostolic message according to their “own desires”, according to their own will, rather than God’s will (1:20–21). In other words – they give the revelation their own interpretation internally and externally, dominated by philosophical (Cyrenaic-epicurean) themes. Their own interpretation leads to eschatological scepticism and, as a result, to an acquiescence to immorality.¹⁰⁷ This would mean that the roots of heresy lie in interpreting the revelation according to one’s own desires, i. e., as in 3:1 with corrupt contaminated reasoning.

In verse 4, the narrator continues to style the text to resemble the writings of the Old Testament prophets. He makes use of the characteristic rhetorical question ποῦ ἐστὶν “where is”, which appears frequently in the LXX in the context of derision and mockery of God’s apparent inaction. The question, “Where is your God?” is asked by the persecutors of the psalmist in Ps 42[41]:4.11. In Ps 79[78]:9–10 it is added to the request for divine help: “Help us, God our savior [...] Why should the nations say, ‘Where is their God?’” (similarly in Ps 115:2[113:10], Joel 2:17). Mic 7:10 predicts the humiliation that will affect those who say: “Where is the Lord, your God?” For the context of Peter 2, Mal 2:17 and Jer 17:15 seem particularly relevant. In the first text there is a warning against the ungodly who incite God to anger, asking: “Where is the just God?” The second text: “Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come to pass!” refers to God’s promises that appear unfulfilled. The fulfilment of the promise is also clearly linked to the eschatological text in Ezek 12:24–25(28), which emphasises the fulfilment of the “word” (λαλήσω τοὺς λόγους μου καὶ ποιήσω); it is not without significance that the fulfilment of the “word” means the removal of false visions (ὄρασις ψευδής) and those who proclaim a promising future to please others (μαντευόμενος τὰ πρὸς χάρις), i. e. false prophets. If the recipients of 2 Peter were to recognise these intertextual references, it must be assumed that they were well acquainted with the LXX in terms of content and form. Such a supposition accompanies the narrator actually from 1:19, where he began, sometimes rather enigmatically, to refer to the prophets.

107 This sequence follows from 2 Pet 2:19–20: the abandonment of immoral customs as a result of coming to know Jesus Christ and the return to them as a result of a misinterpretation of Christian liberty; See analysis of 2 Pet 2:19–20; cf. G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 968, who argues that heteropraxy preceded heterodoxy.

The references to formal elements of prophecies known from the Septuagint, probably to add an archaic touch, is unusual compared to Peter's other prophetic and apocalyptic statements. Perhaps this formal stylisation was also inspired by the Letter of Jude, where the characteristic prophetic exclamation οὐαί 'woe'¹⁰⁸ appears in verse 11. Both Jude's and Petrine stylisations allude to warning prophecies. In Jude 11 the aspect of judgment and punishment is more prominent, in 2 Pet 3:4 the relationship between the promise and its fulfilment and the problem of God's apparent passivity. These issues were addressed earlier in 2 Peter, in particular in 2:3b, where the narrator argued that the judgment is not idle, and that the doom that will befall heretics is not slumbering. Now Peter returns to this motif and aptly summarises the arguments based on examples drawn from Jewish tradition (sinful angels, the Flood, the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah) and prepares the audience for a full explanation of the eschatological hermeneutic applied previously (3:5–7).

The rhetorical question: "where is" refers to "the promise of the parousia" ἐπαγγελία τῆς παρουσίας. Both terms already occurred in 2 Peter, but never together. Neyrey¹⁰⁹ points out that the use of the term "promise" in the context of the parousia is quite unusual. In the NT it usually refers to the promise of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4, 2:33.39, Gal 3:14, Eph 1:13), promises made to the patriarchs (Acts 7:17, 13:32, 26:6, Rom 4:13, 9:4, 15:8, 2 Cor 7:1, Gal 3:16, Eph 2:12, Heb 6:12, 11:9) or to messianic promises fulfilled in Christ (Acts 13:23, Eph 3:6). One can also find contexts similar to 1:4 with the term ἐπαγγελία, namely an individual, personal eschatology related to the life to come (1 Tim 4:8, Heb 10:36). In *exordium*, Peter specifies that this refers to "precious and great promises" of participation in "the divine nature" through an escape "from the corruption in the world". He connects them with the baptismal gifts that make "a godly life" possible. In 2 Pet 3:4 the eschatological aspect of the promise is touched upon; it is linked to the parousia and derived from the ST. For in the ST, ἐπαγγελία appears quite often in the context of the promises God makes. Often these promises concern eschatology and the eschatological intervention of God himself (Isa 64:1–3, 66:15–16.18, Zech 14:1–7).¹¹⁰ Once again, the narrator of 2 Peter seems to indicate that the promise of Jesus' second coming is already encoded in Old Testament prophecies. It suffices to apply to these prophecies the appropriate hermeneutics, which will be explained in the subsequent paragraphs.¹¹¹

108 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 197.

109 J.H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 229.

110 E. Adams, "Where is the Promise of his Coming?" *The Complaint of the Scoffers in 2 Peter 3:4*, "New Testament Studies" 51 (2005), no. 1, p. 110–111.

111 See F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 312, who identifies here a promise spoken by Jesus.

Ἐπαγγελία in 2 Pet 3:4 alludes to the verb ἐπαγγέλλομαι from 2:19: the false teachers make a promise of freedom that is not fulfilled, but rather is fulfilled *à rebours*. The experience of ineffectiveness the heretics seem to transpose onto God, whom they blasphemously accuse of inaction, asking, “where is the promise of parousia?”

The term παρουσία is also used twice by the narrator of 2 Peter – once as a verb (1:12) and a second time as a noun (1:16). Both uses can correspond with the meaning of the parousia in 3:4. Clearly, the dominant understanding here is based on the description of the transfiguration interpreted as an anticipation of the eschatological reign of Jesus. The cosmic coming of Jesus Christ with power is linked to his messianic prerogatives as a king and a judge received from God the Father and is treated mainly in terms of future eschatology. The parousia may also be interpreted as a presence, just as in 1:12 παρουσία ἀληθεία – literally “present truth” – is defined. This would mean that the parousia, the presence of Jesus understood in terms of a fulfilled eschatology, is already taking place, albeit not in a spectacular way. This is reminiscent of the claim concerning judgment and annihilation in 2:3b: although seemingly nothing happens, after all, “judgment/sentence is not idle and the destruction is not slumbering”.

False teachers misunderstand and misinterpret Christian eschatology, and demand evidence concerning the parousia in both senses. This evidence was given in chapter 1 (1:16–21): the accounts of the eyewitnesses of the transfiguration scene, which is interpreted as the inauguration of Jesus’ eschatological reign, and the Christocentric, parousia-oriented eschatological reinterpretation of the prophetic teaching. In this part of the letter, therefore, the narrator no longer returns to them, but shows how they are to be properly understood.

The narrator combines this evidence with a polemic against the arguments of false teachers who, as shown earlier, derive their eschatological scepticism from philosophy and associate it with the absence of God’s intervention in human history. They mockingly point out that successive generations are dying, while nothing has changed since the beginning of the world. Hence, they conclude that nothing will change in the future either. This is the second – after the parousia in the present and future sense – reference in this verse to 2 Pet 2:3b and the apparent postponement of judgment and the slumbering destruction. These references mean that 2 Pet 3:4 can be taken as a vituperative summary of the heretics’ ability to correctly read the narrator’s argument so far – the false teachers, although they knew the most famous stories about the punishment of sinful angels (2:4), the flood that affected the ungodly and the rescue of Noah (2:5), the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah and the rescue of Lot (3:6–8), and finally the humiliation of Balaam (3:15–16), they were unable to apply a proper hermeneutic to these narratives and see in them a foreshadowing of the judgment that would not only take place, but was already taking place. Instead, they blasphemed (2:10–12a), which culminated

in 3:4 where they accused God of being unfaithful to his promises and of not intervening in history. Because of their blasphemy based on such a superficial view of world history and their demand of the immediate fulfilment of God's promises, they are likened to “irrational beasts” (2:12b), unable or even unwilling (3:5a) to understand the saving works of God undertaken since the beginning of the world.

The argument of the heretics is quoted ironically, following the style of the LXX. It begins with the expression ἀφ' ἧς, which was a common formula used to indicate the limitation of time (Exod 9:18, 10:6, Deut 9:7, 1 Sam 7:2, 8:8, 29:3.6.8, 2 Sam 7:6, 1 Kings 8:16, 2 Kings 8:16, Jdt 12:16, 1 Macc 1:11, 9:27, PssSol 18:11.12, Isa 7:17, Jer 7:25, 32:31, Ezek 20:5, 28:13.15, Luke 7:45, 8:2, Acts 20:18, 24:11, Col 1:6.9), meaning simply ‘from’ or ‘since’.¹¹² So, on the one hand, the limitation refers to the time when “the fathers fell asleep”; on the other, it goes all the way back to “the beginning of creation”. Although Bauckham considers such a double temporal formula to be stylistically awkward,¹¹³ it can be regarded as another example of adopting the style of the Septuagint through the use of parallelism. In the synonymous parallelism ἀφ' ἧς γὰρ οἱ πατέρες ἐκοιμήθησαν – ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κτίσεως “since the fathers fell asleep – since the beginning of creation”, the second element clarifies the meaning of the first one. It is not a question of indicating the time when fathers, that is ancestors, went to sleep, but of marking the very distant past, as in the second element. Both elements would refer to the beginning of creation, when the world and man were created (cf. Gen 2:4–7).

The very concept of πατέρες “fathers” is interpreted in different ways. Some commentators¹¹⁴ argue it refers to the first generation of Christians; they link it to the question in 3:4a: “where is the promise of the parousia?” The narrator, belonging to the second or even third generation of followers of Jesus Christ, would thus recall the unfulfilled hopes that have provoked and will always provoke heretics to mock and draw false conclusions. Others¹¹⁵ advocate a broader understanding and rather see in Peter's πατέρες references to the patriarchs, prophets, heroes from the ST, especially those who witnessed the eschatological promises, the promises of the

112 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 970.

113 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 293.

114 See, inter alia, K.H. Schelkle, p. 224; J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 356; R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 290–292; D.J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 285; F. Gryglewicz, *Drugi List św. Piotra*, [in:] *Listy katolickie*, p. 299.

115 See, among others, D.J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 166; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 972; D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 205; D.A. Keating, p. 409; P.H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter*, p. 670; F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 313.

Lord's coming¹¹⁶ or the ancestors of humanity in general,¹¹⁷ which in the light of the parallel and synonymous formulas "since the fathers fell asleep – since the beginning of creation" – seems more justified.

Supporters of the hypothesis that πατέρες are the deceased Christians cite the fact that in Jewish tradition scoffers could raise arguments about the non-fulfilment of God's promises, this would be difficult in Christian circles. For Christians believed that the promises given to the patriarchs and prophets had found fulfilment in Jesus Christ. Only the promise of Christ's second coming would remain to be fulfilled.¹¹⁸ Bauckham¹¹⁹ argues that the narrator of 2 Peter, in reconstructing the mockery, adapts the complaints about the non-fulfilment of God's promises present in Jewish apocalyptic. ApBaSyr 21:24–25, for example, quotes a prayer with the motif of the immutability of history since the time of the patriarchs and a request for the fulfilment of eschatological promises: "For there have been many years like those that are desolate from the days of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and of all those who are like them, who sleep in the earth, on whose account you did say that you had created the world. And now quickly show Your glory, and do not defer what has been promised by you". Similar motifs are probably applied by Clement of Rome when he expresses a wish: "Far from us be that which is written, Wretched are they who are of a double mind, and of a doubting heart; who say, These things we have heard even in the times of our fathers; but, behold, we have grown old, and none of them has happened unto us" (1 Clem. 23:3).

The apocalyptic convention of the text adopted by Peter allows Bauckham to interpret 2 Pet 3:4 as a similar Christian complaint: behold, the eschatological promises heard "in the days of our fathers" have not been fulfilled. In this context, "our fathers" would indeed mean the immediate ancestors of the scoffers. However, Bauckham points out that two major changes were made to the original apocalyptic source, which should not be surprising if one considers Peter's modifications of Jude's material. First – the narrator drops the possessive pronoun in the expression "our fathers", leaving only the noun. He thus wants to disassociate himself from the scoffers (the phrase "our fathers" could be understood as a reference to common roots) and to indicate that he means fathers in the Christian faith. Secondly – it explicitly states that the fathers died, whereas the apocalyptic source texts only suggest it.¹²⁰ If the fathers are indeed the generation of the apostles, then one can

116 E. Adams, "Where is the Promise of his Coming?", p. 113–114.

117 D. J. Moo, 2 Peter, Jude, p. 166–167 argues that both interpretations – the one referring to distant ancestors and the one referring to the previous generation – are possible, although he himself advocates the former.

118 R. Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, p. 290.

119 Ibid., p. 291–292.

120 Ibid., p. 291.

link the disappointment at the lack of the parousia and the accusation of the non-fulfilment of the promise to the statements of Jesus, who assured that “there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom” (Matt 16:28, 24:34, Mark 9:1, 13:30–31, Luke 9:27, 21:32–33, cf. John 21:22–23). Also, the apostle Paul in 1 Thess 4:13–18 expressed faith in the second coming of Christ while he is still alive and reassured the readers concerned about the fate of those who died before the parousia.¹²¹ This suggests that it is when the apostolic generation dies that the promises should be regarded as unfulfilled. Therefore, the mockery of the heretics would be based not only on the impression that the promise was not fulfilled, but above all on the fact that the promise itself pointed to a time of fulfilment, which had already passed.

As mentioned, inferences are sometimes drawn from the statement that “the fathers” are the first generation of Christians regarding the time 2 Peter was written. However, it is not clear from 2 Pet 3:4 how much time had passed since the death of the fathers. It is possible that the mockery occurred towards the end of the life of the first generation of Christ’s followers, when eschatological expectations soared, which could date the letter back to the end of the first century. As Bauckham notes, it was at the end of the first century that the hope of Christ’s second coming grew year by year,¹²² which was inversely proportional to the departure of the first generation of Christians. In these circumstances, every year of delay seemed a long time, and the mockery of the false teachers quite natural. However, at the turn of the second century. Hermas in *The Shepherd* describes a vision in which closely connected white stones symbolise the apostles and the first generation of bishops, teachers and deacons; “Some of them have fallen asleep, and some still remain alive. And they have always agreed with each other” (Vision 3:5), and in the second century the author of 2 *Clem.* 11:2, who almost literally quotes words from 1 *Clem.* 23:3, states: “For the prophetic word also declares, Wretched are those of a double mind, and who doubt in their heart, who say, All these things have we heard even in the times of our fathers; but though we have waited day by day, we have seen none of them [accomplished]”. This, in turn, could suggest that 2 Peter was written in the second century, although generally in the second century the question of the delayed parousia was no longer raised.¹²³

Another hypothesis seems more convincing: πατέρες denote ancestors in general. In the intertestamental and New Testament literature, such references to the “fathers” were regarded as equivalent to evocations of the past and the historical-religious heritage. 1 En 99:14 warns: “Woe to them who reject the measure and eternal

121 J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 356.

122 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 291.

123 *Ibid.*, p. 293.

heritage of their fathers”. PssSol 9:18 demonstrates the unchangeability of God’s covenant and evocatively relates it to the present: “Thou madest a covenant with our fathers concerning us” (see Matt 23:30.32, Luke 1:55, 6:23.26, 11:47, John 4:20, 6:31.49.58, Acts 3:13.25, 7:2.11.12.15.19.39.45.51–52, 13:17.32, 15:10, 26:6, 28:25, Rom 9:5, 1 Cor 10:1, Heb 1:1, 3:9). Josephus Flavius, too, refers to “observances by succession from their fathers (πατέρες), which are not written in the laws of Moses: and for that reason it is, that the Sadducees reject them” (*Ant.* XIII 10:6). Early Christian literature continues this understanding of “the fathers”. It associates this term primarily with the patriarchs and righteous men of the ST. The Epistle of Barnabas, applying a Christocentric hermeneutic, relates the promises given to the fathers by the prophets to Christ and transfers them to Christians: “The prophets, having obtained grace from Him, prophesied concerning Him. And He (since it behooved Him to appear in flesh), that He might abolish death, and reveal the resurrection from the dead, endured [what and as He did], in order that He might fulfil the promise made unto the fathers” (*Barn.* 5:7). In EpAp 27[38] Christ himself, interpreting his descent into the abyss, calls the prophets the fathers: “For to that end went I down unto the place of Lazarus, and preached unto the righteous [fathers] and the prophets, that they might come out of the rest which is below and come up into that which is above”. This brings the apostles peace about the fate of the departed fathers, i. e. the patriarchs and prophets, and joy: “Lord, thou hast given unto us the rest of life and hast given us <joy?> by wonders, unto the confirmation of faith: wilt thou now preach the same unto us, seeing that thou hast preached it unto the <righteous> [fathers] and the prophets?” (EpAp 28(39)). Even this simple comparison shows that in early Christian circles, from the NT writings onwards, the Jewish tradition of naming the patriarchs and prophets as the fathers was adopted to show the continuity of the heritage and the validity of the promises. It is not often that this term is applied to the first generation of Christians.¹²⁴ An exception, though not entirely certain, is the text in *2 Clem.* 19:4 (“rising up to life again with the fathers he will rejoice for ever without a grief”), in which the term “fathers” can denote deceased Christians, but it just as likely, if not more certain, refers to the patriarchs, prophets and righteous men of the OT.¹²⁵

However, it seems that the narrator of 2 Peter does not limit the concept of “fathers” to the patriarchs and prophets of Israel. He also includes the ancestors of all mankind,¹²⁶ to Adam considered the father of all humans. It is no coincidence that ST texts refer to humans in general as “sons of Adam” (LXX – Deut 32:8, Tob 8:6, Odes of Solomon 2:8, Sir 40:1, cf. Sir 49:16). This reference to Adam

124 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 972.

125 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 290.

126 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 205.

corresponds with the second element of the parallelism – the beginnings of creation. The stylisation of Old Testament prophecy is also not insignificant here; it ensures that the recipients of the letter recognise in the term πατέρες the sense it has in Old Testament contexts similar to Peter's.

The whole parallel formula ἀφ' ἧς γὰρ οἱ πατέρες ἐκοιμήθησαν – ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κτίσεως is thus intended to refer to the ancient past, even to the beginnings of the world. The second part of the construction leaves no doubt about this. A similar formula referring to "the beginning of creation" is used in Mark 10:6, 13:16, Rom 1:20 and *Barn.* 15:3. But this two-element phrase in 2 Pet 3:4b has not only a temporal meaning. It also suggests stagnation, a lack of dynamism, a lack of any progression. This is clearly indicated by the verbs ἐκοιμήθησαν "fell asleep" and διαμένει "remains, continues". One can see here a chiasmic polemic of the false teachers against Peter's claim in 2:3b. This confirms the earlier thesis that 3:4b sums up all of Peter's argumentation derived from the Old Testament, which the heretics failed to understand:

- A. The judgment "is not idle"
 - B. annihilation "is not slumbering"
 - B'. fathers "fell asleep"
- A' "all things have remained the same".

The verb κοιμάομαι is used here as a euphemistic term for death and/or burial. This was a common practice in Jewish tradition (cf. LXX 1 Kings 2:10, 11:21.43, 14:31, 15:8.24, 16:6.28, 22:40.51, 2 Kings 8:24, 10:35, 13:9.13, 14:16.29, 15:7.22.38, 16:20, 20:21, Isa 14:18, 43:17, Lam 2:21, Ezek 32:27.29.30, Job 21:13, Sir 46:19), so this euphemism can be considered an element of styling. The image of death as a dream became popular in the New Testament tradition (Matt 27:52, John 11:11–13, Acts 7:20, 13:36, 1 Cor 15:6.18.20.51, 1 Thess 4:13–15) and early Christianity (*1 Clem.* 44:2, *The Shepherd*: Vision 3:5, 3:11, Commandment 4:4, Similitude 9:15, 9:16).

The phrase πάντα οὕτως διαμένει ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κτίσεως has primarily a temporal meaning: since the act of creation of the world, i. e. since the beginning of creation, nothing changes, everything continues in the same way. This means that, in the view of the false teachers, God's only activity in relation to the world was the creation.¹²⁷ However, this is somehow overlaid by Epicurean philosophy as one of the sources of the teachings of the heretics.¹²⁸ This is indicated by the verb διαμένω 'remain, abide'

127 Otherwise A. Vögtle, *Das Neue Testament und die Zukunft des Kosmos*, Düsseldorf 1970, p. 132–133, who argues that the second part of the parallelism is an introduction to the polemical argumentation against the false teachers' claim in vv. 5–7, which begins with a reference to the origin story; after: R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 293.

128 *Ibid.*, p. 295; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 973.

in ind. praes., which suggests that since the world was created (ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως “from the beginning of creation”), it still remains in the same (οὕτως alike) form and shape. For Epicurus, in the Epistle to Herodotus cited by Diogenes Laertius (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers* X 39.77), states:

the sum total of things was always such as it is now, and such it will ever remain. For there is nothing into which it can change. For outside the sum of things there is nothing which could enter into it and bring about the change. [...] we are bound to believe that in the sky revolutions, solstices, eclipses, risings and settings, and the like, take place without the ministration or command, either now or in the future, of any being who at the same time enjoys perfect bliss along with immortality. For troubles and anxieties and feelings of anger and partiality do not accord with bliss, but always imply weakness and fear and dependence upon one’s neighbours.

This would confirm earlier suggestions that the teaching of the false teachers is an attempt to make Christianity a heresy, or one of the philosophical schools, and thus part of its paganization.¹²⁹ The narrator of 2 Peter, however, has no intention of debating his opponents on a philosophical level. On the contrary, he returns to the teaching of the prophets and apostles, which had already been contrasted with σεσοφισμένοι μύθοι “cleverly devised myths” (1:16) and πλαστοὶ λόγοι “deceptive words” (2:3). Since the author clearly passed his opinion in 2:19 against the paganization of Christianity and against putting it on a par with the philosophical schools, he no longer needed to remind the readers about this and could concentrate on explaining the prophetic message using an eschatological hermeneutic (3:5–7). This does not mean, however, that he completely abandoned the philosophical implications. Indeed, it may be noted that the arguments against the heretics, although based on Jewish tradition, are reminiscent of the views of Plato, which are particularly close to those of Peter.

2.10 D₃. Prophetic and apostolic teaching (2 Pet 3:5–7)

⁵For it hides/it escapes notice from them who wish [it]/deliberately ignore, that the heavens existed/were of old, and the earth out of water and by water [together with them] stood [and stands] through the word of God, ⁶By which the then world, deluged in water, was destroyed. ⁷But now the heavens and the earth by the same word [were] and are gathered together, preserved for fire for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

¹²⁹ See analysis of 2 Pet 2:19.

In arguing against the claims of heretics who accuse God of inaction and who see the world as unchanging, the narrator of 2 Peter draws primarily on prophetic teaching. He shows how it should be construed in the light of the eschatological hermeneutic. He himself, as stated, had already applied it more discreetly in 2:4–8, allowing his audience to see in the events a commentary on 2:3b about a judgment that is not idle and a doom that is not slumbering, and thus an anticipation of eschatological judgment. The narrator used his methodology based on the conviction that prophecy requires a twofold interpretation: an internal or homodiegetic prophecy, and an external heterodiegetic one (cf. 2 Pet 1:20–21).¹³⁰ Whereas in 2:4–8 the former was more noticeable, focusing on the protagonists of the stories of the Flood and Sodom and Gomorrah, who correctly or incorrectly interpreted God's warnings and prophecies of judgement, now the latter is in the foreground, allowing us to see in the events of the past a typological foreshadowing of the eschatological future.

This is compounded by the discrediting of false teachers in two ways. First, the narrator of 2 Peter shows that the thinking of the heretics is tainted because it is based on incomplete assumptions. Watson and Callan call this thinking an enthymeme.¹³¹ It turns out the false teaching is not supported by neither Scripture nor the Jewish tradition, and consequently it significantly limits the prophetic message. Furthermore, the arguments of the false teachers can by no means be derived from Greek philosophy, or at least from the views close to Peter: Platonism and Stoicism. Thus, the ambition to paganise Christianity and make it one of the philosophical schools, i. e. a heresy, is ridiculed (cf. 2 Pet 2:1).

The axis of the whole passage 2 Pet 2:5–7 is undoubtedly verse 6, which links Peter's ktiseological reflection with eschatology. It also best illustrates and explains Peter's typology and hermeneutics:

A. ktiseology: the heavens, (water) and earth were created by the word of God (verse 5b);

B. by the word of God the world was destroyed with a flood (verse 6);

A' eschatology: heaven and earth are preserved for the day of judgement, when they will be destroyed by the word of God with fire (verse 7).

Furthermore, verse 6 becomes the common element of two parallelisms. The first – antithetical parallelism based on the chiasm – is formed with verse 5:

¹³⁰ See analysis of 2 Pet 1:20–21.

¹³¹ D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 205–206.

- a. “the heavens existed/were of old, and the earth out of water and by water [together with them] stood [and stands]” (creation);
 - b. “through the word of God”;
 - b’. “by the word of God”;
- a’. “the world, deluged by water, was destroyed” (destruction).

The second parallelism is formed with verse 7. It is based on an analogy and gradation of the causes, magnitude and consequences of the cosmic catastrophe that occurred in the past (“then”) and the one that is “now” approaching:

- a. “the then world, deluged by water, was destroyed”;
- b. “now the heavens and the earth by the same word [were] and are gathered together, preserved for fire for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men”.

The fundamental difference that this parallelism exposes is the magnitude of the catastrophe. During the Flood, the material world was destroyed; the final judgment and accompanying destruction will also include the spiritual world.

The reminder of the prophetic teaching in verse 3:5a begins the narrator of 2 Peter rather uncharacteristically – pointing out to the heretics that their accusations formulated in 3:3–4 are based not on sound grounds, but on wishful thinking, a desire for things to be as they teach. The translation of the whole of verse 5a *λανθάνει γὰρ αὐτοὺς τοῦτο θέλοντας* may cause some difficulty because of the form of the verb *λανθάνω* – 3 sg. ind. praes. act. (*λανθάνει*) ‘ignores’, ‘hides’, ‘forgets’, ‘overlooks’, ‘overlooks’ (cf. Luke 8:47, Acts 26:26, Heb 13:2). It is impossible to clearly identify the subject here.¹³² For grammatical reasons, only the pronoun *τοῦτο* fits. A literal translation of the text would then read: “For it hides/it escapes notice from them wishing”, which should be understood as “this hides/is hidden from their will/want/desire”. The pronoun *τοῦτο* would refer to the true prophetic teaching on the creation and changeability of the world, which will be cited in verse 5b, and the participle *θέλοντες* to verse 4b, where a heretical cosmological conception is presented, based only on the will of false teachers wanting God not to intervene in the history of the world and not to think of judgment on the world. Most translators, however, translate the phrase *λανθάνει γὰρ αὐτοὺς τοῦτο θέλοντας* as if the false teachers are the subject of verse 5a and the verb *λανθάνω*, while the pronoun *τοῦτο* is interpreted as a direct complement.¹³³ While such a translation accentuates the

132 D. J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 286 even argues that this is a construction without the subject.

133 “But they deliberately forget that” (NIV); “For this they willingly are ignorant of” (KJV); “For they deliberately overlook this fact” (ESV); “For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that” (NASV).

ignorance of the heretics, it does not sufficiently emphasise their will, which seems of great importance for Peter. The participle *θέλοντες* refers to 2 Pet 1:20–21, where true and false prophecies are described. The true prophecy does not result from the will of man *θελήματι ἀνθρώπου* and bears no trace of the prophet's interference with God's word. Thus, a cosmology created by the will of heretics who weaken the prophetic teaching and consequently the word of God cannot be inspired and therefore true and reliable. Equally unreliable are their claims against eschatology. The will of the false teachers mentioned in 3:5a fits well with the theological and inspirational understanding of the term *ἐπιθυμία* in 3:3. It confirms that heretics in their reinterpretation of Christianity follow their own desires *κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν πορευόμενοι*.¹³⁴

Treating the pronoun *τοῦτο* as the subject of 3:5a corresponds with the apocalyptic style. Although the verbs used here are in the present tense, they should be read as referring to the description of the future initiated in 3:3.¹³⁵

In 3:5b the correct prophetic teaching is given. There is a clear reference to 3:4b and the immutability of all things *ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κτίσεως* “from the beginning of creation”.¹³⁶ From creation, then, Peter begins his confrontational presentation. He states that *οὐρανοὶ ἦσαν ἔκπαλαι* “the heavens existed/were of old”. As G.L. Green notes,¹³⁷ the verb *ἦσαν* implies the act of creating the heavens (cf. John 17:5). It is accompanied with a rare adverb *ἔκπαλαι*, which was already used in 2:3b. At that time it was translated in the context of a judgment that had been made “of old” or was taking a long time to be fulfilled. Now *ἔκπαλαι* can be translated as “of old”: “the heavens existed/were of old”. This lexical reference to 2:3b does not seem accidental. As mentioned repeatedly, Peter's aim is to prove the thesis that “judgment is not idle and the destruction is not slumbering”. Just as the heavens existed “of old”, the judgment was also made “of old/long ago”, even before the creation of the earth, on those who question the eschatology present in God's plans – paradoxically – as early as the creation of the world. The narrator thus returns to the characteristic apocalyptic connection between protology and ktiseology and eschatology that was present in 2:3b.

What is notable in Peter's presentation is the separation of the account about the heavens, which “existed of old”, from the description of the creation of the earth. Perhaps this is a clue to treat the heavens more broadly than simply as a reference to the firmament or the statement in Gen 1:1: *ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν*

134 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:3.

135 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 296, favouring a translation that makes the false teachers the subject of 5a, the author argues that the narrator abandons the previous prophetic convention and reverts to a description of his contemporary heretics.

136 Ibid.

137 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 976–977.

καὶ τὴν γῆν “In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth”.¹³⁸ Of course, biblical literature often uses such “separating” phraseology to mean simply the creation of the world (Ps 33[32]:6–8, 136[135]:5–6; in reverse order the earth and heavens appear in Prov 8:23–39); early Christian writers do likewise: “Lo, the God of powers, who by His invisible strong power and great wisdom has created the world, and by His glorious counsel has surrounded His creation with beauty, and by His strong word has fixed the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth upon the waters” (*The Shepherd*, Vision 1:3). However, if one considers the entirety of Peter’s present polemic based on the citation of the same examples as in 2:4–8, one can assume that the Jewish apocalyptic tradition of the creation of the heavens and the angels who inhabit them on the first day of creation, and thus before the earth – i. e. the dry land – emerged from the waters on the third day (cf. Jub 2:2–6), is behind this separation. Thus, the narrator of 2 Peter would be evoking the first of the examples in 2:4–8 – the angels, which included those who later sinned (2:4). He also refers to it in 3:7.

The image of the earth γῆ which ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι’ ὕδατος συνεστῶσα τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγῳ “out of water and by water [together with them] stood [and stands] through the word of God” is a preparation for explaining the eschatological significance of the second example from chapter 2: the Flood. After describing the first day of creation, the narrator of 2 Peter goes straight to the tradition concerning the third day. He uses, as can be seen, an elliptical narrative;¹³⁹ for he does not speak explicitly of the events of day two. However, they can be reconstructed on the basis of biblical texts (e. g. Gen 1:6–8) and apocalyptic tradition (e. g. Jub 2:4). Peter alludes to the same sources for his sparing but sufficiently figurative references to the third day, which take the form of two prepositional phrases: ἐξ ὕδατος and δι’ ὕδατος.

The first expression is quite obvious: ἐξ ὕδατος evokes that moment when the earth – dry land – emerges from the waters separated on the second day from the lower waters on the third day. The biblical text – Gen 1:9–10 – is rather laconic, as is 4 Ezra 6:42: “On the third day thou didst command the waters to be gathered together in the seventh part of the earth; six parts thou didst dry up and keep so that some of them might be planted and cultivated and be of service before thee”.

138 2 Pet 33:5b is considered a general reference to Gen 1:1 by, among others, J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 358–359; D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 206; D.J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 169; R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 297; Bauckham believes that this clause contains no suggestion that the heavens were created before the earth, but is a reminder of the act of creating the heavens and the earth. To support it, he cites Middle Eastern mythology in which the whole world – heaven and earth – emerged from the primordial ocean (cf. Gen 1:2.6–7).

139 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 979.

More details that might be helpful for interpreting the phrase δι' ὕδατος are given in Jub 2:5–7:

And on the third day He commanded the waters to pass from off the face of the whole earth into one place, and the dry land to appear. And the waters did so as He commanded them, and they retired from off the face of the earth into one place outside of this firmament, and the dry land appeared. And on that day He created for them all the seas according to their separate gathering-places, and all the rivers, and the gatherings of the waters in the mountains and on all the earth, and all the lakes, and all the dew of the earth, and the seed which is sown, and all sprouting things, and fruit-bearing trees, and trees of the wood, and the garden of Eden, in Eden and all plants after their kind.

The second expression δι' ὕδατος “by/through water”, “due/thanks to water” is definitely more difficult to explain. There are sometimes attempts to interpret the preposition διὰ as in indication of a location “in the midst of the water” or “through/across the water”, which matches the image of creation, although in Gen 1:6 the expression ἐν μέσῳ¹⁴⁰ appears in a similar context. One can see here a comitative meaning “together with water”, which on the one hand corresponds with the verb συνίστημι ‘to retain, set together’;¹⁴¹ on the other hand, the presence of two different prepositions – διὰ and σύν – when expressing the same thought is at least questionable. Finally, it is possible to understand the expression δι' ὕδατος in a causative-instrumental way “due/thanks to water”. The latter variant, which already appears in patristic commentaries, e. g. Hilary of Arles¹⁴² and Bede the Venerable,¹⁴³ has the most supporters, who, however, disagree on further details. Does the phrase “due/thanks to water” indicate the rain by which the earth is irrigated and thus life is sustained on it? Or does “due/thanks to water” refer to that moment when the waters, at God’s command, gathered in designated places and thus the earth was able to emerge? Or does the phrase “due/thanks to water” describe the way in which the earth now exists, floating on water? The first version is the least likely. Versions two and three allude to different renditions of the Jewish ktiseological

140 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 297.

141 D. J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 286.

142 *Treaties on the Seven Catholic Epistles*: „All creation took its origin from water. It was hardened to become earth, or rose up to become heaven”; *Ojcowie Kościoła komentują Biblię*, p. 144. In a similar vein, M. Luther put it: “the heaven was made from the water, and there was water above and beneath, but the earth is made and stands in the water [...]. Therefore if God did not sustain it, it must all soon fall down and sink into the water”; *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude Preached and Explained by Martin Luther III* (V.5, 6).

143 “Everything is permeated by water, as is the body of living beings – by the blood flowing in it. It is difficult to imagine otherwise”; *Ojcowie Kościoła komentują Biblię*, p. 144.

tradition. Indeed, it can be argued that the earth was created and exists because of the waters that were gathered by God first in one place, as in Gen 1:9–10, and then the seas, lakes and soil-irrigating rivers and streams etc.¹⁴⁴ were created from them, according to the Book of Jubilees. But it can also be argued that the earth floats on the surface of the sea, as Ps 24[23]:2, 136[135]:6 and 2 En 47:5 state: “The Lord has placed the foundations in the unknown, and has spread forth heavens visible and invisible; he fixed the earth on the waters”.

It is clear from the above summary that the whole expression ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι’ ὕδατος can be interpreted in term of chronology or as an explanation.¹⁴⁵ In the first case, the idea would be to mark two moments: the emergence of dry land from water (ἐξ ὕδατος) and the preservation of land by water (δι’ ὕδατος). In the second case, if καὶ is interpreted as an exegetical conjunction (καὶ *explicativum*), the whole expression means “the earth from water”, i. e. it came into being through water, and refers to the single moment described in Gen 1:9 (and in related verses).

Verse 5 ends with the concluding formula συνεστῶσα τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγῳ ‘to set together with the word of God’. Although formally part. perf. act. συνεστῶσα refers to “the earth”, it actually refers to both or even three elements: heaven and earth or heaven, water and earth. The use of the non-transitive verb συνίστημι ‘to stand with someone’, ‘to stand together’, ‘to exist together’ in a ktiseological context is not uncommon, especially in intertestamental literature. It appears, for example, in 1 En 101:6–7: “Are not the entire sea and all its waters, and all its movements, the work of the Most High, and has He not set limits to its doings, and confined it throughout by the sand?” The perfective form in 2 Pet 3:5b, however, implies that the narrator is not simply stating the fact that in the past the heavens, waters and earth were set together, but that they still stand together. However, it is not a matter of setting these elements up, leaving them unattended and allowing them to continue as they were set up. On the contrary, it is about showing that their continuance depends on the word of God, which does not at all mean immutability, as verse 6 argues.

Of key importance here is the expression τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγῳ, which is emphasised by its designated final position. The dative τῷ λόγῳ is to be interpreted simultaneously as *dativus causae* indicating the word of God as the cause of the existence of heaven, water and earth, and as *instrumentalis* indicating the instrument through

144 Gen 1:9–10 is also referred to by M. Luther: “For God spoke a word of power when he said, ‘let the waters under the heavens gather themselves into a separate place, that the dry land may be seen;’ that is, let the water put itself aside and give room for the earth to come forth, whereon man might dwell, – yet naturally the waters should spread themselves over the earth. Therefore this is, at the present day, one of the greatest miracles that God works”; *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude Preached and Explained by Martin Luther III* (V.5, 6).

145 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 170.

which the world came into being and by which it exists. This means that, contrary to the claim of the false teachers, the continuance of the world and its stability is not the result of God's inaction. On the contrary, His active power and interest in the world is manifested, on the one hand, in the preservation of the world,¹⁴⁶ on the other hand, in the possibility of its destruction (verse 6 and 7).

The motif of the creation and maintenance of heaven and earth by God's word appears very often in Jewish tradition, both in biblical literature (e. g. Gen 1:1–30, Ps 33[32]:6–9, 148:5–6, Wis 9:1) and in intertestamental apocalyptic literature (4 Ezra 6:38.43: “O Lord, thou didst speak at the beginning of creation, and didst say on the first day, ‘Let heaven and earth be made,’ and thy word accomplished the work. [...] For thy word went forth, and at once the work was done”); later also in Christian tradition and New Testament writings (John 1:1–3, Heb 1:3). The idea of God sustaining by his word and/or will the existence of the world resounds particularly strongly in the Sapiential literature. Sir 43:5–26.33 lists the various elements of creation, praises their beauty and, like a refrain, repeats in various variations that they were all created and function by the word and will of God. Attention is particularly drawn to Sir 43:26b, where a formula almost identical to 2 Pet 3:5b appears: καὶ ἐν λόγῳ αὐτοῦ σύγκειται τὰ πάντα “and at his bidding accomplishes [all]”.

Behind the idea that God sustains the existence of the world is the conviction that God's constant care extends also to man (cf. 2 Pet 3:9.14). This is expressed in a way close to Peter by Philo of Alexandria, who described in *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* [*Who is Heir of Divine Things*] XII 58 the persistence of the human race which, like all creation, could not exist and function without God's providence: “the body, which is filled with blood, being of itself easily dissolved and dead, has its existence through, and is kept alive by, the providence of God, who holds his arm and shield of defence over it, while our race cannot, by any resources of its own, exist in a state of firmness and safety”. In addition to the Jewish sapiential tradition, the influence of the views of Plato and the Stoics can be seen here.

If Peter's polemic against the false teachers is transferred to the philosophical plane, it can be seen that his argumentation also converges with some of Plato's views. This convergence between Christian ktiseological and providential concepts and Platonism was also noted by Justin Martyr: “For while we say that all things have been produced and arranged into a world by God, we shall seem to utter the doctrine of Plato” (*The First Apology* 20). It is difficult to say unequivocally whether this coincidence is accidental or intentional. Although the explanation is primarily based on the teaching of the prophets and Jewish tradition, the narrator of 2 Peter is well aware of these similarities and uses them as a polemical and vituperative

146 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 978.

element designed to ridicule and discredit the heretics. The false teachers, although they would like to transform Christianity into one of the philosophical schools, ignore the most popular currents of Greek philosophy, those close to Peter and which Peter – according to his strategy – subjects to Christianisation.

It is noteworthy that Peter's description of heretics and their views resembles the characterisation of blasphemers in Plato's *Laws*. Blasphemy can be committed by a person who either "thought that there were no Gods, or that they did not care about men, or that they were easily appeased by sacrifices and prayers" (*Laws X*). The cause of the ungodliness of the blasphemers is "they rush into impiety only from a love of sensual pleasure. [...] A very grievous sort of ignorance which is imagined to be the greatest wisdom" (*Laws X*) when in fact they do not understand correctly, but rely on erroneous reasoning. Further, Plato argues against the blasphemers who do not believe that the gods care about humans that the world is not stagnant and unchanging, but is in constant motion. This movement is, of course, purposeful and orderly. And this fact alone is to prove that the world must be directed by spiritual beings, more perfect than man, that is gods, who watch over it and govern it.¹⁴⁷ These perfect gods also take care of human affairs. He who thinks otherwise, who acknowledges that the gods exist but denies that they care for human affairs, thinks that the gods exist but despise human affairs and do not care for them altogether, must be protected, lest this view should bring upon him a heavier impiety and that the threatening danger may be averted. Plato's and Peter's strategies are very similar here. For protection consists in explaining and convincing the authors of this blasphemous view, and those who believed them, that the gods care about human affairs, since they care about minor things perhaps even more than about great things. Since the gods possess the fullness of all perfection and virtue it is in their nature to exercise care over the world. If the gods did not take care of the world and humans, they would prove to be careless, lazy and indolent, and these are vices that are not befitting of the gods. Rather, the gods should be seen as bearers of virtue, or in this case, activity; for virtue cannot mean any negligence in action.¹⁴⁸ Plato insists that it should not be said of a god that he has a disposition which he himself hates, and one should not in any way allow similar things to be told about him. In other words, if the gods did not exercise providence, they could not be called gods, because there would be no order in the world to reveal their existence and nature to man.¹⁴⁹

Similar views were propounded by the Stoics. According to them, God is "a living being, immortal, rational, perfect or intelligent in happiness, admitting nothing

147 T. Stępień, *Opatrzność Boża w myśli filozofów. O możliwości udowodnienia istnienia Opatrzności z porządku świata*, "Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne" 19 (2006), p. 93.

148 Ibid., p. 94.

149 Ibid.

evil [into him], taking providential care of the world and all that therein is”, reports Diogenes Laertius in the *Lives and Eminent Philosophers* VII:1, dedicated to the Stoics (Zeno).

Verse 6, central to the passage 3:5–7, refers not only to the content of verse 5, but also its formal and rhetorical aspect through the introductory phrase δι’ ὧν. The rhetorical devices – antithetical parallelism and chiasmic construction – have already been discussed. This passage clarifies why the word of God is mentioned at the very end of the explanation about God’s creative and sustaining function in the world. For the narrator, after a ktiseological reflection and before eschatological issues in verse 7, makes use of the typological account of the Flood, which reveals the destructive potential of God’s word. He alludes to the diluvial motif of 2:5, although he abandons the reinterpretation of this story on an intradiegetic level and remains only with an external interpretation subordinated to an eschatological hermeneutic. However, the linking of 2 Pet 2:5 and 3:6 takes place not only at the motivic level, but also at the lexical level, which facilitates the understanding of the narrator’s interpretative strategy:

2 Pet 2:5	2 Pet 3:6
Καὶ ἀρχαίου κόσμου οὐκ ἐφείσατο κατακλυσμὸν κόσμῳ ἀσεβῶν ἐπάξας	δι’ ὧν ὁ τότε κόσμος ὑδατι κατακλυσθεὶς ἀπώλετο
If of the ancient world was not spared, flood to the world of the ungodly having brought	By/through which the then world, deluged/flooded with water, was destroyed

In 2:5 the earth destroyed by the Flood is called ἀρχαῖος κόσμος “the ancient/old world” and κόσμος ἀσεβῶν “the world of the ungodly”. In 3:6 the noun κόσμος has no attributes, but the proverbial pronoun τότε “then” not only clearly indicates the diluvial narrative used earlier, but also allows the attributes from 2:5¹⁵⁰ to be assigned to the noun κόσμος. The adjective ἀρχαῖος would indicate in this context that it is precisely the world created “in the beginning” ἐν ἀρχῇ, the noun ἀσεβῶν would indicate the cause of the destruction – the conduct of the ungodly. This

150 A slightly different interpretation of this pronoun is given by G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 981–982; he argues that τότε here has an adjectival meaning and denotes “at that time”.

transposition renders pointless the dispute mentioned by R. Bauckham,¹⁵¹ whether in 2 Pet 3:6 the narrator has the whole material world in mind, as the source text of Gen 7:21.23 would suggest, or only the people.¹⁵²

The process of destruction itself is described similarly in both Peter's accounts. In 2 Pet 2:5 three terms are used: οὐκ ἐφείσατο "not spared", ἐπάξας "having brought", κατακλυσμός "flood"; in 2 Pet 3:6 also three: ὕδατι "by water", κατακλυσθεῖς "sunk/flooded", ἀπώλετο "was destroyed". In both cases the agent is God; in 2:5, however, this is expressed explicitly: "God (the subject remains the same as in 2:4) did not spare, having brought the flood"; in 3:6 the agent is implicit in passivum theologicum of the verbs κατακλυσθεῖς, ἀπώλετο and in the key expression here δι' ὃν "by which" referring to "the word of God". The use of aorist emphasises that the destruction was complete, but also a unique event. In the history of the world, indeed, the Flood was not repeated, but here the point is rather to indicate that the cosmic catastrophe in eschatological times, with all the analogies inherent in the typology, will nevertheless have a different character, a different course and a different scope beyond the material world. Nevertheless, it will also be a complete destruction and a unique event.

The manner of destruction in 3:6 is redundantly described as "flooding with water". But it seems that the addition of the seemingly redundant dat. instrumentalis ὕδατι is not a stylistic awkwardness, but, on the one hand, a reference to 3:5 and the water from and through which the earth was formed, and, on the other, a contrast with the destruction by fire described in the next verse.

It is worth noting here the verb κατακλύζω, which is a New Testament *hapax legomenon*.¹⁵³ However, it occurs in the LXX, e. g. in Wis 10:4, and thus in the same text referred to by Peter in his first diluvial narrative, describing Noah as "a preacher of righteousness".¹⁵⁴

The verb ἀπόλλυμι, meaning 'destruction', 'doom' and 'death', plays a significant role in 3:6. In the intertestamental and New Testament literature (1 Cor 1:18, 2 Cor 2:15, 4:3, 2 Thess 2:10, John 3:16, 10:28, 17:12, cf. John 4:12) it occurs most often in an eschatological context, as does the noun ἀπώλεια. It is of particular importance in Jude 5, where it is juxtaposed as an antonym to the verb σώζω and used in the anagogical typology.¹⁵⁵ In 2 Pet 3:6, it is no accident that it is assigned a final position. Firstly, so as to give further prominence to its eschatological

151 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 298.

152 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 171 draws attention to the narrator's transition from "heaven and earth" to "cosmos". He considers these to be significant; for "heaven and earth" would refer to everything created, "cosmos" only to humans.

153 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 299.

154 See analysis of 2 Pet 2:5b.

155 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 127, 129.

significance, which is needed for a proper interpretation of the diluvian narrative according to Peter's hermeneutic. This is facilitated by the reference to 2 Pet 2:1.3, 3:16, where the noun ἀλώλεια occurs to describe the final fate of the false teachers. Secondly, the juxtaposition with the expression τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγῳ having the same final position in verse 5 and with the expression δι' ὃν in its primary position in verse 6 exposes the main theological thought of 3:5–6: "the word of God", which has the power to create, also has the power to destroy the world. In NA28, this thought is already exposed in the text taken as normative through the expression δι' ὃν with the relative pronoun in acc. sg., referring explicitly to "the word of God" in verse 5. In previous editions (NA26 and NA27), the version δι' ᾧν with the pronoun in gen. pl. based, among others, on P⁷² κ A B C Ψ 048. 33. 81. 307. 1611. 1735. 1739 (the version with acc. sg. appears in the critical apparatus).¹⁵⁶

The idea of God's word that creates and destroys is taken from the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, which is also mentioned in *1 Clem.* 27:4¹⁵⁷: "By the word of His might He established all things, and by His word He can overthrow them". In 1 En 101:6–7, the description of the work of creation is followed by a description of the work of destruction, and the contrast between the one and the other is deepened by reference to the creation of the seas and the land, as in 2 Pet 3:5, and to destruction by drought: "Are not the entire sea and all its waters, and all its movements, the work of the Most High, and has He not set limits to its doings, and confined it throughout by the sand? And at His reproof it is afraid and dries up, and all its fish die and all that is in it".

The integration of ktiseological themes with eschatology is for the Jewish apocalyptic tradition just as characteristic as combining the motif of creation and destruction. The Book of Jubilees refers several times in different ways to the beginning and the end of the world. "And do thou write down for thyself all these words which I declare unto thee on this mountain, the first and the last, which shall come to pass in all the divisions of the days in the law and in the testimony and in the weeks and the jubilees unto eternity" (Jub 1:25) – God commands Moses. He directs a similar command to the angel of presence: "Write for Moses from the beginning of creation till My sanctuary has been built among them for all eternity. And the Lord will appear to the eyes of all, and all shall know that I am the God of Israel and the Father of all the children of Jacob, and King on Mount Zion for all eternity" (Jub 1:26–27). In 4 Ezra 6:6 God declares: "they were made through me and not through another, just as the end shall come through me and not through another". If one superimposes the ktiseological-eschatological and creation-destructive themes,

156 In most commentaries based on NA27 and earlier, there is a discussion about how to understand the plural form in the expression δι' ᾧν. The adoption of the version δι' ὃν renders this discussion pointless.

157 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 299.

it becomes clear that in the apocalyptic tradition the Flood became an anticipation of the destruction and at the same time the purification of the world in the end times. This is particularly clear in 1 En 9–11, where the components characteristic of eschatological descriptions are embedded within the framework of the diluvial narrative: the end, judgment, punishment, fire, annihilation, the periodisation of history, references to eternity, and purification and new creation.¹⁵⁸ The punishment for ungodliness involves not only human beings, who are treated marginally, but above all the angels responsible for the evil, and the executors of the punishment are the angels faithful to God, headed by Michael, Raphael and Gabriel.

	1 En 9–11
The framework of the Flood narrative	9:6–9 – the sin of angels, the appearance of giants on earth and the reign of wickedness in the world (cf. Gen 6:2.4–7.11–12); 10:1–3 – warning Noah (cf. Gen 6:8.13, 7:1); 10:22 – God’s promise: “I will never again send (them) upon it from generation to generation and for ever” (cf. Gen 8:21, 9:11);
End	10:2: “reveal to him that the end is approaching”;
Judgement	10:6: “And on the day of the great judgement” 10:12: “bind them [...] in the valleys of the earth, till the day of their judgement and of their consummation”;
Annihilation/destruction	10:2–3: “a deluge is about to come upon the whole earth, and will destroy all that is on it”; 10:14: “[Semjaza] shall be condemned and destroyed [...] with them”; 10:15: “And destroy all the spirits of the reprobate and the children of the Watchers”; 10:16: “destroy all wrong from the face of the earth”;
References to eternity	10:5: “let them abide there for ever!”; 10:12: “till the day of their judgement and of their consummation”; 10:13–14: “they shall be led off to [...] the prison in which they shall be confined for ever”;
Fire	10:6: “And on the day of the great judgement he shall be cast into the fire”; 10:13–14: “In those days they shall be led off to the abyss of fire: and to the torment”;
Periodisation of history	10:12: “bind them fast for seventy generations”; 10:14–15: “[they will be] bound together with them to the end of all generations”; 10:22: “I will never again send [flood] upon it from generation to generation and for ever”;

158 E. Zajac, *Potop w tradycji biblijnej oraz w literaturze judaizmu okresu Drugiej Świątyni*, Lublin 2007, p. 131.

	1 En 9–11
Cleaning	10:20: “cleanse thou the earth from all oppression, and from all unrighteousness, and from all sin, and from all godlessness: and all the uncleanness”; 10:22: “the earth shall be cleansed from all defilement, and from all sin, and from all punishment, and from all torment”;
New creation	10:16–19: “the works of righteousness and truth shall be planted in truth and joy for evermore. And then shall all the righteous escape [...]. And then shall the whole earth be tilled in righteousness, and shall all be planted with trees and be full of blessing”; 10:21: “all the children of men shall become righteous”; 11:2: “truth and peace shall be associated together throughout all the days of the world”.

From similar elements, the narrator of 2 Peter builds his eschatological hermeneutic. Now he no longer makes the audience guess what it consists in. Using the teachings of the false teachers, he demonstrates the role of the word of God in the history of the world: the world created by the word of God at the beginning of history will be destroyed by the word in the end times. He bases the certainty of this claim on the fact that the world has already been destroyed once by God’s will through the Flood. In other words – since the world has already been destroyed once by God’s word, it must be expected that in the end times during the judgment His word will play a similar role.¹⁵⁹ In verse 7 he adds further elements: the periodisation of history, fire, judgment, purification.¹⁶⁰ In the final judgment, God will no longer use the destructive power of water, but, as in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, He will use fire to bring destruction to the wicked and cleansing to the righteous, so that a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness reigns (3:13), can later appear (by God’s word).

Verse 7, as mentioned, with the previous verse forms a climactic parallelism that explains the relationship between the first and final destruction of creation:

The first element: by the word of God the first creation was destroyed (verse 6).

The second element: by the word of God the present creation is preserved for judgment and will be destroyed in the end times (verse 7).

Whereas the first destruction by water had a global dimension, the second destruction – by fire – will be cosmic; encompassing not only the material world but also the spiritual world. It is not surprising, therefore, that in 2 Pet 3:7 there are clear lexical references to 2 Pet 2:4. The suggestion that in 2 Pet 3:5 the creation of the

159 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 297,299.

160 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:7.

heavens and the earth is separated to mark the existence of spiritual beings who will also be subject to the final judgement is also confirmed.

Although the anticipatory nature of the Flood was emphasised earlier, the narrator explains that the end of the present world will not be like that of Noah's time. Rather, it will resemble the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah. He also incorporates into his typology the narrative of Gen 19:23–29 in 2 Pet 2:6–8. Of course, he is not original in this; he draws on the Jewish tradition of Second Temple times, which treated the story of Sodom and Gomorrah paradigmatically.¹⁶¹ As with the Diluvian narrative, here too it ignores internal interpretation and focuses on external interpretation – an eschatological hermeneutic. However, it must be acknowledged that there are, at first glance, far fewer direct allusions to the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative here than in the case of the references to the Flood. In fact, the only links are the motif of incineration (τεφρώω) and fire (πῦρ), punishment (κατακρίνω) and judgment (κρίσις), and the ungodly (ἄσεβεῖς).¹⁶²

As has been shown, the motif of destruction by water and by fire appears in Jewish apocalyptic writings, especially those of the intertestamental period. However, it should be noted that in writings of a different nature, even of a prophetic nature, it is not very frequent (actually only Ezek 38:22 can be mentioned). In 1 En 52:6–7.9, destruction by fire and water appears as an element of the messianic times, which the narrator of 2 Peter reinterprets in relation to Jesus and his parousia: “And these mountains which thine eyes have seen [...], All these shall be in the presence of the Elect One As wax [...]. And it shall come to pass in those days that none shall be saved [...], And none be able to escape. [...] When the Elect One shall appear before the face of the Lord of Spirits”. This combination can also be found in the Life of Adam and Eve 49.3¹⁶³ from the end of the first century, where the dying Eve announces to her children that the first destruction of the world by water and the second destruction by fire will be caused by the disobedience of humans initiated by their first parents. In doing so, she quotes the words of the archangel Michael: “On account of your transgression, Our Lord will bring upon your race the anger of his judgement, first by water, the second time by fire; by these two, will the Lord judge the whole human race”. In the Jewish Hellenistic writers, one can see both the influence of apocalypticism, e. g. in Flavius, who presents the prophecy of Adam: “Adam's prediction that the world was to be destroyed at one time by the force of fire, and at another time by the violence and quantity of water” (*Ant.* I 2:3), as well as Platonic philosophy. Plato, for example, in the dialogue *Timaeus*, mentions water

161 See analysis of 2 Pet 2:7.

162 See R.P. Juza, *Echoes of Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of the Lord: Intertextuality and Tradition in 2 Peter 3:7–13*, “Bulletin for Biblical Research” 24 (2014), no. 2, p. 231.

163 The Greek version of the apocryphal is entitled *The Apocalypse of Moses*; the Latin version is entitled *The Life of Adam and Eve*; the Armenian text, *The Atonement of Adam*.

and fire as instruments of the cyclical destruction of the world: “There have been, and will be again, many destructions of mankind arising out of many causes; the greatest have been brought about by the agencies of fire and water, and other lesser ones by innumerable other causes”. This thought is repeated by Philo in *De vita Moïis*. II X:53, when he describes

crafty wickedness, and all others kinds of vice, not through compulsion, but of their own spontaneous free will [...], [these people] are awaiting, not any ordinary punishments, but new and extraordinary ones, which that constant assessor of God, justice, who detests wickedness, invents and inflicts terribly upon them, turning against them the most powerful elements of the universe, water and fire, so that at appointed times some are destroyed by deluges, others are burnt with fire.

Before judgement and final annihilation occur, οἱ δὲ νῦν οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ τεθησαυρισμένοι “But now the heavens and the earth by the same word are gathered together”. As can be seen, the theme of the word of God and its impact on preserving the present world is repeated. In verse 5, the period referred to covered the time from creation to the Flood; in verse 7 it is a description of the present which is reinforced by the adverb νῦν “now”. The present will end with the coming of judgement. Here, the narrator employed a periodisation of history typical of Jewish apocalyptic¹⁶⁴: the first period of the history of the world is from creation to the Flood (3:5–6); the second period is from the postdiluvian rebirth of the earth to the final judgement (3:7.10–12); the third period is the post-eschatological rebirth of the whole creation (3:13). These different periods are separated by great cosmic catastrophes: period one ended with the Flood; period two, the present period, will end with the sending of fire (3:7.12). Such a periodisation, together with a diluvial typology similar to that in 2 Peter, appears for example in SibOr 7:11–15: “Noah sole fugitive from all men came. Earth shall float, hills float, and even sky shall float, Everything shall be water and all things [s]hall be destroyed by waters. And the winds [s]hall stand still and a second age shall be” (δεύτερος αἰών). Similarly, the history of humanity is divided by Philo in *De vita Moïis*. II XII:65:

[those who were saved from the Flood] became also the founders of a new generation, and the chiefs of a second period of the world, [...] man having received the supremacy over all earthly creatures whatsoever, being a kind of copy of the powers of God, a visible image of his invisible nature, a created image of an uncreated and immortal Original.

164 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 299; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 984.

This periodisation is also adopted by early Christianity: “Noah, being found faithful, preached regeneration to the world through his ministry”, writes Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (*1 Clem.* 9). Justin Martyr, in *The Second Apology* VII, almost as much as Peter presents the analogies between the different periods in the history of the world, including the world of angels:

Wherefore God delays causing the confusion and destruction of the whole world, by which the wicked angels and demons and men shall cease to exist, because of the seed of the Christians, who know that they are the cause of preservation in nature. Since, if it were not so, it would not have been possible for you to do these things, and to be impelled by evil spirits; but the fire of judgment would descend and utterly dissolve all things, even as formerly the flood left no one but him only with his family who is by us called Noah, [...] from whom again such vast numbers have sprung, some of them evil and others good. For so we say that there will be the conflagration [...]. But since God in the beginning made the race of angels and men with free-will, they will justly suffer in eternal fire the punishment of whatever sins they have committed.

The Enochic periodisation is more elaborate. *The Book of the Heavenly Luminaries* divides the history of mankind into ten periods; the first corresponds to the time of universal righteousness (1 En 93:3), the second is a period of iniquity identified with the time of Noah: “in the second week great wickedness, And deceit shall have sprung up [...]; And after it is ended [this is most likely an allusion to the Flood] unrighteousness shall grow up, And a law shall be made for the sinners” (1 En 93:4–5). Weeks three to nine seem to describe the present, the world after the Flood, which will be destroyed, although there is no description of how this destruction will take place. Then there will be a final judgement, followed by “a new heaven”:

And after that, in the ninth week, the righteous judgement shall be revealed to the whole world, And all the works of the godless shall vanish from all the earth, And the world shall be written down for destruction. And after this, in the tenth week in the seventh part, There shall be the great eternal judgement, In which He will execute vengeance amongst the angels. And the first heaven shall depart and pass away, And a new heaven shall appear [...]. And after that there will be many weeks without number for ever, And all shall be in goodness and righteousness, And sin shall no more be mentioned for ever (1 En 91:14–17).

Elements of the periodisation of history had already appeared earlier in 2 Peter. They can be found, for example, in the assessment of the present world, in which corruption (1:4) and darkness (1:19b) reign. In the latter example, there is also a

clear suggestion of when this world will cease to exist – the dark present era will be ended when “the day dawns”, i. e. the second coming of Christ.¹⁶⁵

In describing the present period of world history in 3:7, the narrator, not coincidentally, uses lexis referring to 2:4 – “preservation” and “judgment”: ὁ θεὸς ἀγγέλων παρέδωκεν εἰς κρίσιν τηρουμένων. This entails the suggestion that present behaviour and judgement applies to both sinful angels and ungodly men. It should be recalled that 2 Pet 2:4 was the first commentary and an illustration drawn from Jewish tradition to 2:3b. 2 Pet 3:7a can be seen as – drawing on the same tradition – another illustration of the claim that the “judgment upon them is not idle, and their destruction is not slumbering”. In addition, a clearer explanation than before emerges as to why it seems that the world remains unchanged and sinners supposedly escape punishment: the word of God still sustains the existence of a broken world. But this does not mean that it is an eternal and unchanging state. On the contrary, it will be terminated with the coming of judgement, which is in fact the purpose of preserving the present world. This is very clearly indicated by the deliberate use of the preposition εἰς.

The present is characterised by two participles: θησαυρίζω and τηρέω. The passive interpreted as passivum theologicum emphasises God’s will and activity in this gathering and preservation, which corresponds very well, perhaps it is even redundant, with the explicit claim that the heavens and the earth are preserved by God’s word. The perfective form τεθησαυρισμένοι indicates that God’s decision for the heavens and earth to be gathered was made long ago (cf. ἔκπαλαι in 2:3b) and is still valid (this is another reference to 2:3b and the present tense used there). The validity of God’s decision is confirmed by the present tense of the second participial – τηρούμενοι “heaven and earth are preserved”.

Attention is drawn to the verb τηρέω, associated with the narrative of the fallen angels, and to the verb θησαυρίζω, which generally has positive connotations, for it means ‘to preserve’, ‘to place in a treasury’, ‘to accumulate treasures’, ‘to win favour’ (cf. Matt 6:19–20, Luke 12:21, 1 Cor 16:2). The image of a treasury is used by Philo when in *Quod deus sit immutabilis* [*On the Unchangeableness of God*] XXXIV 156 he writes:

the Saviour of the universe has opened to us his heavenly treasury ὀλύμπιον θησαυρόν for our use and enjoyment? For Moses, the hierophant, prays that ‘the Lord may open to us his good treasure τὸν θησαυρὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀγαθόν, his heavenly one, to give us his rain,’ and the prayers of the man who loves God are sure to obtain a hearing.

165 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:19.

But God's treasury can also have negative connotations as a place where the instruments of God's wrath are gathered (cf. Jer 50[27]:25). This tradition is also known to Philo.¹⁶⁶ In *Leg. alleg.* III XXXIV 105–106 he quotes the text of Deut 32:34 and argues that with God there are many storehouses with the instruments of wrath and punishment, but then he returns to the storehouse with positive connotations or rather a treasury with God's blessings. The storehouses with the instruments of punishment remain closed, from the treasury God takes and generously distributes his blessings to people:

For, just as there are storehouses of good things so are there also storehouses of evil things with God εἰσι γὰρ ὡς περ ἀγαθῶν οὕτω καὶ κακῶν παρὰ τῷ θεῷ θησαυροί; [...] [God] opens the treasurehouse of his good things freely, but he binds fast that which contains the evil things. For it is an especial property of God to offer his good things freely and to be beforehand with men in bestowing gifts upon them, but to be slow in bringing evil on them, and Moses [...] says that not only have his storehouses of evil things been sealed up in all other times.

It is more likely, however, that the imagery used by Peter is based on Jewish apocalyptic tradition and the Gospel (Matt 6:19–20, Luke 12:21) image of a treasury in which all human deeds are stored, both those deserving punishment and those deserving reward: “He that doeth righteousness layeth up life for himself with the Lord. And he that doeth wrongly forfeits his life to destruction” (PssSol 9:5); “For you have a treasure of works laid up with the Most High; but it will not be shown to you until the last times” (4 Ezra 7:77). The thought conveyed by Peter, then, seems to be as follows: God is storing up all human works – both good and bad – in heaven as in a treasury until the end times, when the judgment on the world will take place. This refers to the protological elements that are implied in 2:3b, taken from apocalyptic literature and Jude 4 about the recording of all human deeds in a heavenly book or on heavenly tablets¹⁶⁷: “And do not think in your spirit nor say in your heart that ye do not know and that ye do not see that every sin is every day recorded in heaven in the presence of the Most High” (1 En 98:7–8); “And I observed the heavenly tablets, and read everything which was written (thereon) and understood everything, and read the book of all the deeds of mankind, and of all the children of flesh that shall be upon the earth to the remotest generations” (1 En 81:2–3). In the end times, at the judgment, this book will be opened, and men will be judged by what has been written in it: “In those days I saw the Head of

166 J.H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 235.

167 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 101.

Days when He seated himself upon the throne of His glory, And the books of the living were opened before Him” (1 En 47:3):

Next I saw a large white throne and the one who was sitting on it [...]. I saw the dead, the great and the lowly, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. Then another scroll was opened, the book of life. The dead were judged according to their deeds, by what was written in the scrolls” (Rev 20:11–13).

It is worth mentioning that the narrator has used metonymy here – instead of pointing to angels and their conduct and humans and their actions, he has used the more general phrase heaven (in relation to angels) and earth (in relation to humans)¹⁶⁸: “the heavens and the earth by the same word are gathered into a treasury”. In the imagery created by the second verb – τηρέω: “the heavens and the earth by the same word are preserved” – two meanings are employed. One metonymic, as before referring to humans and angels, uses the context of the verb “to preserve” in 2:4, 2:9b.17 and giving it the meaning of “being kept under guard, in a detention” from which angels and the ungodly, including the dead (cf. 2 Pet 2:9b), will be brought to judgment.¹⁶⁹ The second literal meaning, referring to the maintenance and preservation of all creation – heaven and earth – in the form we know today by the word of God until the time of judgement. Perhaps the inspiration for the use of this peculiar wordplay related to the contextual meanings of the nouns οὐρανοὶ καὶ γῆ “heaven and earth”, and especially the verb τηρέω, came from the Letter of Jude, where this verb also has several meanings (cf. Jude 1.6.21). The narrator of 2 Peter adapted Jude’s wordplay as usual to his explanations and to his vision of world history.

Between the participles τεθησαοθρισμένοι and τηρούμενοι there is an expression εἰσὶν πυρί. The dative case πυρί can be interpreted as dativus instrumentalis, dativus commodi or temporis. Because of its position, it would have to be translated as dativus commodi: “they are gathered in a treasury and preserved for the fire”. Fire here would have to be a metonymic term for God’s wrath and God’s punishment. In this position, the temporal meaning also seems natural: gathered and preserved until the time of fire. But fire can also be seen as an instrument of trial and purification (cf. 1 Cor 3:13–15).¹⁷⁰ The accumulated human experiences, deeds and teachings that pass the fiery test will be recognised as an expression of true Christian faith, in accordance with apostolic precepts and prophetic and apostolic teaching, and as such will guarantee the faithful entry into the eternal

168 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 172.

169 See analysis of 2 Pet 2:4.9b.17.

170 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:7.

kingdom. The instrumental understanding of the dative *πυρί* refers not so much to the participle *τεθησαυρισμένοι* as to the manner of execution of the punishment on the ungodly: for the day of judgement and the annihilation of the ungodly by fire. This would allude to the use of the noun *ὔδατι* as an instrument of punishment in parallels 3:6. Since this question cannot be clearly resolved, it seems that the narrator has deliberately overlaid all these meanings. Again, the inspiration for this use of the dative when describing eschatological events may have come from the equally ambiguous intentional construction *Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ τετηρημένοι* “preserved for Jesus, by Jesus and in Jesus” in Jude 1.¹⁷¹

Judgement on the world, God’s wrath and punishment depicted by fire, are among the most typical images rooted in Jewish tradition. They appear in the prophetic writings (Isa 29:6, 30:27.20.33, 33:14, 66:15–16.22.24, Nah 1:6, Zeph 1:18, 3:8, Mal 3:19, cf. also Sir 48:3) and in extra-biblical oracles: “Fire shall come flashing forth in the broad heaven, And many cities burn and men destroy, And much black ashes shall fill the great sky, And small drops like red earth shall fall from heaven, Then know the anger of the God of heaven” (SibOr 4:170–174). While some of these have a primary eschatological character, others need to be given this character through the use of an eschatological typology and hermeneutic close to Peter, also used in apocalyptic literature (cf. Rev 9:17–18, 16:8, 20:9, PssSol 15:4) or apocalyptic and eschatological passages in NT writings (Acts 2:19, 2 Thess 1:8). In the context of Peter’s argument, it is important to note that in Matt 10:15 the reference to the day of judgement appears with the typological mention of Sodom and Gomorrah. Although the image of fire is only implied here, the message is quite clear – the destruction of sinful cities by fire is only a substitute for the destruction of the world by fire on the day of judgement.¹⁷² Early Christian writers, especially those close to apocalypticism, also did not shy away from such imagery of judgment. Thus, for example, in 2 *Clem.* 16:3, the characteristic image of the “melting” of heaven and earth appears: “Know that the day of judgment draws near like a burning oven, and certain of the heavens and all the earth will melt, like lead melting in fire; and then will appear the hidden and manifest deeds of men”. Hermas, on the other hand, adds blood to the fire, making his vision more terrifying: “the fiery and bloody points out that the world must perish through blood and fire” (*The Shepherd*, Vision 4:3).

An even more elaborate motif of fire appears in the dependent texts of 2 Peter. In ApPet 5, among other things, it is the instrument of the destruction of the world and one of the signs of the beginning of judgment:

171 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 81–82.

172 R.P. Juza, *Echoes of Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of the Lord*, p. 233.

And this shall come at the day of judgement upon them that have fallen away from faith in God and that have committed sin: Floods (cataracts) of fire shall be let loose; [...] the waters shall be changed and turned into coals of fire and all that is in them shall burn, and the sea shall become fire. Under the heaven shall be a sharp fire that cannot be quenched and floweth to fulfil the judgement of wrath. [...] The spirits also of the dead bodies [...] shall become fire at the commandment of God. And so soon as the whole creation dissolveth, the men [...] shall flee [...]. And in all places shall the wrath of a fearful fire overtake them and an unquenchable flame driving them shall bring them unto the judgement of wrath, unto the stream of unquenchable fire that floweth, flaming with fire.

Similarly, in the Second Book of the Sibylline Oracle, which is a summary of the Apocalypse of Peter: “A mighty stream of burning fire from heaven [a]nd every place consume, earth, ocean vast, And gleaming sea, and lakes and rivers, springs, And cruel Hades and the heavenly sky. And heavenly lights shall break up into one [a]nd into outward form all-desolate. For stars from heaven shall fall into all seas. And all the souls of men shall gnash their teeth Burned both by sulphur stream and force of fire [i]n ravenous soil, and ashes hide all things. And then of the world all the elements Shall be bereft” (SibOr 2:245–251).

Justin Martyr and Theophilus of Antioch emphasise that the concept of the destruction of the world by fire is common to Jewish, Christian and Greek traditions. Theophilus in *To Autolytus* II XXXVIII:628–630 emphasises the convergences:

Concerning the burning up of the world, Malachi the prophet foretold: “The day of the Lord cometh as a burning oven, and shall consume all the wicked.” And Isaiah: “For the wrath of God is as a violent hail-storm, and as a rushing mountain torrent.” The Sibyl, then, and the other prophets, yea, and the poets and philosophers, have clearly taught both concerning righteousness, and judgment, and punishment.

Similarly, Justin in *The First Apology* 20:

And the philosophers called Stoics teach that even God Himself shall be resolved into fire, and they say that the world is to be formed anew by this revolution; but we understand that God, the Creator of all things, is superior to the things that are to be changed. [...] on some points we teach the same things as the poets and philosophers [...]. For while we say that all things have been produced and arranged into a world by God, we shall seem to utter the doctrine of Plato; and while we say that there will be a burning up of all, we shall seem to utter the doctrine of the Stoics.

In *The Second Apology* VII, however, he points out that while there are indeed quite a few parallels between Christianity and Stoicism, there are also fundamental differences. The most important of these is the Stoic determinism and fatalism to which human beings and the world as a whole are subject, irreconcilable with the Christian conception of free will:

But neither do we affirm that it is by fate that men do what they do, or suffer what they suffer, but that each man by free choice acts rightly or sins [...]. The Stoics, not observing this, maintained that all things take place according to the necessity of fate. But since God in the beginning made the race of angels and men with free-will, they will justly suffer in eternal fire the punishment of whatever sins they have committed. And this is the nature of all that is made, to be capable of vice and virtue.

Determinism makes the destruction and cleansing of the world by fire – the so-called ἐκπύρωσις¹⁷³ – conceived as repeated cycles that have nothing to do with the behaviour of human beings and make the reborn world not a new world, but one composed all the time of the same elements that will decay again in some time.

It is difficult to suppose that Peter is not aware of these similarities. He probably has them in mind in the construction of his argumentation. On the one hand, he based his strategy of integrating elements of the Jewish and Hellenistic traditions and christianising Greek philosophy. On the other hand, even this implicit reference to philosophy is intended to discredit the views of the false teachers also on philosophical grounds,¹⁷⁴ especially in the eyes of an audience familiar with philosophy. Previously, this concerned the concept of the functioning of the world, it now touches upon the question of cosmic catastrophe, judgment, and the purification of the world, which the heretics vehemently denied.

The most relevant elements for the eschatological prophetic and apostolic teaching were placed by the narrator of 2 Peter at the end of verse 7: εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων “for the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly people”. They are all taken from the apocalyptic tradition, and they all appeared in the preceding chapters, which makes it possible to reconstruct Peter’s interpretation of them. They also make it possible to generate the gist of Peter’s reasoning: the judgement refused by the false teachers will be for them, as for all the ungodly, a time of destruction.

173 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 300.

174 Differently, R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 301, who argues that although Peter was aware of the similarities between the Jewish and Greek concepts of cosmic catastrophe, he was not particularly interested in them.

The mention of judgment and the ungodly is one of the links between the description of the incineration of Sodom and Gomorrah in 2:6 and the end times in 3:7b. In 2:6 it is made clear that the punishment that fell on the cities is a warning example – ὑπόδειγμα – to those who are about to lead an ungodly lifestyle. This would mean that the term “ungodly” in 3:7b refers precisely to all those to whom the example of Sodom has not appealed and who are leading ungodly lives. It includes both those who will still be alive when the day of judgement comes and those who have died before the judgement. This suggestion is confirmed by 2:9b, where the fate of the unrighteous dead is described, who after death already suffer the preliminary punishments.¹⁷⁵ Now they all face judgment and final punishment.

In apocalyptic literature, the preliminary and final punishment¹⁷⁶ is most often described as fire. Not surprisingly, the narrator of 2 Peter also uses these associations and the Sodom paradigm here. It must be admitted that he is scanty in words when he describes the final doom. He limits himself to placing the noun πῦρ in his reflection in 3:7, and this in a position that does not at all determine the direct connection between annihilation and fire. Earlier, with the notion of ἀπώλεια (2 Pet 2:1.3), he did not use any doxology at all. That in antiquity, however, his text was read in accordance with the apocalyptic tradition and attributed a destructive and punitive function to fire is evidenced by the elaborate descriptions of execution in the literature dependent on 2 Pet. In *The Apocalypse of Peter*, inspired by the letter, almost every punishment to be meted out to the ungodly features an element associated with fire, be it a flame or glowing instruments of torture: idolaters will be burnt along with images of the deities they worship (ApPet 6), they will also be flogged with fiery chains (ApPet 10), those hanged by their tongues who malign the way of justice will be guarded so that they will never be plucked from the unquenchable fire (ApPet 7), those who have denied justice will be cast down into a pit of fire (ApPet 7), murderers will be thrown into the fire where venomous snakes abound (ApPet 7), blasphemers will have their eyes scorched with an iron (ApPet 9), those who despise the poor and hope in riches will fall on fiery stones (ApPet 9), those who abandon the commandments of the Lord will burn with the fire of condemnation (ApPet 10), those who demand public recognition for works of mercy will roll on coals of fire that do not go out (ApPet 12), sorcerers and witches will be hanged on a fiery wheel (ApPet 12).

It is noteworthy that in Peter's description of the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, much more space is given to the experience of Lot being declared righteous and

175 See analysis of 2 Pet 2:9b.

176 D. J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 288 argues that ἀπώλεια here does not mean the punishment associated with fire, but the total annihilation of the ungodly.

being rescued from the conflagration (2 Pet 2:7–8). The transposition of this theme into the description of judgement in 3:7 allows us to see the implications of the fate of the righteous in this description, with fire also playing a crucial role. The motif of purifying fire has already been mentioned above. Paul in 1 Cor 3:13–15 does not explain what exactly the trial by fire and the passage through the fire would consist of. It is possible that the explanation is to be sought in early Christian tradition. A similar theme of trial appears in Didache 16:5: “Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and shall perish; but they that endure in their faith shall be saved”. Attention is drawn to the similarity between the description of Lot’s experience in 2 Pet 2:7–8 and the description of the experience of the righteous living among the ungodly in Vision 4:3 of *The Shepherd*. Hermas refers to the righteous as gold, and to their experiences as a trial by fire by which the faithful will become pure, prepared to dwell in the world to come: “the golden part are you who have escaped from this world” (cf. 2 Pet 1:4). “For as gold is tested by fire, and thus becomes useful, so are you tested who dwell in it” (cf. 2 Pet 2:8).

Those, therefore, who continue steadfast, and are put through the fire, will be purified by means of it. For as gold casts away its dross, so also will you cast away all sadness and straitness, and will be made pure so as to fit into the building of the tower. But the white part is the age that is to come, in which the elect of God will dwell, since those elected by God to eternal life will be spotless and pure (cf. 2 Pet 3:14).

The righteous, therefore, living among the ungodly, have already passed the test of fire, so the destructive eschatological fire is not frightening to them. It actually only serves to separate the faithful from the unfaithful, the righteous from the ungodly. This thought is developed in the texts dependent on 2 Peter – ApPet and SibOr 2. ApPet 6 mentions passing through a stream of fire during the final judgment. The righteous will not feel the flames at all, but for the ungodly it will merely be a foreshadowing of punishment:

[During the judgment] the nations behold it, they shall weep, every nation apart. Then shall [the Father] command them to enter into the river of fire while the works of every one of them shall stand before them [...] to every man according to his deeds. As for the elect that have done good, they shall come unto me and not see death by the devouring fire. But the unrighteous the sinners, and the hypocrites shall stand in the depths of darkness that shall not pass away, and their chastisement is the fire.

The motif of separation is treated much more extensively in Book II of the *Sibylline Oracles*:

And then shall all pass through the burning stream Of flame unquenchable; but all the just Shall be saved; and the godless furthermore Shall to all ages perish [...]. Of the heavenly and immortal God shall drive Against a pillar where shall all around In a circle flow a restless stream of fire; And deathless angels of the immortal God, Who ever is, shall bind with lasting bonds In chains of flaming fire and from above Punish them all by scourge most terribly; And in Gehenna, in the gloom of night, Shall they be cast 'neath many horrid beasts Of Tartarus, where darkness is immense. But when there shall be many punishments Enforced on all who had an evil heart, Yet afterward shall there a fiery wheel From a great river circle them around, Because they had a care for wicked deeds. [...]. And piety and thoughts most just were dear, Shall angels, bearing through the burning stream, Lead unto light and life exempt from care (SibOr 2:313–316.350–365.385–387).

Due to the implications related to the righteous, which will be developed later in the letter (2 Pet 3:11.13–14), through the motif of purification and the separation of the pious from the ungodly, 2 Pet 3:5–7 is embedded even more firmly in the apocalyptic tradition. Moreover, it allows us to interpret the formula εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων in a slightly different way. Usually the conjunct καὶ is treated explicatively and the whole expression understood as “the day of judgement”, i. e. “the destruction of the ungodly”. Now it appears that the conjunct καὶ can be given an additive meaning and the whole expression treated as an ellipsis, in which the notion of judgement includes not only the passing of judgment and the condemnation of the wicked to destruction, but also the separation of the righteous and the unrighteous on the basis of their deeds gathered in the treasury (τεθησαυρισμένοι). In this way – according to apocalyptic tradition – the righteous will become part of “the new heaven and the new earth, in which righteousness dwell” (2 Pet 3:13).

As can be seen, at the centre of Peter’s reflection based on prophetic teaching is neither cosmology nor chronology, but eschatology and the judgement, which is denied by false teachers. The true teaching on judgement, however, includes elements of cosmology which heretics misinterpret. The demonstration of these errors is intended to discredit the entire false doctrine. The typological references to the narratives of the Flood and Sodom have a double function here. Firstly, they serve to clarify the eschatological hermeneutic applied to them already in 2:5–. Secondly, they contradict the heretics’ claim that God does not intervene in the fate of the world. In the end times, God’s intervention will take the form of a cosmic catastrophe,¹⁷⁷ which will bring destruction to the ungodly and to the old world, but will also be the beginning of a new, post-eschatological reality. This thought is strongly emphasised by Oecumenius in his commentary on the Second Letter

177 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 294, 301.

of Peter: “To the one who poses the question, ‘For what purpose did God create the world, if he will turn it into nothingness anyway?’, it can be answered that the world at the end of time will be renewed”.¹⁷⁸

2.11 E₃. Interpretation of prophetic and apostolic teaching: β. – interpretation proper – soteriology (2 Pet 3:8–10a)

⁸This one thing let not escape you/Be not ignorant of this one thing, beloved, that one day with the Lord [is] like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow [in keeping]/is not delaying the promise, as some [people] perceive a delay, but shows patience towards you, not wishing that any [of you] should perish, but that each [of you] should come to repentance/conversion. ^{10a}And the day of the Lord will come like a thief.

After presenting the principles and applying a typological eschatological hermeneutic to the ktiseological, diluvial, and implicitly also to the narrative of the angels and the destruction of Sodom, the narrator moves on to further interpret the apostolic teaching. He shows how the most disputed elements, which contributed to the prophetic message on the final judgment and secondly to its questioning, are to be understood. He exposes the soteriological aspects of eschatology. One can see here the same mechanism used in the preceding verses (3:5–7) when considering the stories mentioned in chapter 2: a focus on external interpretation while minimising internal interpretation. Whereas in 3:6–7 the narrator focused on interpreting the negative aspects of the Flood and the burning of Sodom, he now turns to positive themes. It is no coincidence, then, that in describing the structure of 2 Peter both 2:5b; 2:7–9b and 3:8–10a are qualified by the proper interpretations of prophetic and apostolic teaching that contribute to an understanding of its salvific message.¹⁷⁹

In both the narrative of the Flood and the narrative of Sodom, the theme of God’s patience and the call to repentance is much emphasised. It is for this reason that Noah was called *δικαισύνης κήρυξ* “the herald of justice”, and Lot even *δίκαιος* “the righteous one”. The narrator was thus alluding to the extra-biblical Jewish tradition according to which Noah was a prophet proclaiming God’s justice and calling for repentance,¹⁸⁰ while Lot epitomised patience amidst the daily experience of living with the ungodly.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, both protagonists are those who cor-

178 *Ojcowie Kościoła komentują Biblię*, p. 145.

179 See Introduction (vol. 1).

180 See analysis of 2 Pet 2:5b.

181 See analysis of 2 Pet 2:7–9a.

rectly interpreted God's words of punishment and annihilation and trusted them. Consequently, they witnessed the fulfilment of God's threat (promise), and though their world was destroyed, they were rescued as righteous and obedient by God. Now Peter seems to be explaining the typological and eschatological message of both stories: just as before the Flood and before the destruction of Sodom God showed patience with sinners, waiting for their repentance, so also before the final judgment he will show patience so that people can repent (3:9).

The reference to the diluvian and Sodom narratives allows the readers to see that at the centre of passage 3:8–10a there is a soteriological message. It is framed by statements relating to the time of the parousia and judgement, which allude to prophetic teaching taken from Ps 90[89]:4 (2 Pet 3:8) and apostolic teaching, which most likely refers to the words of Jesus himself (2 Pet 3:10a). It is also worth noting that the two framing elements have a similar structure – for they are comparisons with the comparative participle ὡς:

- a. eschatology – the unknown time of the parousia (“one day like a thousand years”; “a thousand years like one day”) – verse 8bc;
- b. soteriology – God's patience for people to repent – verse 9;
- a' eschatology – the unexpected parousia (“the day of the Lord like a thief”) – 10a.

The argumentation takes place on two levels. On the one hand, the narrator continues his polemic against the false teachers; on the other, he shows his audience how God's promises and the supposed delay in their fulfilment should be correctly interpreted. Just because they are fulfilled in a way that deviates from human expectations does not mean that one should question them, as the heretics did. Rather, one should revise one's expectations and try to interpret the prophetic and apostolic prophecies about the coming of “the day of the Lord” from the right perspective. The attempt to fit the prophecies to one's own desires (cf. 2 Pet 3:3,5) is indeed a blasphemy, for one either questions God's creative and destructive power (2 Pet 3:6) or God's faithfulness in fulfilling the eschatological promises (2 Pet 3:4).¹⁸² This is blasphemy based primarily on a misunderstanding of God's revelation, which the narrator had already signalled earlier (cf. 2 Pet 2:12). The correct interpretation of the eschatological promises presented in 3:8–10a is intended to help the recipients of the letter to remain faithful to the prophetic and apostolic teaching. At the same time, it is a positive explanation of the issue of the alleged delay of the parousia, which had troubled and perhaps even disappointed the faithful¹⁸³ since the middle

182 J.H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 237.

183 D.J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p., 185.

of the first century. This explanation is made up of three essential components:¹⁸⁴ (1) the chronometric element (3:8b–c); (2) the theological and soteriological element (3:9); (3) the element of surprise, implying the need for immediate conversion and vigilance (3:10a).

Formally, verse 8 can be seen as the beginning of a response to the mocking question of the false teachers ποῦ ἐστὶν ἐπαγγελία τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ “where is the promise of His coming” from verse 4. The heretical views are also alluded to here by the negated verb λανθάνω, which was used without negation in verse 5. At the same time, the narrator is clearly addressing the recipients of the letter, as evidenced by the use of the personal pronoun ὑμᾶς in the accusative and the addressative ἀγαπητοί, as in 3:1. In 3:8a the polemical aspect overlaps with the parenetic aspect. The narrator of 2 Peter warns his audience not to draw false conclusions, similar to heretical teachings, from the fact that they have not yet lived to see the parousia and the judgement. Instead, they should consider all the reasons behind it. Previously, the false teachers had given a very selective and reductive explanations of the world’s history and God’s providence precisely because something “escaped notice from them” (3:5a). They also drew incorrect anti-eschatological conclusions on this basis, contaminated by Epicurean philosophy. Now the narrator is trying to ensure that “this one thing does not escape” his audience. At first glance, it seems that ἐν τούτῳ “this one thing” refers to divine chronometry, a completely different perception of time with God and by humans.¹⁸⁵ However, it turns out that an understanding of the chronometric difference actually leads to an understanding of the most important salvific element here in God’s plan for fulfilling/delaying the promise and the proper response, the response to God’s salvific will, namely conversion.

The contrast between the conduct of the heretics and the postulated perception of judgement and parousia by the recipients of the letter is emphasised by the addition of the opposite δεῖ¹⁸⁶: “this one thing let not escape you”. Imp. praes. pass. λανθανέτω would have to be interpreted as passivum theologicum. This means that God does not hide from people His perspective on the fulfilment of the eschatological promises. All that is needed is to apply a proper interpretation to this promise, present in the prophetic and apostolic teaching, an interpretation that will be neither reductive nor instrumentalised or too broad. The former leads to eschatological scepticism, the latter to literalism and attempts to specify precisely when the day of the Lord will occur. In other words, the correct interpretation must

184 Ibid., p. 185–186 sees only two arguments here: (1) the untranslatability of God’s plan and timetable into the human reckoning of time; (2) the positive purpose of delay – patience in waiting for the conversion of the people.

185 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 304; D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 208.

186 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 994.

be according to God's will and not the desires of the faithful. This requires taking God's perspective and abandoning the human perspective. What this interpretation consists in is shown in the three sections already mentioned: chronometric, theological and soteriological and motivational.

Advice on the proper perspective is addressed to the recipients of the letter contemporary to the sender, and to the future readers. The narrator calls them, as in 3:1, ἀγαπητοί “beloved” (cf. also 3:14,17). Usually, the use of such an addressive denotes transition. This is also the case this time. The idea is to focus the attention of the recipients on the correct message,¹⁸⁷ which is a synthesis of prophetic and apostolic teaching.

The message begins with a reference to the prophetic teaching, namely Ps 90[89]:4: ὅτι χίλια ἔτη ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς σου ὡς ἡ ἡμέρα ἢ ἐχθές ἥτις διήλθεν καὶ φυλακὴ ἐν νυκτί “A thousand years in your eyes are merely a day gone by, Before a watch passes in the night”. Although the narrator does not quote it in full, it can be assumed that he expects that the audience knows it. He had already made a similar assumption when he inserted phrases typical of the Septuagint. The reference to the prophetic text is intended to emphasise the indisputable, timeless and enduring significance of what the prophets – here David – said.¹⁸⁸ In this way Peter reiterates the thought from 1:19a.

It can be seen that the way of referring to the source text is very similar to the way Peter used to adapt material from the Letter of Jude. Thus, it is not a matter of reconstructing and transposing the source text and context, but of adapting them to the current argument. Not surprisingly, the narrator referred not only to the main theme of the first part of the psalm – the eternity of God and the impermanence of man, and to the motif of God's wrath and judgement,¹⁸⁹ but also to Ps 90[89]:12 in the Hebrew version and the request for wisdom, which involves learning God's way of counting the days: “Teach us to count our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart”. This also implies a *vituperatio* against the lack of wisdom of false teachers who are alien to seeing time from God's perspective.

In Ps 90[89]:4 this divine perspective is marked by the expression ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς σου “in your eyes”, in 2 Pet 3:8b by the formula παρὰ κυρίῳ “with the Lord”. The title “Lord” is not explicit neither here nor in the whole passage 3:8–10a. The context of Ps 90[89] seems to indicate God (the Father), yet in Peter's argumentation so far the term “Lord” has been attributed to Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:2.8.11.14.16, 2:10). Most likely this vagueness is intentional. The narrator does not want to conclusively decide whom the recipients should identify with the title “Lord”. On the one hand,

187 P.H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter*, p. 604.

188 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 208.

189 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 995.

the context indicates that it seems natural to continue with references to the God who created, maintains and will judge the world. On the other, it is well known that Jewish apocalypticism transfers God's judicial prerogatives to the messiah. In the light of 2 Pet 1:16, where not only a Christocentric hermeneutic is employed, but where it is also made clear that the Son received from the Father the divine powers of an eschatological Judge and Ruler, it would be appropriate to associate the title "Lord" with Jesus Christ.¹⁹⁰

Peter is not the only apocalypticist to use chronometry based on Ps 90[89]. This way of reckoning time, where one day with the Lord has the value of a thousand years with men, is characteristic of Jewish apocalypticism in general: "for one thousand years are as one day in the testimony of the heavens" according to Jub 4:30. A similar perspective, though more general, is presented in ApBaSyr 48:13: "But with you hours are as a time, And days as generations" (cf. Sir 18:9–10). Bauckham¹⁹¹ points out that although 2 Pet 3:8b and ApBaSyr 48:13 are based on the same psalm, these texts are not parallel primarily because ApBaSyr is not intended to explain the eschatological delay. What they do have in common, however, is undoubtedly the conviction of the incompatibility of the transience and ephemerality of human life and the eternity and timelessness of God, and thus the different perspective on the perception of time and its passage in God and humans. It should also be mentioned that man is only subject to the passage of time, whereas God rules time. It is at His discretion to lengthen or shorten time, especially in an eschatological context, as Pseudo-Philo in *The Biblical Antiquities (Liber antiquitates biblicae)* 19:13 makes clear:

But this heaven shall be in my sight as a fleeting cloud, and like yesterday when it is past, and it shall be when I draw near to visit the world, I will command the years and charge the times, and they shall be shortened, and the stars shall be hastened, and the light of the sun make speed to set, neither shall the light of the moon endure, because I will hasten to raise up you that sleep;

and ApBaSyr 20:1:

Therefore, behold! the days come, And the times shall hasten more than the former, And the seasons shall speed on more than those that are past, And the years shall pass more quickly than the present (years).

190 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 187 argues that the title Lord in verse 8 refers to YHWH, and consequently sees the same references in 3:9.

191 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 309.

Chronometry, where one day is a thousand years, is also taken up by early Christian writers and in a much more literal way than the Jewish apocalyptists.¹⁹² The author of *The Epistle of Barnabas* applies it to the story of creation and the determination of the age of the world: “Attend, my children, to the meaning of this expression, He finished in six days. This implies that the Lord will finish all things in six thousand years, for a day is with Him a thousand years. And He Himself testifies, saying, Behold, today will be as a thousand years. Therefore, my children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years, all things will be finished” (*Barn.* 15:4). Irenaeus of Lyon in *Adv. Haer.* V 28:3 claims that the end of the world will occur when six thousand years have elapsed. He also bases his calculation on the assumption that one day is a thousand years and the parallel between the days of creation and the time of destruction:¹⁹³

For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded. And for this reason the Scripture says: Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all their adornment. And God brought to a conclusion upon the sixth day the works that He had made; and God rested upon the seventh day from all His works. This is an account of the things formerly created, as also it is a prophecy of what is to come. For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand year.

The same chiliastic chronometry is used by Irenaeus to explain the relationship between the announcement of death after eating the forbidden fruit in Gen 2:17:¹⁹⁴

[on this very day] when you eat from it you shall die”, and the death of Adam, who according to Gen 5:5 lived to be 930 years old: “And there are some, again, who relegate the death of Adam to the thousandth year; for since a day of the Lord is as a thousand years, he did not overstep the thousand years, but died within them, thus bearing out the sentence of his sin (*Adv. Haer.* V 23:2).

192 F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 321; Mickiewicz adds that it was the Jewish rabbis who reversed the sentence order of Ps 90[89]:4 and taught that one day is to God as a thousand years by human reckoning (*Gen. Rabb.* 19:8, 22:1). Consequently, it can be said that the first element of the chronometry in 2 Pet 3:8 is taken from the rabbinic tradition, the second element directly from Ps 90[89]:4.

193 C.A. Blaising, *The Day of the Lord Will Come*, p. 393–394.

194 *Ibid.*, p. 394 argues on the basis of parallels with Irenaeus’ argument and the rabbinic texts – the midrash to Genesis – that Peter’s chronometry is rooted in both Ps 90[89]:4 and Gen 2:17; see also J.H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 238.

Such a reckoning of time also lies at the heart of Christian millenarianism of the first and second century.¹⁹⁵ Millenarists expressed the conviction that the final judgment would be preceded by a thousand-year period of universal happiness, the reign of the righteous (Rev 20:4–6). The righteous dead will be resurrected and those who are still alive will be transformed (1 Thess 4:17). Only later will there be judgment, the resurrection of the ungodly to destruction, the transfiguration of the righteous, called the second resurrection, and entrance into eternal life (cf. 1 Cor 15:24–26, Rev 20:12–15).¹⁹⁶

2 Pet 3:8b does not, however, provide a basis for either the chiliastic chronometry of the *Epistle of Barnabas* or *Adversus Haereses*, nor for millenarianism.¹⁹⁷ On the contrary, as already mentioned, the narrator seeks to guard against literalism and speculation regarding the indication of the time of the parousia. He does this in three ways. Firstly – he does not use the simple equation that “one day in the Lord is a thousand years”, but – in accordance, moreover, with the initial text of the LXX – he uses a comparison here: “one day in the Lord ὡς like a thousand years”. Secondly – he introduces the same comparison in verse 10a, where he juxtaposes the coming of the day of the Lord and the appearance of a thief: ἦξει δὲ ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτης “and the day of the Lord will come ὡς like a thief”. No one would put an equal sign between the day of the Lord (or even the coming Jesus himself) and a thief.¹⁹⁸ So no one should put an equals sign between one day and a thousand years in verse 8b. Thirdly and finally, to the comparison from the psalm he adds his own in 8c, depicting the opposite situation: καὶ χίλια ἔτη ὡς ἡμέρα μία “and a thousand years ὡς as one day”. He thus creates a chiasm:¹⁹⁹

- a. one day (8ba)
 - b. like a thousand years (8bβ);
 - b'. thousand years (8ca)
- a'. as one day (8cβ).

However, this is not just a matter of constructing a rhetorical figure, but an attempt to look at time from God's perspective and demonstrate how absurd all speculative calculations of the time of the parousia and judgment are. Since with God 1,000 years is like one day, this means that from God's point of view not only is there no delay in the fulfilment of the eschatological promise,²⁰⁰ but there will

195 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 306; D.J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 186.

196 J. Daniélou, *Teologia judeochrześcijańska*, Polish transl. S. Basista, Kraków 2002, p. 338.

197 *Ibid.*, p. 345.

198 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:10a.

199 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 208.

200 *Ibid.*

be none even if it is still many thousands of (human) years before people experience the parousia or judgment.²⁰¹ Behind this addition may be a reference to prophecies about the Lord's second coming within a generation (Matt 16:28, 24:34, Mark 9:1, 13:30–31, Luke 9:27, 21:32–33). False teachers cited these prophecies as evidence of the failure of the promise to come (2 Pet 3:4). Peter shows that, from God's perspective, up to several hundred thousand years may still pass without the promise ceasing. This is because 40 years is usually given as the lifespan of one generation. Using literal chronometry, where a thousand years is like one day, this would mean approximately 14,160 thousand years (an average of 354 days of the year according to the Jewish reckoning of time multiplied by 40 years). These calculations rightly seem nonsensical. And the recipients of the letter should also regard them as such. This absurdity is intended to lead them to abandon any literalist millenarian currents relating to both ktiseology and eschatology and to adopt a more general and symbolic interpretation of the phrase "one day as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day". Both in the source Ps 90[89]:4 and in its Petrine adaptation, the idea is to express the conviction that God, being eternal, does not experience time as humans do.²⁰² By human accounts, time may seem long, but from God's perspective it is short.²⁰³ And vice versa, adds the narrator of 2 Peter.²⁰⁴ One cannot, therefore, adopt a human perspective when reflecting on eschatology, resulting from human spatial and temporal conditions, human imaginations, hopes, speculations and human impatience. If the human perspective is transposed into eschatology, impatience and disillusionment result. This is because, argues Bruce J. Malina,²⁰⁵ people's attention is focused on what is happening today (cf. the prayer

201 A similar thought is expressed by Augustine in Letter 19:17: "Even if the end of the world were to come after a thousand years, the whole millennium could still be called the last time or the last day, since it is written 'A thousand years in your eyes is like one day'. For this reason, everything that would happen during these thousand years could be described as having occurred in the last time or in the last day"; *Ojcowie Kościoła komentują Biblię*, p. 146.

202 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 186.

203 M. Luther presents this divine perspective in an interesting way by referring to the time between death and resurrection in the end times. When man is alive, he perceives time from a human perspective, counting "from Adam, one year after another, even to the last day". When he dies, however, he enters a different realm, and after the resurrection he completely takes over this divine perspective, so that even to Adam after the resurrection on the last day it will appear that the state of death lasted only an hour, although in fact many thousands of years have passed: "So when man dies, the body is buried and wastes away, lies in the earth and knows nothing; but when the first man rises up at the last day, he will think he has lain there scarcely an hour, while he will look about himself and become assured that so many people were born of him and have come after him, of whom he had no knowledge at all"; *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude Preached and Explained by Martin Luther III* (V.8–10).

204 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 309.

205 B.J. Malina, *Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?*, CBQ 51 (1989), no. 1, p. 15.

for bread to be given by God today in Matt 6:11, the persuasion not to worry about what the future/tomorrow will bring in Matt 6:34). False teachers are attached to this human perspective, so they expect God's promises to be fulfilled 'today' and in a manner consistent with their perceptions (κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας). If 'today' they are not fulfilled or fulfilled in a different way than imagined, they are rejected. As Moo²⁰⁶ rightly points out, the narrator of 2 Peter is not telling his audience that they are wrong to wait for the 'imminent' coming of Jesus. He is showing that they are wrong to be impatient that this coming is not coming as soon as they would like or have calculated.

However, if, when attempting to adopt God's perspective in the perception of time, one disregards the comparative participle ὡς and takes the indications of Ps 90[89]:4 literally in relation to ktiseology and eschatology, one reaches an absurdity, especially if God's perspective is reduced to the chronometric aspect. Meanwhile, God's perspective, as already mentioned, is not limited to time, but also includes a soteriological aspect and an element of surprise, urgency and motivation for conversion.

The theological and soteriological aspect of viewing the eschatological promises from God's perspective is described in verse 9. Already from the structure of 3:8–10a, one could see that the focus of Peter's reflection is not how to count time, but precisely the indication of God's patience and mercy.

Verse 9 begins with a direct response to the accusations of the false teachers quoted directly in 3:4, and repeated summarily in 9ab: οὐ βραδύνει κύριος τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ὡς τινες βραδύτητα ἡγοῦνται "The Lord is not slow [in keeping]/is not delaying the promise, as some [people] perceive a delay". Thus, the narrator again overlaps the audience-oriented parenetic plane and the polemical one oriented towards false teachers.

The lexical references to 3:4 allow "the promise" to be more closely defined. 3:4 refers to the παρουσία αὐτοῦ "of His coming". Although the pronoun αὐτοῦ is not unambiguous and can refer to both God and Jesus, there is little doubt that the taunts of the false teachers refer to the second coming of Christ. In citing these taunts, the narrator has used a stylisation into prophetic language and then smoothly moved on to accusations of God's lack of intervention in the history of the created world. He thus wove a Christological element – parousia – into the stylistics, imagery and competence associated with God (the Father). In a similar birefringent manner, he treated the title "Lord" in 3:8, and it can be assumed that he does the same in 3:9a – he infuses Christological elements into the Jewish theological tradition. In this, he resembles the behaviour of the narrator of the Letter of Jude, who also transposes

206 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 187.

the titles and powers traditionally attributed to God the Father onto Christ.²⁰⁷ All this confirms that the promise in verse 9a should be read primarily as a promise of Christ's coming as eschatological Judge and Ruler, while the title "Lord" should be referred to both God and Jesus, especially since patience as an attribute is attributed to both divine Persons.²⁰⁸

The lack of specification of the noun ἐπαγγελία in 3:9a makes it possible to extend its content somewhat and to add to the parousia elements those indicated in 2 Pet 1:4, where the promises are described as τίμια καὶ μέγιστα "precious and great". In the analysis of 2 Pet 1:4, they were found to refer to an eschatological communion with God, the attainment of which is made possible by baptismal gifts that enable a person to live a godly life.²⁰⁹ It now seems that the narrator is slowly returning to this thought and, through lexical references and a similar bireferential context,²¹⁰ wants to guide the audience not only to the cosmic but also to the individualised aspects of the parousia and judgment that will bring the faithful to share in the divine nature and enter the eternal kingdom (cf. 2 Pet 3:13–15a).

While determining the content of the promise is not problematic, the use of the noun ἐπαγγελία in the genitive case in conjunction with the verb βραδύνει is somewhat problematic. This is not the most skilful combination,²¹¹ which is why sometimes the genitive case ἐπαγγελίας is interpreted in a possessive way and treated as an attribute of the title Lord: κυρίως τῆς ἐπαγγελίας "Lord of the promise", i. e. the Lord to whom the promise belongs. However, if the genitive case is linked to the verb βραδύνει, then the whole of verse 9a can be understood: "the Lord is not delaying [is not slow in keeping] the promise". The result is an anacoluthon in which the direct complement – "keeping" – is omitted though quite easy to reconstruct.

The verb βραδύνω itself in the NT outside 2 Peter occurs only in 1 Tim 3:15. When used in a neutral sense, it indicates delay (as in 1 Tim). However, it can also be used in a pejorative sense; it then indicates procrastination, laziness, slowness. The narrator of 2 Peter seems to have consciously used both meanings: negative with the verb in 9a, neutral in 9b with the noun βραδύτημα, formed from the same stem, being a New Testament hapax legomenon. The pejorative meaning of βραδύνω in verse 9a alludes to the accusations of false teachers against God, which are treated as blasphemy by Peter, just as it was blasphemy to accuse the gods of licentiousness in Plato's *Laws* already cited.²¹² Also Plutarch, in his treatise *On Those Who Are Punished By The Deity Late* (*Moralia* 548C), addresses Epicurean accusations

207 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 81–82.

208 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:9.

209 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:4.

210 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:3.

211 D. J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 288.

212 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:5.

against providence and the deferment of punishment: “For the fellow seemed to rampage about, in his anger and abusive language, with a long disconnected and rambling rhapsody drawn from all sources, and at the same time inveighed against Providence”. It seems that Peter in his polemic in 9a ironically reproves the false teachers, and then in 9b he straightens out their blasphemies, pointing out that the Lord’s action is not laziness, but a postponement, a delay that has its justification. Thus, if we differentiate the meaning of the lexeme βραδύτητα in 9a and 9b, the passage should be translated: “The Lord does not procrastinate in [keeping] the promise, as some/any perceive postponement/delay”.

The subject of the side sentence in 9b is expressed by the indefinite pronoun τινες. It is usually translated neutrally as “some/certain”. However, it would seem more legitimate to give it a more polemical,²¹³ and thus a negative and contemptuous meaning, similar to Jude 4, where the phrase τινες ἄνθρωποι is usually translated as disparaging “certain/some people” (in USCCB “some intruders”). This would correspond with the accusations of the false teachers in 2 Pet 2:12.17, where they are referred to sarcastically as οὔτοι – “those” who interpret the neutral delay as laziness or procrastination on the part of the Lord to fulfil His promise to come. There is no doubt that τινες refers to false teachers. Sometimes the reference is also extended to those who were persuaded by pseudo-teachers. However, the first variant is more likely here, especially when the pronoun τινες is given a contemptuous interpretation.

As has been repeatedly pointed out, the views of the false teachers cannot be categorised into any particular philosophical trend. From the subordinated apocalyptic convention of Peter’s presentation, it is rather an unsystematised conglomeration of Jewish-Christian-Hellenistic elements.²¹⁴ Nevertheless, some elements of their doctrine the heretics certainly took from the Epicureans. These include seeing the delay of God’s judgment and punishment of the ungodly as evidence of God’s lack of interest in the world in general and humans in particular. This leads not only to questioning the existence of any, especially posthumous, divine punishment and reward, but also to denying divine providence. In *On Those who are Punished by the Deity Late* (*Moralia* 549C), Plutarch explicitly cites this Epicurean mode of argument: “For the slowness of punishment takes away belief in providence, and the wicked, observing that no evil follows each crime except long afterwards, attribute it when it comes to mischance, and look upon it in the light more of accident than punishment, and so receive no benefit from it, being grieved indeed when the

213 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 187.

214 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1004; Green sees in Peter’s polemic with the false teachers echoes of the debates between Epicureans and Stoics that were common in the first century. Christians may have been not only witnesses but even participants in such disputes; he cites Acts 17:18 and 17:31 as evidence.

misfortune comes, but feeling no remorse for what they have done amiss”. He goes on (*Moralia* 549D) to show how arguments largely coinciding with the Christian view of God’s judgment are refuted: “justice that [...] ‘steals on silently and with slow foot,’ and falls upon the wicked some time or other, seems to resemble more chance than providence by reason, of its uncertainty, delay, and irregularity”. Such thinking, however, is, in Plutarch’s estimation, based not on wisdom but, on the contrary, on ignorance: “[no] one could succeed in justice, or understand how to succeed in it, without he had learned or somehow got that science” (*Moralia* 550B). In a similar way, the narrator of 2 Peter judged false teachers who blaspheme what they do not understand (2 Pet 2:12).

The main source of Peter’s reflection on the delay of judgment and the parousia, however, is not Greek philosophy, but Jewish tradition, with which the question of delay is well known. Two strands of it can be observed shaping attitudes towards the delay in the fulfilment of God’s promises: the first, in which there are assurances that “the Lord will not delay”, and the second, in which the response to delay is to maintain an unshakable confidence that what God announces will be realised. The narrator of 2 Peter combines the two strands. On the one hand, by means of psalmic chronometry (Ps 90[89]:4), he was proving that all human calculations regarding the time of the coming of judgment do not translate into God’s perception of time. It is therefore difficult to speak of delay, “the judgment is not idle, and their destruction is not slumbering” (2 Pet 2:3b), and “the Lord is not slow [in keeping]/is not delaying the promise” οὐ βραδύνει κύριος. Similar formulas with the verb βραδύνω occur in Deut 7:10, Isa 46:13 and Sir 35:19. These texts share the motif of justice/just retribution more (Isa 46:13, Sir 35:19)²¹⁵ or less explicitly embedded in a judicial eschatological context. Also in ApBaSyr 20:6, there is an assertion that eschatological events are indeed not late: “And afterwards come to that place and I will reveal Myself to you, and speak true things with you, and I will give you commandment regarding the method of the times; for they are coming and tarry not”.

On the other hand, the narrator of 2 Peter seems to acknowledge that the parousia and judgment are delayed, but in 3:9c he gives the essential reason for the delay – God’s patience. The only proper attitude in the face of delay is to trust God and remain confident that all the promises will be fulfilled, not, as the false teachers do, to blasphemously question God’s credibility and deny the delaying judgment. Peter’s preferred attitude is described precisely in Hab 2:3 (LXX): “For there is still a vision for an appointed time [καίρος], and it will rise up at the end and not in vain. If it [that time] should tarry, wait for it, for when it comes it will come and not delay”. It is commonly believed that this very text is the basis of Peter’s reflection,

215 F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 323.

especially since in the Aquila version the same verb as in 2 Peter – βραδύνω – appears instead of the final verb χρονίζω (‘to tarry’, ‘to delay’, ‘not to come for a long time’). Habakkuk’s recommendations are also used by other apocalypticists. The closest to Peter is the Teacher of Righteousness from Qumran, who also sees a delay in the coming of judgement, yet assures us that the end time will not delay:

interpreted this concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets. For there shall be yet another vision concerning the appointed time. It shall tell of the end and shall not lie. Interpreted, this means that the final age shall be prolonged, and shall exceed all that the Prophets have said; for the mysteries of God are astounding. If it tarries, wait for it, for it shall surely come and shall not be late. Interpreted, this concerns the men of truth who keep the Law, whose hands shall not slacken in the service of truth when the final age is prolonged. For all the ages of God reach their appointed end as he determines for them in the mysteries of His wisdom (1QpHab 7:4–14).²¹⁶

Peter’s certainty that, despite the delay, the parousia and judgement will take place is also based on his earlier interpretation of the narrative of the Flood and the destruction of Sodom using typology and eschatological hermeneutics. Both the diluvial tradition and the Sodom tradition are treated paradigmatically this time because of the relationship between the announcement of punishment and its execution. Since God has announced His eschatological judgement, during which He will punish the wicked, this means that this judgement is bound to take place, since the announcement of the punishment of the earth with the Flood and the announcement of the punishment of Sodom with fire and – in both cases – the extermination of the wicked, have previously been fulfilled. It should be noted, however, that the execution of both punishments was preceded by the people’s patient calls to repentance. Now the narrator of 2 Peter returns to these motifs and develops them in a more universal theological and soteriological context, also using eschatological typology and hermeneutics.²¹⁷ Just as before the Flood Noah, the preacher of justice, according to Jewish tradition called for repentance, so before the final judgment similar calls can be expected. And just as before the burning of Sodom God first patiently listened to Abraham’s pleas (bargains) to save the city for the sake of the righteous (Gen 18:23–33), and then with equal patience waited for the

216 *Peshar on Habakkuk*, <https://intertextual.bible/text/1qphab-7-matthew-24.36> [accessed: 5.01.2024].

217 Similar motifs occur in *1 Clem.* 7:5–6, but Clement does not apply such an explicit eschatological hermeneutic to them; rather, he emphasises the constant exhortation to repentance and conversion: “Let us turn to every age that has passed, and learn that, from generation to generation, the Lord has granted a place of repentance to all such as would be converted unto Him. Noah preached repentance, and as many as listened to him were saved”.

resisting Lot to leave Sodom (Gen 19:17–22),²¹⁸ so also before the final judgement he still shows his patience. These implications are contained in 2 Pet 3:9c–e: ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς μὴ βουλόμενός τινας ἀπολέσθαι ἀλλὰ πάντας εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι “[the Lord] shows patience towards you, not wishing that any [of you] should perish, but that each [of you] should come to repentance”.

Referring to God’s patience, the narrator of 2 Peter uses a different lexeme than in 1:6 when describing human virtues. Ὑπομονή in relation to humans meant perseverance, endurance and steadfastness,²¹⁹ the noun μακροθυμία and respectively the verb μακροθυμέω in relation to God accentuate the element of mercy. Merciful patience is one of the most important attributes of God in Jewish tradition and one of the main theological themes of the Old Testament.²²⁰ It is an essential element of God’s self-revelation.²²¹ Exod 34:6–7 lists God’s patience along with a number of closely related terms relating to grace and faithfulness, which it juxtaposes with the consequence of inflicting punishment for iniquity (ἀνομία). This would mean that mercy and justice are seen as the two most important incompatible attributes of God. While justice, as mentioned, is based on consistency, mercy takes on various facets, one of which is precisely patience. The text of Exod 34:6–7 became a model for later statements,²²² in which patience does not appear as an independent attribute of God. God’s patience and fullness of mercy is referred to by Moses when he asks God to forgive Israel (Lev 14:18). Jonah prays to a God who is “gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, repenting of punishment” (Jonah 4:2). Similar terms are used by Joel 2:13, Nah 1:3, Neh 9:17, Ps 86[85]:15, 103[102]:8, 145[144]:8–9, Wis 15:1. In apocalyptic literature, patience is also characterised alongside mercy (4 Ezra 7:132, 1 En 60:5), graciousness (4 Ezra 7:133), generosity (4 Ezra 7:135), and compassion (4 Ezra 7:136): “[The Most High is called] patient, because he shows patience toward those who have sinned, since they are his own works” (4 Ezra 7:134). This traditional path is followed by the apostle Paul in Rom 2:4 when he lists patience together with kindness and forbearance.

Seemingly, the narrator of 2 Peter departs from the presentation of God’s patience integrated with other qualities and seeks to emancipate it, as is the case in

218 R.P. Juza, *Echoes of Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of the Lord*, p. 234–235; in further argumentation, Juza cites rabbinic tradition (mainly targumic to Gen 18:21) in which the conversion of the inhabitants of Sodom signifies God’s withdrawal from the execution of the announced punishment. Even if one considers that this tradition goes back to the time of the writing of 2 Peter and may have been known to Peter, God’s waiver of judgment would contradict Peter’s entire argument for its inevitability and certainty.

219 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:6.

220 C.A. Blaising, *The Day of the Lord Will Come*, p. 394.

221 W. Grundmann, p. 116; D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 208.

222 J.H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 242; F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 324.

ApBaSyr 24:2, 85:8: “at that time that you shall see [...] the long-suffering of the Most High, which has been throughout all generations, who has been long-suffering towards all who are born, (alike) those who sin and (those who) are righteous”²²³ A similar treatment can be seen in 1 Pet 3:20 describing God’s patience before the Flood. It is not insignificant that these texts refer to punishment and the chance of salvation, and are therefore soteriological in nature. The same character is also found in 1 Tim 1:16, where patience is attributed to Christ (cf. 2 Pet 3:15) thus showing mercy to those who believe in Him. Patience, therefore, as a joint attribution of God (the Father) and Jesus Christ fits perfectly with the birefringence of the title “Lord”. It is the “Lord” – God the Father/Christ, who is the subject of 3:9c–e – who shows patience. However, as mentioned, the isolation of the Lord’s patience from other misericordial attributes is only apparent here. The soteriological purpose of patience described in 3:9de clearly re-integrates God’s patience with His eschatological mercy.²²⁴

The beneficiaries of the Lord’s patience are identified in verse 9c by the personal pronoun ὑμεῖς “ye”. If one considers the fact that Peter is addressing his letter to many future generations of Christians until the end times, the pronoun ὑμεῖς may refer primarily to those among the recipients who will not live to see the second coming of Jesus. The narrator anticipates that questions about the time of the parousia and judgment, despite the indication that it cannot be determined in human terms, will continually arise and even intensify as the years and centuries pass. Many questioners may be inclined to accept the solutions of the false teachers (cf. 2:14,18), or at least lose eschatological vigilance. He argues, therefore, to take this indeterminacy and alleged delays not as a reason for disappointment, doubt and even blasphemous accusations, but as an expression of God’s mercy and will to save. One can see here a clear contrast between the beliefs of τινες “some [people]” based on erroneous inference and the reminder (cf. 3:1.2) to the recipients of the letter about the teaching of the prophets and apostles (cf. 3:2), which allows the delay to be interpreted positively.

Since, as Peter reminds us, the object of God’s patience is the recipients of the letter, the theological-soteriological remarks of verse 9de must also be applied to them, as 3:15²²⁵ also confirms. This means that the statements τινας [μὴ] ἀπολέσθαι “that any/none [of you] should perish” and πάντας εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι “that each/every [of you] should come to repentance” are not to be taken as general

²²³ *The Apocalypse of Baruch the Syrian*, p. 416, 441.

²²⁴ See analysis of 2 Pet 3:9d–e.

²²⁵ R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 313; T.R. Schreiner, p.704; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1004; See analysis of 2 Pet 3:15.

quantifications that could imply universal salvation.²²⁶ As can be seen, the pronoun *τινες* in verse 9d is used in a different function, with a different meaning and with a different referent than the pronoun *τινες* in verse 9b, where it referred to false teachers. This interplay of meanings should not be surprising, for in the same verse it was applied to the verb *βραδύνω* and the noun *βραδύτημα*.

The false teachers have long been doomed. The narrator repeatedly describes their fate using the verb *ἀπόλλυμι* or the noun *ἀπωλεία* (2 Pet 2:1.3). The last time in reflecting on the preservation of the present state of affairs until the day of judgement and annihilation of the ungodly (2 Pet 3:7). According to Jewish apocalyptic tradition, especially those who deny judgment and blaspheme the Judge (cf. 2 Pet 2:10–12), and see His merciful patience as weakness and lack of power, await judgment and punishment (cf. 2:3b):

Until this day lasted the day of His mercy; and He hath been merciful and long-suffering towards those who dwell on the earth. And when the day, and the power, and the punishment, and the judgement come, which the Lord of Spirits hath prepared for those who worship not the righteous law, and for those who deny the righteous judgement, and for those who take His name in vain-that day is prepared, for the elect a covenant, but for sinners an inquisition (1 En 60:5–6).

Since the fate of the ungodly and false teachers has already been described, it seems quite natural that the narrator of 2 Peter moves slowly on to zoom in on the fate of the righteous/believers (cf. 3:13–15). He uses a phrase that has entered permanently into Christian language: *τινας μὴ ἀπολέσθαι*; indeed, formally and/or

226 Traditionally, 2 Pet 3:9de is translated and read in a universal way, referring to God's will for the conversion and salvation of everyone/everyone; see J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 363; W. Grundmann, p. 116–117; D.A. Keating, p. 420–421; R.A. Reese, *2 Peter and Jude*, p. 169; F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 325; M. Luther translates the text as follows: "will nicht, daß jemand verloren werde, sondern daß jedermann zur Buße finde [wills not that any one should perish, but that all should come to repentance]". In his commentary, however, he does not address this issue further. He treats 2 Pet 3:8–10 collectively and focuses on the divine and human perception of time, *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude Preached and Explained by Martin Luther III* (V.8–10). In modern translations, *τινες* is most often translated inclusively as "any/anyone": "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (NIV); "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (NKJV); "not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance" (NASB); "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (ESV). P.H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter*, p. 617–618, in 3:9d sees elements characteristic of universal salvation and from 2 Pet 3:9ce derives the encouragement for Christians to pray for all, including their enemies (here false teachers), so that they too may come to true knowledge, conversion and faith and thus escape judgment. Sometimes the inclusive translation and interpretation are slightly modified or narrowed, see: D.J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 188, for example, argues that only the statement about repentance in 3:9e applies to all people.

semantically similar expressions, also with a particularised quantification, can be found in John 3:16 (“everyone who believes”); John 10:28 (with reference to the believers/followers of Jesus/Shepherd); John 17:12, 1 Cor 1:18 (with reference to believers); only in 1 Tim 2:4, a general quantifier seems to have been used, but, as notes Daniel J. Harrington²²⁷ – the New Testament writers understood the idea of the universality of salvation mainly within Christianity. Early Christian literature confirms this. Clement of Rome comments on the words of the prophets about repentance addressed to the house of Israel, to the sons of God’s people, and concludes: “Desiring, therefore, that all His beloved should be partakers of repentance, He has, by His almighty will, established [these declarations]” (*1 Clem.* 8:5). This is even more clearly seen in *The Shepherd*. Hermas, in Similitude 8, describes different kinds of branches – green, withered completely, withered halfway, broken, destroyed in whole or in part by vermin, and so on. They symbolise the different attitudes of people but within the Church, and the different prospects of conversion, and with them of perdition/death or salvation (dwelling in the tower), associated with these intra-community attitudes, e. g.

they whose branches were found withered and moth-eaten are the apostates and traitors of the Church, who have blasphemed the Lord in their sins, [...] not a single one of them repented, although they heard the words which I spoke to them, which I enjoined upon you. [...] And they who gave them in withered and undecayed, these also were near to them; for they were hypocrites, and introducers of strange doctrines, and subverters of the servants of God, especially of those who had sinned, not allowing them to repent, but persuading them by foolish doctrines. These, accordingly, have a hope of repentance. [...] as many of them as repented became good [...]. You see, then, he said, that repentance involves life to sinners, but non-repentance death. [...] They whose branches were half-withered to the same extent are the wavering; [...] And they who have them half-withered and cracked are both waverers and slanderers [...]. And yet to these also, he continued, repentance is possible. [...] some of them have repented, and there is still remaining in them [...] a hope of repentance. And as many of them, he added, as have repented, shall have their dwelling in the tower. [...] And as many as do not repent at all, but abide in their deeds, shall utterly perish. [...] Many, accordingly, who heard my commands repented, and those at least who repented had their dwelling in the tower. But some of them at last fell away: these, accordingly, have not repentance [...]. And many of them doubted. These still have repentance in their power, if they repent speedily; and their abode will be in the tower. [...] And they who gave in their branches two-thirds withered and one-third green, are those who have denied [the Lord] in various ways. Many, however, repented, but some of them hesitated and were in doubt. These, then, have repentance within their

227 D. J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 288.

reach, if they repent quickly, and do not remain in their pleasures; but if they abide in their deeds, these, too, work to themselves death (Similitude 8:6–8).

In this picture (up to 8:10), Hermas finally describes those who “were always good, and faithful, and distinguished before God” (8:10), but they too were not without sin, nor were the waverers or those who only believed but did not manifest their faith by works. All of them, when they heard the call to repentance “they unhesitatingly repented, and practice all virtue and righteousness” (8:10). And although the similitude ends with the appeal: “Go and tell them to every one, that they may repent, and they shall live unto God. Because the Lord, having had compassion on all men, has sent me to give repentance, although some are not worthy of it on account of their works” (8:11), it is clear that the call to repentance is addressed to the faithful who belong to the Christian community, not to all people. Hermas – like Peter – links this call with God’s patience and willingness to save those who have previously been called into the Christian community: “the Lord, being long-suffering μακρόθυμος ὡν ὁ κύριος, desires those who were called by His Son to be saved” (8:11).

The reason for the delay of judgment is God’s patience, while the purpose is the desire to save/salvage the faithful. This is expressed using the antithetical parallelism μὴ βουλόμενός τινας ἀπολέσθαι – πάντας εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι. Thus, on the one hand, God’s salvific will signifies His desire that the faithful should not perish; on the other, that they should come to conversion.²²⁸ The two elements of the parallelism condition each other, meaning that the condition for avoiding annihilation is conversion, and the condition for conversion is the recognition that one deserves annihilation. Both segments use verbs in the form of infinitivi aoristi. The aorist indicates that the narrator of 2 Peter had in mind a total, complete annihilation from which there is no rescue, and a total, complete coming to conversion involving all aspects and dimensions of human life.

A similar thought to 2 Pet 3:9de and the formula εἰς μετάνοιάν σε ἄγει can be found in Rom 2:4.²²⁹ This does not, however, imply a direct relationship between the Peterine and Pauline texts. Rather, the source of Peter’s claim should be sought in the Jewish sapiential tradition (Wis 11:23, 12:10) and the prophetic and apocalyptic texts referring to God’s patience, where there is also a call to repentance (Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2), a mention of human sinfulness (4 Ezra 7:134) and the need for justification (ApBaSyr 24:2). In 4 Ezra 4:38–39 the protagonist expresses a supposition

228 Otherwise, for example, F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 324, who translates this passages as follows: “His [God’s] patience is motivated by the fact that he does not wish some people to perish, but desires to bring everyone to conversion”.

229 J.H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 242.

particularly close to Peter's argument: "all of us also are full of ungodliness. And it is perhaps on account of us that the time of threshing is delayed for the righteous – on account of the sins of those who dwell on earth".

The motif of God's patience to give people time to repent is also known to Philo. In *Leg. alleg.* III 34:106, he quotes Scripture to prove that "God does not visit with his vengeance even those who sin against him, immediately, but that he gives them time for repentance, and to remedy and correct their evil conduct".²³⁰ Moreover, even Plutarch, in his treatise *On Those who are Punished by the Deity Late*, cites as one of the causes and one of the purposes of delay the mildness and long-suffering of a god who wishes to encourage a sick soul to repent:

observing that the deity [...] puts off his punishments and defers them for some time [we] shall be reserved in our views about such matters, and shall think that mildness and long-suffering which the god exhibits a divine part of virtue, reforming a few by speedy punishment, but benefiting and correcting many by a tardy one. [...] But it is likely that the deity would look at the state of any guilty soul that he intended to punish, if haply it might turn and repent, and would give time for reformation to all whose vice was not absolute and incurable. [...] [W]hereas to those who seem to have fallen into wrong-doing, rather from ignorance of what was good than from deliberate choice of what was bad, he gives time to repent. But if they persist in vice he punishes them too, for he has no fear that they will escape him (*Moralia* 551C–E).

The fact that God gives the faithful time to convert should be seen as an act of mercy.²³¹ This is why the prophetic texts so closely linked mercy, grace and patience. Now, it is also clear that Peter's addition of the purpose of patience fits into this characteristic parity, or even identity, of patience and mercy in prophetism, and tones down and even overcomes the apparent isolation of patience from God's other misericordial attributes.

In describing conversion, the narrator of 2 Peter uses the term *μετάνοια*. The term rarely appears in classical Greek, but it is relatively common in koine Greek, although it occurs occasionally in the LXX, mainly in wisdom literature (Prov 14:15, Wis 11:23, 12:10.19, Sir 44:16). It refers primarily to mental activity, but also includes the translation of reflection into action, so it usually means: firstly, the recognition of previous views as erroneous; secondly, remorse and regret that erroneous views determined erroneous conduct; and finally, a radical change of conduct.²³² Before

230 Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* III, <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book4.html> [accessed: 5.01.2024].

231 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 304.

232 J. Goetzmann, *Conversion (μετάνοια)*, NIDNTT, p. 357.

the noun *μετάνοια* or the verb *μετανοέω* came to be used in the NT to refer to the phenomenon as a whole, they were used in the ST to refer to particular components of conversion, e. g. when describing regret (1 Sam 15:29, Joel 2:14, Jer 4:28, 18:8.10, Wis 5:3), as well as in describing the conduct of God who turns away from inflicting punishment and turns towards mercy (Amos 7:3.6, Jonah 3:9). Thus, if we consider the prophetic tradition, Peter's connection between God's patience and conversion can be understood as follows: The Lord shows patience to you, wanting everyone to come to such a state that will cause that God resigns from inflicting punishment and shows mercy. This is, of course, overlaid with a holistic inter- and New Testament understanding of conversion as a human turning away from sin and changing the way of life. The bearer of such a meaning is, of course, the Greek term, but also its Semitic equivalents, as can be seen very clearly in the Qumran literature, where there are numerous exhortations and references to conversion treated as a condition of membership in the community:

And this is the rule for the men of the community who have freely pledged themselves to be converted from all evil and to cling to all his commandments according to his will [...] Whoever approaches the Council of the Community shall enter the Covenant of God in the presence of all who have freely pledged themselves. He shall undertake by a binding oath to return with all his heart and soul" (1QS 5:1.7–9)

the members of the community call themselves converts from Israel: "The priests are the captivity of Israel who have gone forth out of the land of Judah and they who have joined them. And the sons of Zadok are the chosen of Israel" (CD 4:2–4), and their covenant with God, the covenant of conversion²³³: "Because they entered into the covenant of repentance" (CD 19:16).

From the apocalyptic tradition, Peter draws the eschatological orientation of conversion; thus, among the prophets, he may be considered closest to John the Baptist and Jesus himself, who called for conversion because the kingdom of God had come (cf. Matt 3:2, 4:17, 10:7, Mark 1:15). In 3:9e, then, he does not mean to emphasise turning away from a sinful, pagan past, for this the faithful have already done by joining the Christian community, but to persevere in that community (cf. 2 Pet 2:20–21). In the call for the faithful to come to conversion, one can see a reference to the baptismal catechesis from chapter 1. The narrator argues that baptism is not the final moment in the Christian life, but the initiatory moment when the faithful can begin to come to conversion. Having already been cleansed of past sins (1:9) and equipped with everything necessary for a godly life and escape from corruption (1:3–4), they should continually use this equipment to perfect

233 Ibid.

themselves (1:5–8), affirm their election (1:10), not stumble on their way to the eternal kingdom (1:10–11) and attain a share in the divine nature (1:4). In this baptismal context, one can see a characteristic feature of Peter’s understanding of conversion, which is not a one-off act but a daily, eschatologically oriented Christian duty²³⁴ leading to standing before God without stain or blemish (2 Pet 3:14–15).

God’s patience, which temporarily restrains His wrath,²³⁵ is not, however, shown indefinitely, for mercy does not imply the suspension of justice. ApBaSyr 12:4 speaks of the coming of God’s wrath after a time of patience: “For assuredly in its own season shall the (divine) wrath awake against you. Which now in long-suffering is held in as it were by reins”; likewise the canonical Apocalypse of John (Rev 2:5.16.21–22, 3:3, cf. Ps 7:12–13, Acts 17:30–31). Therefore, conversion, the exercise of baptismal gifts, should not be delayed.²³⁶ The one who fails to convert in time will be subject to judgment and punishment, just like the ungodly false teachers who, although they turned away from the pagan way of life (2:20), even accepted baptism (1:9), nevertheless did not persevere in the daily pursuit of conversion, became like blind men, or rather visually impaired (1:9), so it is no wonder that they deviated from the straight path and went astray (2:15) on their way to the eternal kingdom. Linked to the encouragement to begin the pursuit of conversion immediately is the depiction of the sudden, unexpected arrival of the day of the Lord in 3:10a. This makes the case that conversion can also be seen as part of eschatological vigilance.

In verse 10a, the coming of the day of the Lord is likened to the coming of a thief. As already mentioned, this verse forms, together with 3:8, the framework of the entire passus not only in terms of content – referring to the time of the parousia and judgment – but also in terms of form. For both texts make direct reference to prophetic and apostolic teaching. 2 Pet 3:8 referred to the comparison with Ps 90[89]:4, 2 Pet 3:10a refers to the apostolic comparison of the day of the Lord to a thief (cf. Matt 24:44, Luke 12:40, 1 Thess 5:2, Rev 3:3, 16:15).

The very phrase ἡμέρα κυρίου “the day of the Lord” is taken from the prophetic and apocalyptic tradition. By using it, the narrator emphasises the prophetic nature of his statement. “The day of the Lord” has a double meaning, which is also marked in 2 Peter. On the one hand, it signifies the eschatological judgment and punishment that will fall on sinners (Isa 13:6.9, Ezek 13:5, 30:3, Joel 1:15, 2:1.11, Obad 15–16, 3:4, Amos 5:18.20, Zeph 1:7.14, Mal 3:2, cf. Acts 2:20, 1 Cor 5:5, 1 Thess 5:2, 2 Thess 2:2),

234 In the same spirit, M. Luther speaks about penance in thesis 1: “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent’ (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance” (*The 95 Theses* 1).

235 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 310.

236 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 187.

on the other hand, a time of salvation for the righteous (Joel 2:21–3:2, Obad 17, Zech 14:4–21). Such ambivalence also appears in extra-biblical literature:

On that day Mine Elect One shall sit on the throne of glory And shall try their [sinners] works [...]. And their souls shall grow strong within them when they see Mine Elect Ones, And those who have called upon My glorious name: Then will I cause Mine Elect One to dwell among them. And I will transform the heaven and make it an eternal blessing and light And I will transform the earth and make it a blessing: And I will cause Mine elect ones to dwell upon it: But the sinners and evil-doers shall not set foot thereon. For I have provided and satisfied with peace My righteous ones And have caused them to dwell before Me: But for the sinners there is judgement impending with Me, So that I shall destroy them from the face of the earth (1 En 45:3–7).

Peter described the judgment on sinners – their extermination – directly. In 3:9c–e, by mentioning God’s patience and unwillingness to annihilate the faithful, he also indirectly pointed to the salvation of the righteous. He will return to this positive aspect of “the day of the Lord” again in 3:15–16.

In the New Testament, “the day of the Lord” is also called “the day of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:8), “the day of our Lord Jesus” (2 Cor 1:14), “the day of Christ [Jesus]” (Phil 1:6.10, 2:16, cf. 2 Thess 1:6–10). As in 3:8 and 9, also in 3:10a, the title “Lord” is to be considered bi-referential: both God (prophetic tradition) and Jesus (apostolic tradition).

From the apostolic tradition, as mentioned, the comparison of the day of the Lord to a thief is taken. This startling analogy is intended, firstly, to make the recipients aware that the day will come suddenly, without warning, and therefore all speculation and calculation, even those based on Ps 90[89]:4 are inapplicable; secondly, the idea is to mobilise the faithful to vigilance and constant readiness for the coming of the Lord, no matter when it takes place, i. e. to constant Christian conversion. Neyrey²³⁷ as well as Watson and Callan²³⁸ claim that the thought and comparison of the coming of the day of the Lord to a thief was taken by the narrator of 2 Peter directly from Paul (cf. 1 Thess 5:2.4) and cite 2 Pet 3:15–16 as evidence. However, this seems to be too far-fetched a conclusion; it is not known exactly what writings of Paul the author of 2 Peter was familiar with.²³⁹ A simpler solution would be to point out that the comparison entered the Christian sociolect from the oral tradition and became an essential element of a pan-Christian eschatological

237 J.H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 242.

238 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 209.

239 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:15–16.

parenthesis encouraging vigilance²⁴⁰ and conversion. Such mobilisation combined with warning appears in the canonical gospels (Matt 24:43–44, cf. Mark 13:32–37) and the Apocalypse of John (Rev 3:3, 16:15), but also in extra-canonical literature e. g. Didache 16:1: “be ready, for you know not the hour in which our Lord comes”, and in the Gospel of Thomas: “if the owner of a house knows that the thief is coming, he will begin his vigil before he comes and will not let him dig through into his house of his domain to carry away his goods”.

The most likely source of the comparison is the teaching of Jesus himself, although it should be noted that in the gospels and Revelation the coming of Jesus is likened to the coming of a thief (ἥξω ὡς κλέπτης “I will come like a thief” – Rev 3:3, ἰδοὺ ἔρχομαι ὡς κλέπτης “Behold, I am coming like a thief” – Rev 16:15), in 1 Thess 5:2 and 2 Pet 3:10a – it is indeed as in 2 Peter “the day of the Lord will come like a thief”. This difference, however, does not seem to be significant, since the day of the Lord, associated primarily with judgment, is closely associated in apostolic tradition with the parousia – the second coming of Jesus as Judge and Ruler (cf. 2 Pet 1:16–17). As mentioned, the element of comparison marked by the comparative participle ὡς is of considerable importance here, for it impinges on the understanding of 2 Pet 3:8b. It seems clear that in the comparison “the day of the Lord/the Lord will come like a thief” is not about making the Lord a thief, but about finding *tertium comparationis* common to the element being compared and the comparative element. The same mechanism must also have been used in the comparisons in 3:8b: “one day in the Lord [is] like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day”, although undoubtedly *tertium comparationis* is less clear there. The point, however, is to dwell on the observation that the divine and human reckoning of time are incompatible, and a short time with God (one day) is a long time in human perception, but also a short time in human perspective can be a long time from the point of view of God’s design. All calculations are meaningless anyway, because the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly anyway.

As can be seen, 2 Pet 3:10a is an excellent summary of the transitory passage begun in 3:8, in which the point is to draw the audience’s attention to three facts. First – the false teachers’ accusations of God’s passivity and delay or even omission of judgement are unfounded because they stem from the adoption of a human time perspective. God’s chronometry is quite different. It eludes all speculation and calculation. From this divine perspective, there can be no delay²⁴¹ (verse 8). Secondly – if we look at eschatology from a human point of view and assume that there has been some delay, it is a delay caused by God’s mercy (patience). For God wants the day of judgment and the day of Jesus’ coming to be a time of salvation,

240 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 306.

241 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 209.

not annihilation, for the faithful (verse 9a–d). Thirdly – for the day of the Lord to be a time of salvation, there needs to be a constant mobilisation of the faithful to vigilance, which translates into a continual coming to repentance/conversion (verse 9e–10a).

2.12 D₄. Prophetic and apostolic teaching (2 Pet 3:10b–11a)

^{10b}In which the heavens loudly/at the voice [of God] shall pass away,

And heavenly bodies, burning, will be destroyed/dissolved.

The earth and the works on it will not be found/will be burnt up,

^{11a}Because it will all [be] destroyed/dissolved in this way.

After interpreting the delay as an expression of God's patience and mercy, Peter returns again to a description of the last day drawn from the apocalyptic and prophetic and apostolic tradition. He had already prepared his audience for the fact that he was now reaching not only for prophetic imagery but also for the teaching of Jesus transmitted by the apostles in 3:10a by referring to the comparison of the day of the Lord to a thief, which most likely referred to the sayings of Jesus himself. He most likely borrows the phrase about the passing of the heavens from Jesus.

The structure of the prophetic and apostolic teaching quoted in 3:10b–11a refers back to 3:7, where it was said that “the heavens and the earth were and are preserved for fire”. Now the narrator returns to this thought, develops it and summarises it. The development includes elements related to heaven (3:10b–c) and elements related to earth (3:10d). The summary deals with destruction by fire (3:11a).

Formally, 2 Pet 3:10b is a continuation of the sentence begun in 3:10a, the subject of which is “the day of the Lord” (ἡξει δὲ ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς). “In which” ἐν ᾧ, beginning the relative attributive clause, refers then to “the day”. However, this clause has its own subject – οὐρανοί “heavens”. Its predicate – παρέρχομαι ‘to pass away’, ‘to lapse’, ‘to pass out of sight’ clearly alludes to the apocalyptic and eschatological teaching of Jesus (Matt 5:18, 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33, cf. Rev 21:1).²⁴² The narrator thus alters the traditional image “the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll” that appears in Isa 34:4 and even in the dependent texts of 2 Peter, e. g. in ApPet 5 (in the account of Macarius Magnes 4:9), where the Isaiah comparisons are revisited: “And every power of heaven shall be melted, and the heaven shall be rolled up like a book”. Perhaps the purpose of such a procedure is to make the narrator credible again in the eyes of the audience. For Peter would be acting as an eyewitness (cf. 2 Pet 1:16) and direct recipient of Jesus' eschatological

242 R. Bauckham, *Jude*, 2 Peter, p. 315.

speeches. Now, as an apostle, Peter passes the message on, taking care to make his listeners aware that they are the continuation and culmination of the eschatological prophetic message (cf. 1:19a). It is no coincidence, then, that the general formula attributed by the evangelists to Jesus οἱ οὐρανοὶ παρελεύσονται, he enriches with details that connote images from apocalyptic Jewish tradition: a loud sound, the fate of the heavenly bodies and, finally, fire.

The sound accompanying the passing of the heavens is defined by the adverb ροιζηδόν. Since it is a biblical hapax legomenon,²⁴³ it is difficult to determine its exact meaning. If one considers its onomatopoeic character,²⁴⁴ ροιζηδόν would suggest a sound similar to a swish, crackle, hiss (perhaps the crackle or hiss of fire). G.L. Green speculates that it may be a sound generated by something passing with great force and speed.²⁴⁵ Sometimes a rumble, roar, howl or great noise caused by the confusion of many different sounds is indicated, just as the cacophony of the eschatological doom of the world is described in 1QH 11[3]:32–36: the depths of the abyss “roar like the turbulence of the seas when their waves beat and spew out ash and mud. The earth shrieks over the desolation wrought in the world, and all its depths trumpet [...] God thunders with the thunder of his great strength, and his holy residence echoes with the truth of his glory, and the host of the heaven adds its noise”. The Apocalypse of Thomas takes a completely different approach to the audible eschatological signs. The text refers to the six days of creation. On days one, two and three there is a great voice or thunder that is the antithesis to the creative word of God. Although not expressed explicitly, one can guess that the voice in the end times will also belong to God/Jesus as Judge.

At the third hour of the day shall be a great and mighty voice in the firmament of the heaven [...]. And on the second day there shall be a great voice in the firmament of the heaven, and the earth shall be moved out of its place [...]. And on the third day, about the second hour, shall be a voice in heaven, and the abysses of the earth shall utter their voice from the four corners of the world.

On the following days the voice will belong to creation. “And on the fourth day at the first hour, the earth of the east shall speak, the abyss shall roar [...]. And on the fifth day, at the sixth hour, there shall be great thunderings suddenly in the heaven”. In a shorter version of the text, various voices and sounds also accompany the events of the sixth, seventh and eighth days:

243 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1008.

244 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 315.

245 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1008.

And on the sixth day at the fourth hour there shall be a great voice in heaven, and the firmament of the heaven shall be cloven from the east unto the west [...] And on the seventh day at the eighth hour there shall be voices in the four corners of the heaven. And all the air shall be shaken, and filled with holy angels, and they shall make war among them all the day long. [...] And when the seven days are passed by, on the eighth day at the sixth hour there shall be a sweet and tender voice in heaven from the east.

As can be seen, the apocalyptic tradition links noise in the last days either to a creature that is being destroyed or to the voice of God that is carrying out judgment. It seems that Peter is closer to the latter variant, referring to the prophetic texts, where the angry voice of God is likened to thunder.²⁴⁶ Moreover, God's accomplishing judgment and destroying word/voice in the end times corresponds with Peter's earlier argument (2 Pet 3:5–6). It also fits perfectly with apocalypticism's characteristic integration of ktiseological and eschatological motifs and themes. 4 Ezra additionally links this voice, belonging to the messiah "who will himself deliver his creation" (4 Ezra 13:26), with the action of fire: "and whenever his voice issued from his mouth, all who heard his voice melted as wax melts when it feels the fire. [...] And as for your seeing wind and fire and a storm coming out of his mouth" (4 Ezra 13:4.27). Likewise, The Apocalypse of Elijah: "It will come to pass on that day that the Lord will hear and command the heaven and the earth with great wrath. And they will send for fire" (ApEl 5:22). This imagery is close to the narrator of 2 Peter, who chose to creatively combine the motif of the destructive action of fire with the motif of the voice/word of God in the last days in an amalgam *ροιζηδόν* evoking both associations simultaneously.

The action of fire is mentioned in 3:10c with the verb *καυσόομαι* in part. praes. medii 'burning' or 'melting' (under the influence of high temperature), which docket the noun *στοιχεῖα*. The term *στοιχεῖα* can be understood in at least three ways: firstly, as the components, the chemical elements of which the world is made, often identified with the classical four elements; secondly, as the heavenly bodies, i. e. the sun, the moon, the stars; thirdly and finally, as the supernatural powers that govern nature.

The first hypothesis, related to the understanding of *στοιχεῖα* as elements and/or elements, is based on the assumption that the narrator of 2 Peter draws here primarily on Greek philosophy. For the Greeks believed that the basic components of the universe are water, earth, air and fire.²⁴⁷ Plutarch, referring to Plato and Aristotle, calls earth, water, air and fire the four elements (roots) (*Sentiments Concerning Nature* I:2). Diogenes Laertius, in the *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, notes that

246 1 Sam 2:10, 7:10, Ps 18[17]:14, 77[76]:19, 104[103]:7, Job 37:5, Sir 43:17, Joel 4:16, Amos 1:2.

247 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 209–210.

already the Egyptian philosophers “say that matter was the first principle, next the four elements (στοιχεῖα) were derived from matter, and thus living things of every species were produced” (I Prologue:10). However, the term is primarily characteristic of the philosophy of the Stoics, who also distinguished between principle (ἀρχή) and elements (στοιχεῖα):

[principles] without generation or destruction, whereas the elements are destroyed when all things are resolved into fire (ἐκπύρωσις). Moreover, the principles are incorporeal and destitute of form, while the elements have been endowed with form. [God] created first of all the four elements, fire, water, air, earth. [...] An element is defined as that from which particular things first come to be at their birth and into which they are finally resolved (VII 1:134.136).

Since the narrator of 2 Peter is close to Stoicism, one could see in 3:10c and later in 3:22–13 an adaptation of at least some components of the Stoic idea of purification and renewal of the world by fire (ἐκπύρωσις and παλιγγενεσία).²⁴⁸ There would be nothing strange in the transposition of such a Greek viewpoint into Jewish and Christian tradition. On the contrary, it would even be in line with Peter’s strategy to Christianise Greek, especially Stoic and Socratic-Platonic philosophy. This is all the more so since echoes of such ideas about the four elements or the chemical elements of which the world and man are made already resound in Jewish tradition, e. g. in Md. In Wis 7:17, 19:18, 4 Macc 12:13 and in Philo, who in *De Cherubim* II 35:127 compares the creation of the world to the construction of a house: “consider the greatest house or city, namely, this world [...] the materials are the four elements, of which it is composed”. The same cosmological concept is also adapted by Hermas, who in Vision 3:13 expresses the belief that the world is governed by the four elements. Aristides of Athens proves in the *Apology* that the elements – earth, water, fire and winds, i. e. air – cannot be gods, although some barbarians give them divine worship. The same mistake is made by those who regard the sun as a deity, while it is, like the stars and the moon, merely a creation of God. In one of the manuscripts of the Syriac version, after the second paragraph, the mention is added that “the wind is obedient to God, and fire to the angels; the waters also to the demons and the earth to the sons of men” (*Apology* II). The interpretation of στοιχεῖα as the elements of 2 Pet 3:10c may have been influenced by the Second Book of the Sibylline Oracles, which states that in the end times all the four elements will become bereft: “And then of the world all the elements [s]hall be bereft, air, earth, sea, light, sky, days,

248 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:7; see also J.A. Harrill, *Stoic Physics, the Universal Conflagration, and the Eschatological Destruction of the ‘Ignorant and Unstable’ in 2 Peter*, [in:] *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, ed. T. Rasmus, T. Engberg-Pedersen, I. Dunderberg, Grand Rapids 2010, p. 115–140.

[n]ights” (SibOr 2:255–257). What is notable here is the absence of fire among these elements – most likely because in the Sibylline books fire plays a key role during judgment, so it cannot be annihilated.²⁴⁹ The reference of the term στοιχεῖα to the four elements or chemical elements seems attractive, for, as mentioned, it fits into Peter’s strategy of Christianising Greek philosophy.²⁵⁰ However, it does not stand up when confronted with the parallel structures of 3:7 and 3:10b–d (and later also 3:13), for the chemical elements or the four elements cannot be attributed solely to heaven. Meanwhile, the narrator of 2 Peter seems to make a clear distinction between elements associated with heaven and elements associated with earth.²⁵¹

The sun, moon and stars have already appeared alongside the four elements in some of the texts cited above. Hypothesis two therefore assumes that it is to them that the term στοιχεῖα refers. Although this view has the most supporters among commentators,²⁵² it is not reflected in contemporary Polish translations of 2 Peter.²⁵³ The source of the identification of στοιχεῖα in general with the celestial bodies can also be traced back to Greek philosophy, including Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (997b), which announces: “there will have to be a heaven besides the sensible heaven, and a sun and moon, and all the other heavenly bodies”. As it seems, at the turn of the 1st/ second century, early Christian writers understood the term στοιχεῖα in this Aristotelian spirit, whether they treated the sun, stars, moon in a literal or metaphorical way. Theophilus of Antioch in *To Autolycus* I IV:3, V:3 calls the sun, moon and stars the elements:

For the heavens are His work, the earth is His creation, the sea is His handiwork; man is His formation and His image; sun, moon, and stars are His elements [στοιχεῖα], made for signs, and seasons, and days, and years, that they may serve and be slaves to man; [...] For if a man cannot look upon the sun, though it be a very small heavenly body, on account of its exceeding heat and power.

Justin Martyr in *The Second Apology* V:2 describes the establishment of the protection of angels over men, but before this took place, “God [...] had made the whole world, and subjected things earthly to man, and arranged the heavenly elements [the sun, the moon and stars] for the increase of fruits and rotation of the seasons”.

249 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:7.

250 This reference was still popular in the Middle Ages. Bede the Venerable, in his commentary on the Second Letter of Peter, argues that “the world consists of four elements, which are fire, air, earth and fire. This fire will not consume all of them, but only two. The other two the fire will renew and they will receive a new appearance”; *Ojcowie Kościoła komentują Biblię*, p. 147.

251 See below for a tabular representation of the parallels between 3:5.6.7 and 10c.

252 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 315.

253 ESV renders στοιχεῖα as “heavenly bodies”; NIV, KJV, NKJV, NASB translates the term as “elements”.

Tatian, in *Oratio ad Graecos* 9–10, uses the term *στοιχεῖα* to describe the signs of the zodiac and the figures who were honoured by the Greeks with being transferred to the heavens, to the constellations. In the letter of Polycrates of Ephesus quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea, *στοιχεῖα* is used metaphorically and denotes the most prominent figures, the stars; it refers to the apostle John, the apostle Philip and his daughters: “For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the last day, at the coming of the Lord” (*HE* III 31:3). It can be assumed that 2 Pet 3:10c is part of this tradition of understanding the association of *στοιχεῖα* with elements belonging to the heavens, with heavenly bodies. A comparison with 2 Pet 3:12c may confirm this. Both texts, in almost the same words, first mention the heavens (3:10b and 12b) and then the burning elements that are destroyed. Since the reference to the earth is missing in 3:12, it becomes clear that *στοιχεῖα* refer only to the heavens, and 12b and 12c form a synonymous parallelism:

2 Pet 3:10b–c	2 Pet 3:12b–c
ἐν ἢ οἱ οὐρανοὶ. ῥοιζηδὸν παρελεύσονται, στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσεται	οὐρανοὶ πυρούμενοι λυθήσονται καὶ στοιχεῖα καυσούμενα τῆκεται
in which the heavens loudly/at the voice of God shall pass away, and heavenly bodies burning, will be destroyed	heavens being/standing on fire will be destroyed, and heavenly bodies burning, will be melted

A comparison of 3:10b–c and 3:12b–c also makes it possible to definitively reconstruct the sources of this imagery. As already mentioned, the narrator of 2 Peter in describing the destruction of the sky and its elements partly depends on Isa 34:4: καὶ ἐλιγίησεται ὁ οὐρανὸς ὡς βιβλίον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἄστρα τεσεῖται ὡς φύλλα ἐξ ἀμπέλου καὶ ὡς πίπτει φύλλα ἀπὸ συκῆς “All the host of heaven shall rot; the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll. All their host shall wither away, as the leaf wilts on the vine, or as the fig withers on the tree”. However, he omits the image of the rolling up of the heavens, replacing it with Jesus’ “passing”. This is overlaid with Mal 3:19a where the melting of the world and especially of the ungodly in fire is described: διότι ἰδοὺ ἡμέρα κυρίου ἔρχεται καιομένη ὡς κλίβανος καὶ φλέξει αὐτούς “For the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble, And the day that is coming will set them on fire”. Malachi is also alluded to in 2 *Clem.* 16:3: “the day of judgment draws near like a burning oven, and certain of the heavens and all the earth will melt, like lead melting in fire”. All doubts seem to be dispelled by the dependency of ApPet 5 on 2 Peter, which at the same time provides an indication of how 2 Pet 3:10c and 12b were interpreted

in the second century on the basis of Isa 34:4 and Mal 3:19. The Ethiopic text reads: “And the stars shall fly in pieces by flames of fire”; the Greek text is more elaborate and refers in part to the third hypothesis: “And every power of heaven shall be melted, and the heaven shall be rolled up like a book, and all the stars shall fall like leaves from the vine, and as the leaves from the fig-tree”. Furthermore, the typical integration of ktiseological and eschatological themes in apocalypticism must be taken into account in the reconstruction. Thus, if one sees in 2 Pet 3:10c motifs carried over from the creation narrative, it becomes clear that it is about all that was created on the fourth day (Gen 1:14–18).

The third hypothesis is related to the second,²⁵⁴ for he personifies the heavenly bodies and sees in them the powers of the heavens. Although the source text for 2 Pet 3:10 in the LXX version of Isa 34:4 speaks of the stars (ἄστρα), it must be remembered that the Hebrew text here mentions כל-צבא השמים “all the hosts of the heavens”. It can be understood like the LXX – as a metaphorical term for the stars, but it is also possible to see in the hosts of the heavens a synecdoche indicating the hosts of angels [inhabiting the heavens]. This synecdoche makes it possible to refer to the Jewish tradition, which treats angels as spiritual beings or even powers controlling and directing the sun, moon and stars:²⁵⁵ “For on the first day He created the heavens which are above and the earth and the waters and all the spirits which serve before him [...] and of all the spirits of his creatures which are in the heavens and on the earth” (Jub 2:2).

The destructive effect of fire on heavenly bodies (καυσούμενα) is further reinforced by the verb λύω in ind. fut. pass. The basic meaning of this verb is ‘to dissolve’, but in some contexts it can mean the demolition of a building (John 2:19) or the breaking of wooden parts of, for example, a ship (Acts 27:41). It is also used to describe destruction in SibOr 3:509–510: “dens of earth shall he break up [a]nd walls demolish”. In 2 Pet 3:10c the passive voice λυθήσεται is to be interpreted as passivum theologicum. It implies that God, by means of fire, will carry out the annihilation of the heavens, which, on the basis of the contextual uses of the verb λύω, can be imagined as the collapse of the burning and/or melting vault of heaven, just as SibOr 3:97–111 describes:

Then all the elements shall be bereft [o]f order, when the God who dwells on high [s]hall roll the heaven, even as a scroll is rolled; And to the mighty earth and sea shall fall [t]he entire multiform sky; and there shall flow [a] tireless cataract of raging fire, [a]nd it shall burn the land, and burn the sea, [a]nd heavenly sky, and night, and day, and melt Creation itself together and pick out [w]hat is pure. No more laughing spheres of light, [n]or night,

254 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 316.

255 *Ibid.*

nor dawn, nor many days of care, [n]or spring, nor winter, nor the summer-time, [n]or autumn. And then of the mighty God [t]he judgment midway in a mighty age [s]hall come, when all these things shall come to pass.

Although formally in 2 Pet 3:10c the destruction by fire concerns the heavens, it can be assumed that the fate of the heavens will be shared by the whole of creation, including the earth and what is on it (cf. Isa 66:16, Mic 1:4, Nah 1:6, Zeph 1:18, Mal 3:2.19, Acts 2:19, 2 Thess 1:7–8, Rev 9:18, 18:8).²⁵⁶

The translation and meaning of verse 10d was considered problematic, primarily because of the noun ἔργα and the verb εὐρίσκω used here in ind. fut. pass. εὐρεθήσεται (cf. also 2 Pet 3:14). The passive voice is to be considered passivum theologicum, so that the agent of the action expressed by this verb is God. The basic meaning of the verb εὐρίσκω is ‘to find’, ‘acquire’, ‘attain’, ‘obtain’. The whole expression γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα “the earth and the works thereon will not be found” would have to be considered Semitism or at least Septuagintism, based on the meaning of the Hebrew verb מצא ‘find’. If negated – מצא לו – it indicates that something that was not found, especially by God, ceases to exist (see e. g. Dan 11:19 מצא לו rendered in the LXX as καὶ οὐχ εὐρεθήσεται and translated as “cease to exist, disappear”).²⁵⁷ It is not insignificant that expressions with לו

256 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:7.

257 The phrase οὐχ εὐρεθήσεται appears in the main text of NA28. In NA27 and earlier, *textus receptus* (after א B P 1175. 1448. 1739^{int}. 1852 syph^{mss txt sy^{bm}g}) contained the verb εὐρεθήσεται without a negating participle, which caused problems in understanding and interpreting the text. Usually in the sentence καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται (lit. “and the earth and the works/deeds thereon shall be found”) saw a parallel with PsSal 17:10(8): “According to their sins didst Thou recompense them, O God; So that it befell them according to their deeds” and the meaning of the verb εὐρίσκω was considered in a juridical context as making enquiry, investigation and passing judgment based on the results of the investigation. This entailed understanding the noun ἔργα in ethical terms as deeds. The whole of verse 3:10d would therefore read: “And the earth and the deeds therein shall be examined and judged”. The context of 3:7b would suggest that it is about the deeds of the ungodly. Another solution was to take corrections according to the textual variants given in the critical apparatus. Thus, the verb εὐρεθήσεται was replaced by the verb ἀφανισθήσονται (after C) – “the land and the works/deeds thereon will disappear/will be destroyed”; by the verb κατακαίσεται (after A 048. 33. 81. 307. 436. 442. 642. 1611. 1739^v 1. 2344. Byz vg^{cl} syph^{mss v1} sy^h; Cyr) or κατακαίσονται (per 5. 1243. 1735. 2492) – “the land and the works/devotions thereon will be burned” or by adding to εὐρεθήσεται participium λυόμενα (per P⁷²) – “the land and the works/devotions thereon will be found [as] destroyed”. On the assumption that ἔργα refer to the works that are on the ground one obtained meanings similar to καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα οὐχ εὐρεθήσεται – “the earth and the works on it will disappear”. However, on the assumption that ἔργα indicates works, meanings were obtained that were unclear and difficult to interpret without further emendations introduced by translators and commentators but not confirmed by known manuscript textual evidence; see R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 316–317; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1012; D.F. Watson, T. Callan, p. 210; R.L. Overstreet, *A Study of 2 Peter 3:10–13*, “Bibliotheca Sacra”

κατακαίσει or οὐχ εὐρίσκω often occur in futurum and in eschatological and/or apocalyptic contexts, for example Isa 35:9, PssSol 14:6(9): “Therefore their inheritance is Sheol and darkness and destruction, And they shall not be found in the day when the righteous obtain mercy” (Rev 16:20, 18:21).²⁵⁸ By using this expression, Peter continues his stylisation begun in 3:4. He thus wants to convince his audience that he is an apocalypticist, and that his visions based on existing prophecies not only have the same value as the statements of the earlier prophets, but also – by adopting a Christocentric perspective accentuated by the adoption of a fragment of Jesus’ logia in 3:10a and 10b – are complementary to the earlier prophecies.

The noun ἔργα should also be read in this apocalyptic context and holding to apocalyptic imagery describing cosmic annihilation. As mentioned, 3:10b–c and 3:10d develop the concepts of “the heavens and the earth” from 3:7.²⁵⁹ Thus, as verse 10c described the heavenly bodies as elements belonging to the heavens (10b), so 10dβ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα “and the works on it” parallels the elements belonging to the earth γῆ (10dα), as in 2 *Clem.* 16:3 already cited: “the day of judgment draws near like a burning oven, and certain of the heavens and all the earth will melt, like lead melting in fire”. The works that are on the earth probably refer to what God created on the third day (vegetation – Gen 1:9–12), the fifth day (swimming and flying animals – Gen 1:20–22) and the sixth day (land animals and humans – Gen 1:24–27). Thus, one can see the same integration of ktiseological and eschatological motifs that appeared in the description of heaven and the heavenly bodies.

Recognising the parallelism between 10bc and 10d also allows us to clarify the meaning of the expression οὐχ εὐρεθήσεται. It turns out that it is not just the disappearance of the earth and what is on it, but annihilation by burning (καυσούμενα λυθήσεται). Conversely, the fact that the earth and the works belonging to it will disappear (not be found) means that the burning will be complete.

All the ktiseological and eschatological relations presented so far by the narrator of 2 Peter in chapter 3 as prophetic and apostolic teaching are presented in the table:

137 (1980), no. 548, p. 354–371; arguments defending the validity of the variant κατακαίσει that underpinned translations based on the seventeenth-century Textus Receptus are cited by A. Wolters, *Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10*, “Westminster Theological Journal” 49 (1987), p. 405–413.

258 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 317.

259 H.J. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 243.

	Ktiseology Creation 2 Pet 3:5	First destruction 2 Pet 3:6	Present times Preservation 2 Pet 3:7	Eschatology Destruction 2 Pet 3:10
Heavens	οὐρανοὶ ἦσαν ἔκπαλαι	κόσμος	οἱ δὲ νῦν οὐρανοί	οἱ οὐρανοὶ παρελεύσονται, στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσεται
Earth	καὶ γῆ συνεστῶσα	κόσμος	καὶ ἡ γῆ	καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα
Causal power	τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγῳ	δι' ὃν = διὰ τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγον ὕδατι κατακλυσθεὶς ἀπώλετο	τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ τεθησαυρισμένοι εἰσὶν πυρὶ τερούμενοι	[λυθήσονται] ῥοιζηδόν
Heavens	the heavens were of old	the world	the heavens	the heavens will pass away heavenly bodies, burning, will be destroyed
Earth	and the earth stood [together with them]	the world	and the earth	and the earth and the works on it will disappear/will not be found
Causal power	through the word of God	by which = by the word of God deluged in water was destroyed	are gathered, preserved for fire for the day of judgement by the same word	(destroyed) with loud/powerful sound/voice

The role of God’s word in the work of creating, preserving and destroying the world is now clear. The suggestion that the adverb ῥοιζηδόν in 3:10b should be considered primarily in relation to the great – now destructive – voice of God, which is the equivalent of God’s word in 3:5.6.7 is confirmed.

In verse 11a, the narrator summarises his previous prophecies concerning the fate of heaven and earth and the ungodly: τοῦτων οὕτως πάντων λυομένων “it will all [be] destroyed/dissolved in this way”. Thus, the verse can be seen as a transition to present the same eschatological reality, but from a different perspective – that of the righteous people²⁶⁰ (11b–15a).

The use of gen. absolutus τοῦτων πάντων λυομένων allows for different understandings of this summary. One can see here the equivalent of a temporal sentence: “when all this will be destroyed in such a way”, or, more likely, the equivalent of a causal sentence: “because all this will be destroyed”.

260 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1014.

The same verb λύω as in 3:10c is used to describe destruction, this time as part. praes. pass. As before, the passive voice is to be understood as passivum theologicum, with which the narrator once again emphasises that the author of eschatological destruction will be God. The pronoun πάντες confirms that the previous descriptions referred to the whole world, everything in heaven and everything on earth, while the epiphrastic adverb οὕτως once again indicates that “all this” will be “so/thus” destroyed, i. e. destroyed by God’s word and fire.

2.13 E₄. Interpretation of prophetic and apostolic teaching: β. – interpretation proper – soteriology (2 Pet 3:11b–15a)

^{11b}What [should you be] like? You should have/use [the opportunity to lead] holy ways of life/conduct, that is, godliness, ¹²waiting and toiling until the day of God comes, by which the heavens, being on fire, will be destroyed, and the heavenly bodies, burning, are dissolved. ¹³And we await new heavens and a new earth according to His promise, in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴Therefore, beloved, while expecting this, be diligent/strive earnestly that you may be found for Him as blameless and without spot, in peace. ^{15a}And consider the patience/forbearance of our Lord as salvation/rescue.

Having summarised the eschatological descriptions of the destruction of the world in 3:11a, now, in 3:11b–15a, the narrator can move on to present a proper interpretation of the prophetic and apostolic teaching about the coming of the parousia and judgment, not from the perspective of the ungodly, but from that of the faithful. He had already prepared his audience for this interpretation in 2:5b, when he depicted the doom brought by the Flood on the one hand, but the rescue of the herald of righteousness, Noah, on the other. Similarly, in 2:7 he strongly emphasised the rescue of the righteous Lot from Sodom that was burnt as a punishment. He now seems to be revisiting these themes and explaining the essence of his hermeneutic applied to these narratives. Just as the Flood and the destruction of Sodom were treated typologically as anticipations of the end times, so the characters of the rescued righteous people must be treated typologically. Thus, the purpose of Peter’s eschatological hermeneutic is to show the soteriological dimension of the parousia and judgment for the faithful who, using their baptismal gifts, will, in this world and the next, lead lives characterised by piety and holiness. It is no coincidence, then, that the narrator draws on lexis, concepts, images and motifs already used earlier in the exordial baptismal catechesis,²⁶¹ which he now presents more clearly than before in an eschatological and soteriological context. He uses the wordplays

261 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 207.

he likes, based on phonetic and/or semantic similarity of terms, most of which have been used before.

It is already worth noting the combination of exordial baptismal motifs with eschatological themes that appear in *peroration*.²⁶² This is to show that in Peter's message the way to the eschatological, eternal kingdom is opened by the baptismal gifts, in turn the eschatological promises given to the faithful at baptism will be fully realised in the end times. In *exordium*, the baptismal promises and gifts were described as elements related to faith (A' – 1:5–8), knowledge (B' – 1:3–4) and their synthesis (C – 1:9–15). Their practical aspects and eschatological focus were then emphasised above all. The central element of synthesis C was identified as 1:10–11, which mentions that God will confirm the calling and election of the faithful and allow them to enter the eternal kingdom without falling. In 3:11b–15 this soteriological thesis is developed from an eschatological perspective. The narrator exposes God's saving patience, whereby the called and chosen can in the end times be declared unblemished and without spot (3:14b–15a) and as such enjoy life in the new reality.

This climactic eschatological and soteriological reflection begins in verse 3:11b with the interrogative pronoun ποταπός 'what', 'what kind' in acc. pl. Formally, it should be referred to acc. ὑμᾶς (or ἡμᾶς) in the ACI construction: ποταπούς δεῖ ὑπάρχειν ὑμᾶς. It could then be regarded as an elliptical rhetorical question, the development of which is found in 12a: what should you (should you) be, "waiting and toiling until the day of God comes"? The answer would be brought by the phrase in 11b,²⁶³ indicating the need to live a life of holiness and piety. The verb δεῖ 'to be supposed to', 'should' is often interpreted as an injunction.²⁶⁴ The content of the ought/command is expressed by the formula ὑπάρχειν ὑμᾶς ἐν ἀγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς καὶ εὐσεβείαις, in which all the terms have already been used earlier in the letter, sometimes even several times: ὑπάρχω (1:8, 2:19), ἅγιος (2:21), ἀναστροφή (2:7, cf. 2:18 the verb ἀναστρέφω), εὐσεβεία (1:3,6–7, cf. the adjective εὐσεβής in 2:9). This helps to clarify the meaning of each of these terms and to look at them once more, this time in the light of Peter's soteriology and eschatology.

262 J.A.D. Weima, *Neglected Endings: the Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings*, Sheffield 1994, p. 28–30 the conclusion of 2 Peter – *peroratio* – is seen in 3:14–18. However, as already stated when analysing 3:1, the concluding tendencies appear in 2 Peter already at the beginning of chapter 3.

263 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 197 also draws attention to the use of the pronoun ποταπός in Mark 13:1 and 1 John 3:1, where it expresses a certain awe; somewhat differently formulated by R.L. Overstreet, *A Study of 2 Peter 3:10–13*, p. 366, who also sees here a call to consider what kind of person one should turn out to be on the day of judgement, but misses the rhetorical question. He emphasises the transience of the world on the one hand, and the imperishable value of holiness and piety on the other.

264 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1015.

It is also worth noting the framework of the terms used in 11b – for both ὑπάρχω and εὐσεβεία refer primarily to baptismal catechesis and the Baptist gifts/dispositions described in 2 Pet 1:

ὑπάρχειν

ἐν ἀγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς

εὐσεβείαις

In 2 Pet 1:8, the verb ὑπάρχω was defined as ‘to have in one’s possession’, ‘to have at one’s disposal’, ‘to make use of’. It referred to the whole sort of virtues, i. e. the dispositions which, together with faith, were given to man in baptism, which must be used and multiplied in order to know Jesus Christ actively and fruitfully.²⁶⁵ In 2:19, on the other hand, the verb ὑπάρχω was used in a completely different context. It was describing those who had become “slaves of/to corruption” of δοῦλοι ὑπάρχοντες τῆς φθορᾶς, for they had not made the most of the opportunity to know the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (cf. 2:20a), that is, as the juxtaposition shows, they had not practised and developed the Christian virtues, the gifts that make it possible to escape the corruption in the world (cf. 1:4). Among these virtues in 1:6–7, the narrator of 2 Peter also mentions piety – εὐσεβεία. It grows out of perseverance and leads to brotherly love; it is largely based on justice in the broadest sense. It is that virtue which unites duties towards God and duties towards people, so it has very practical aspects.²⁶⁶ In 1:3 the noun εὐσεβεία together with the noun ζωή formed the hendiadys “pious life”. Everything necessary to live “a godly life” was given to the believers by “divine power”²⁶⁷ at baptism. It is no coincidence that already at the beginning of the letter the pious life was juxtaposed not only with an escape from the corruption in the world caused by lust, which can now also be interpreted as a dissociation from false teachers and their lifestyle, but also with the eschatological promise of participation in the divine nature. In order to get the full picture of godliness, it is still necessary to refer to 2:9, where, admittedly, the adjective εὐσεβεία occurs instead of the noun εὐσεβής, but in a context corresponding to 3:11b–15a. This is because the narrator of 2 Peter was referring to the “saving of the godly from temptation/trial” ἐκ πειρασμοῦ, which includes observing the rise of ungodliness in the end times, coexisting with the ungodly and remaining faithful in these difficult circumstances.²⁶⁸

The framework set by ὑπάρχειν and εὐσεβείαις is filled in by specifying “the holy ways of life/conduct/godliness”. The adjective ἅγιος has already occurred several

265 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:8a.

266 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:6.

267 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:3.

268 See analysis of 2 Pet 2:9a.

times in 2 Peter – in 1:18 it referred to “the holy mountain”; in 1:21 it referred to “the Holy Spirit”; in 2:21 it referred to “the holy commandment” ἅγια ἐντολή, which, despite the singular number, was interpreted collectively and complementarily as the teaching of the prophets, Jesus (including the command to be eschatologically vigilant), the apostles and the baptismal catechesis including ethical themes; and in 3:2 to “the holy prophets”. In the context of the whole theological message of 2 Peter, it seems that the reference to “the holy commandment”, the observance of which – the maintenance of eschatological vigilance – enforces the corresponding behaviours, is of greatest importance.²⁶⁹ The noun ἀναστροφή in 2:7 described the way of life and conduct of the ungodly in Sodom, among whom Lot lived; the verb ἀναστρέφω in 2:18, a life of error. The juxtaposition of ἐν ἀγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς makes it possible to think that what is now meant is a way of life that would be in accordance with “the holy commandment”, i. e. the recommendations of the prophets, Jesus, the apostles, the baptismal teaching, and opposed to that which the inhabitants of Sodom and the pagans were indulging in.

This reference to Sodom appears here not coincidentally, for it clearly links the motifs present in the concepts of ἀναστροφή and εὐσεβεία. In the light of Peter’s eschatological hermeneutics and typology, the dwelling of the pious among the ungodly (cf. 2:7–8) will also be characteristic of the end times. The righteous, therefore – following Lot’s example – are obliged to patiently persevere in their piety, despite the suffering and anxiety of watching iniquity progress. Immediately after outlining Lot’s situation, the narrator of 2 Peter mentioned that God knows how to rescue the pious from their trials (2:9a). Now he returns to this no longer in a historical or narrative context, but in an eschatological and soteriological context, and in the following verses he explains what the rescue from annihilation on the day of the Lord consists of, which will look like a multiplication of the destruction of Sodom by fire.

The lexical and motivic references to the issues outlined earlier, therefore, allow us to see their eschatological focus. This applies, as can be seen, not only to the interpretation of the biblical narratives, but also to baptismal teaching and related ethics. The roots of an eschatologically oriented ethics are, of course, to be sought in Jewish intertestamental apocalypticism, where it is strongly emphasised that in the times immediately preceding the coming of judgment lawlessness and justice will develop in parallel. The apocalyptists mobilise the practice of justice under

269 A slightly different emphasis is given by D.J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 197, who argues that the adjective ἅγιος is used here in the same sense as in 1 Pet 1:18, as an expression of separation from this world; similarly F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 329, who believes that this refers to holiness in the Old Testament, religious sense as a separation, a demarcation between that which serves a cultic, sacred purpose and that which is intended for everyday use is typical of the profane realm.

these difficult conditions, so that the faithful on the day of judgement will not share the fate of the wicked:

beloved: Love uprightness and walk therein. [...] And associate not with those of a double heart, But walk in righteousness, my sons. And it shall guide you on good paths, And righteousness shall be your companion. For I know that violence must increase on the earth, And a great chastisement be executed on the earth, Yea, it shall be cut off from its roots, And its whole structure be destroyed. [...] And the holy Lord will come forth with wrath and chastisement To execute judgement on earth. In those days violence shall be cut off from its roots, And the roots of unrighteousness together with deceit, And they shall be destroyed from under heaven. [...] And shall perish in wrath and in grievous judgement for ever. And the righteous shall arise from their sleep, And wisdom shall arise and be given unto them. And now I [...] show you The paths of righteousness and the paths of violence. Yea, I will show them to you again That ye may know what will come to pass. And now, hearken unto me, [...] And walk in the paths of righteousness, And walk not in the paths of violence; For all who walk in the paths of unrighteousness shall perish for ever (1 En 91:3–8.10.18–19).

And now I say unto you, [...] love righteousness and walk therein; For the paths of righteousness are worthy of acceptation, But the paths of unrighteousness shall suddenly be destroyed and vanish. [...] And now I say unto you the righteous: Walk not in the paths of wickedness, nor in the paths of death, And draw not nigh to them, lest ye be destroyed (1 En 94:1–4).

This eschatological parenthesis²⁷⁰ is also taken up by other NT writers.²⁷¹ It seems, however, that Peter goes a step further than the other hagiographers. For from the beginning of the epistle he seeks to expose two additional relationships, one related to the ungodly and the other to the righteous. The immorality of the ungodly flows directly from their eschatological scepticism and rejection of judgement.²⁷² In contrast, the righteousness of the faithful flows from their nurturing and development of their baptismal gifts. Baptist equipping as an initiatory element and eschatological orientation are also what clearly distinguish Christian morality from philosophically rooted and oriented pagan ethics. This is why Peter sets his sorites (1:5–8), in terms of form and choice of virtues borrowed largely from Greek phi-

270 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 324.

271 Rom 13:12, 1 Cor 15:58, Eph 5:10–16, Phil 4:5, 1 Tim 6:14, 2 Tim 4:1–5, 1 Pet 1:13–17, 4:7, 5:1–10, Jas 5:8–9, 1 John 2:28, see also G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1015.

272 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1017 notes the following relationship here: just as eschatological scepticism leads to immorality, so eschatological expectation and certainty of judgement lead to a godly life according to God's law.

losophy, so firmly in a baptismal and definitive context, and why he so strongly opposes attempts to philosophise and thus paganise Christianity (2:19–20).

The call of the faithful in 2 Pet 3:11b to live a life of holiness and piety also has an additional aspect that Bauckham points out.²⁷³ Namely, the idea is that the faithful should already be living according to the rules of the new world in which “righteousness dwells”. In this way, a link is built, a bridge between the temporal reality and the future reality.

In analysing 2 Pet 3:11b, it is worth raising two more points on which biblical scholars disagree. First, the use of the plural in the phrase ἐν ἁγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς εὐσεβείαις literally, “in holy acts of devotion”. It is possible to understand this plural as indicating separate acts, acts that make up a holy way of life and piety in general (just as the plural of the noun ἀσελγείαι in 2:2.18 was interpreted)²⁷⁴ or as indicating certain abstract ideas.²⁷⁵ It seems that here the issue cannot be clearly resolved. Moreover – this ambiguity can be assumed, for it corresponds to the integrative strategy of the narrator of 2 Peter, who overlays the concrete, casuistic meaning of “ways of life and godliness/piety” characteristic of the Jewish tradition the abstract meaning characteristic of the Greek philosophical tradition and Christianises both. Incidentally, it is worth noting Peter’s fondly used purposive construction with ἐν, in which all *nomina* are to be understood instrumentally (cf. 1:1.2,12, 2:7.10.18.20, 3:1.14.18). In contrast, the asyndetic sequence of datives ἁγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς εὐσεβείαις resembles the construction used in 2:18 – ἐν ἐπιθυμίαις σαρκὸς ἀσελγείαις. Now the final εὐσεβείαις can also be interpreted additively: “holy acts and devotions”, although it is more likely to apply here, as before, an epegegetical apposition in which εὐσεβείαις refines the meaning of the expression ἐν ἁγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς: “in holy acts, that is, in devotions”. This understanding also follows from the framework construction outlined above, in which the use/disposing of devotions” actually means the “disposing of [opportunities to pursue] holy ways of life”.

The second problematic issue concerns the recipients of the rhetorical question and imperative. In the text adopted by the NA28, the recipients of this statement are the recipients of the letter, as indicated by the personal pronoun for the second-person plural in acc. – ὑμᾶς.²⁷⁶ And this version, confirmed by most Greek testimonies and based on the tradition of Jewish eschatological parenthesis, is adopted as normative in this commentary. In some manuscripts (e. g. \aleph^* 5. 642), however, a version of ἡμᾶς with the pronoun for the 1st person pl. appears, compatible with the προσδοκῶμεν pronouncement of verse 13.²⁷⁷ Such a variant pronoun form

273 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 324.

274 *Ibid.*, p. 324; D.J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 197.

275 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1017.

276 In NA27, this version as uncertain is placed in square brackets [ὑμᾶς].

277 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:13.

would not be a rarity in 2 Peter, for the narrator of the epistle had already used it in 1:3–5. Perhaps the best, almost Solomonic solution would be to adopt the variant proposed by P^{72*} P⁷⁴ vid B 1175 vg^{ms} without any pronoun, and thus an impersonal translation of the phrase ποταπούς δεῖ ὑπάρχειν ἐν ἁγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς καὶ εὐσεβείαις τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας “what person [must one be?] One must dispose/use [the opportunity to live] holy ways of life, i. e. godliness, having confidence/waiting and toiling until the day of God comes”. And while the solution is indeed attractive, such impersonal forms are hard to find in parenthetic texts.

In verse 12a, the narrator of 2 Peter clarifies the circumstances in which the recommendations of 11b are to be applied: it is a matter of leading a holy and pious life in anticipation of the coming of the day of God and putting effort and endeavour into it. Since the time of this coming is unknown (cf. 3:9–11a), this recommendation takes on a universal character, a command applicable to all Christians living at any time, for all await the parousia and the day of judgement with the same certainty. In presenting these circumstances, the narrator continues the strategy of verse 11b – he uses terms he has used before, assuming that the audience will reconstruct their meanings on the basis of previous contexts. The new terms here are the verbs προσδοκᾶω and σπεύδω, which seem on the one hand to summarise Peter’s earlier argumentation concerning the certainty of the fulfilment of God’s eschatological promises, and on the other hand to provide²⁷⁸ motivation for living a life of holiness and piety in the end times.

The verb προσδοκᾶω (cf. also 2 Pet 3:13 and 14) appears in the late Old Testament books, intertestamental literature, is relatively frequent in the New Testament and less frequent in early Christian literature. In 2 Macc 7:14 and 12:44, it describes the hope placed in God and even the certainty of resurrection. In Matt 11:3, Luke 1:21, 7:19–20, 8:40, Acts 3:5, 10:24, 28:6 it expresses the expectation of something or someone. It also appears in an eschatological context in the parables in Matt 24:50 and Luke 12:46 recounting the servants who did not expect or anticipate the master’s return. Therefore, Neyrey,²⁷⁹ citing this parable in Matthew and its counterpart in Mark (Mark 13:34–37), proposes that the verb προσδοκᾶω in 2 Pet 3:12.13.14 should be considered equivalent to a call to watchfulness (cf. also 1 Thess 5:6, Rev 16:15). In the context closest to Peter’s, although – as Bauckham notes²⁸⁰ – προσδοκᾶω is not common when referring to the description of eschatological expectations, the verb appears in ApBaSyr 83:4: “let us be expectant, because that which is promised to us shall come” and in 1 Clem. 23:5: “suddenly shall His will be accomplished, as the Scripture also bears witness, saying, ‘Speedily will He come,

278 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 197.

279 H. J. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 244.

280 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 324.

and will not tarry'; and, The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Holy One, for whom you look ὑμεῖς προσδοκᾶτε". Ignatius of Antioch in his *Epistle to the Magnesians* applies the same Christocentric hermeneutic and can therefore write that Jesus Christ as their Master was also expected by the prophets: "how shall we be able to live apart from Him, whose disciples the prophets themselves in the Spirit did wait προσεδόκων for Him as their Teacher? And therefore He whom they rightly waited for, having come, raised them from the dead" (*IgnMagn* 9:2). The examples lead us to understand the verb προσδοκάω in 2 Pet 3:12.13.14 as an expectation based not only on hope, but even on the certainty that the day of God will come. This certainty is the result of the promise of God himself communicated in Ha 2:3 (cf. 2 Pet 3:9ab) and the promise of Jesus, who repeatedly announced his coming (cf. 2 Pet 1:16–19a). 2 Peter also relies on an eschatological hermeneutic applied to narrative texts, primarily non-eschatological, which are treated typologically as examples of the certainty of the fulfilment of God's predictions and as anticipation of punishment and salvation in the end times.

Alongside the verb προσδοκάω, there is the verb σπεύδω which is rare in the NT, used actually only by the author of 2 Peter, Luke and Acts, also in part. praes. act.²⁸¹ Usually this participle is translated as "hastening" or "trying to hasten".²⁸² This translation seems to suggest that a life of holiness and piety can be a catalyst for the coming of the day of God.²⁸³ Its proponents usually quote ApBaSyr, which argues that "the days come, And the times shall hasten more than the former, And the seasons shall speed on more than those that are past, And the years shall pass more quickly than the present (years)" (20:1); and then adds that "For the Most High will assuredly hasten His times, And He will assuredly bring on His hours. And He will assuredly judge those who are in His world" (83:1–2). Of the New Testament texts purporting to affirm the possibility that the day of the Lord might be hastened by the fulfilment of Jesus' injunctions, only Matt 24:14 is actually indicated: the intensification of the preaching of the gospel would thus hasten the coming of the end. In fact, however, neither the Apocalypse of Baruch nor the Matthew text contain such a dependency; rather, they express a desire and longing for a new reality.

The desire for the day of the Lord to come as soon as possible is reflected in early Christian writings. In *Barn.* 4:3 it is motivated by the fear of increasing persecution from the ungodly: "The final stumbling-block (or source of danger) approaches,

281 It is missing from κ*.

282 M. Luther translates 12a: "ihr das Kommen des Tages Gottes erwartet und erstrebt". In the Commentary on 2 Peter he explains that the idea is that people, having hopeful joy, should "hasten to run to meet it, as that which sets us free from death, sin and hell", *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude Preached and Explained by Martin Luther* III (V.11, 12).

283 Cf. D.J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 294.

concerning which it is written, as Enoch says, ‘For for this end the Lord has cut short the times and the days, that His Beloved may hasten; and He will come to the inheritance’”. However, there is no mention of a correlation between the conduct of the righteous and the hastening of the parousia. The usual citation of *2 Clem.* 12:1.6–13:1 in this context also proves problematic. Here, on the other hand, one sees a conditional correlation between godly conduct and the coming of the kingdom of God, but no mention is made of the hastening of this coming. On the contrary, the necessity of waiting for the kingdom, even though the time of its coming is unknown, is strongly emphasised and, like 2 Peter, the encouragement to repentance:

Let us expect, therefore, hour by hour, the kingdom of God in love and righteousness, since we know not the day of the appearing of God. [...] If you do these things [live a pure life], says He, the kingdom of my Father shall come. [...] Brethren, then, let us now at length repent, let us soberly turn to that which is good; for we are full of abundant folly and wickedness. Let us wipe out from us our former sins, and repenting from the heart be saved.

If we detect any suggestion of “hastening” in Peter’s reflection, it concerns conversion (cf. 3:9c–e), not the timing of the coming of the day of the Lord. The urge to repent is present, for example, in ApBaSyr, which at the same time warns that the time of God’s patience is not unlimited and there will come a point when it will be too late to repent and enter the way of the Law. Attention is drawn to Peter’s similar presentation of the positive perspective of eschatological times for all the faithful called purified (cf. 2 Pet 3:14) and the negative for the ungodly called stained (cf. 2 Pet 2:13):

Therefore, the Most High is very patient with us here – He has made known what will happen, and has not hidden from us what will happen at the end. Before he enforces his judgment, [...] let us prepare our souls [...] that we may have hope and not be ashamed and that we may have rest, remain with our fathers and not suffer torment with our enemies. [...] Once more prepare your souls [...] that you may not be condemned when you have completed the journey. Behold, the Most High commands all things to come to pass; there shall be no more room for repentance [...] nor change of way, nor room for prayer, nor for sending petitions, nor for seeking knowledge, nor the gift of compassion, [...] nor prayer for sins, nor the intercession of the fathers, nor the supplications of the prophets, nor the assistance of the righteous. But there shall be no more judgment of condemnation there, nor a way into the fire, nor a path leading to Gehenna. [...] So he

will revive all those whom he finds those purified, and together he will destroy those who have stained themselves with sins (ApBaSyr 85:8–9.11–13.15).²⁸⁴

Similar motifs are found in early Christian literature. Hermas calls for conversion in Similitude 10 of *The Shepherd*:

Do good works, therefore, you who have received good from the Lord; lest, while you delay to do them, the building of the tower be finished, and you be rejected from the edifice: there is now no other tower a-building. For on your account was the work of building suspended. Unless, then, you make haste to do rightly, the tower will be completed, and you will be excluded (Similitude 10:4).

In a manner even closer to that of Peter, 2 *Clem.* 16:1 makes this point: “So, then, brethren, having received no small occasion to repent, while we have opportunity, let us turn to God who called us, while yet we have One to receive us”.

As already noted when analysing 2 Pet 3:9c–e, the idea that God’s patience will not be shown forever is not alien to Peter. It should accompany the faithful who have been given the chance and time to convert, and prompt them to speed up their conversion (cf. Mark 1:15). In Peter’s case, moreover, it is closely linked to the false and correct interpretation of the delay in the realisation of the eschatological promises. The false interpretation of delay as God’s departure from His promises leads to ungodliness. The correct interpretation of delay as God’s merciful patience leads to hastening conversion in time for the coming of the day of the Lord.

The suggestion that leading a pious and holy life is meant to hasten the coming of the day of God is contrary to the letter’s previous message regarding any effort to influencing God’s decisions about judgment and other eschatological speculations. The phrase from 2 Pet 2:11 βλάσφημος κρίσις “a blasphemous judgement” was interpreted as a potential attempt to get God to hasten the final judgment and pass sentence on the ungodly.²⁸⁵ However, this would be an entrance of angels into God’s competence. The same applies to humans (cf. Matt 24:36, Mark 13:32). The narrator of 2 Peter spoke particularly clearly against speculation about the timing of the fulfilment of the eschatological promises in 3:8–9. He demonstrated the incompatibility of human and divine perspectives and warned against a human perception of the divine *kairos*. The basic thesis of Peter’s message is thus that God neither delays nor hastens the end times. Everything that happens in the world happens according to His eternal plan (cf. 2 Pet 2:3b).

284 *Apokalipsa Barucha Syryjska*, Polish transl. J. Woźniak, [in:] *Apokryfy Starego Testamentu* (Prymasowska Seria Biblijna), ed. R. Rubinkiewicz, Warszawa 2000, p. 441–442.

285 See analysis of 2 Pet 2:11.

A similar conviction can be found, among others, in 4 Ezra, which repeatedly emphasises the limitation of human knowledge: “those who dwell upon earth can understand only what is on the earth, and he who is above the heavens can understand what is above the height of the heavens” (4 Ezra 4:21). It also cautions against impatience and reminds us that everything has already been decided by God and counted accordingly:

For the evil about which you ask me has been sown, but the harvest of it has not yet come. If therefore that which has been sown is not reaped, and if the place where the evil has been sown does not pass away, the field where the good has been sown will not come. [...] “How long and when will these things be? Why are our years few and evil?” He answered me [Esdras] and said, “You do not hasten faster than the Most High, for your haste is for yourself, but the Highest hastens on behalf of many. Did not the souls of the righteous in their chambers ask about these matters, saying, ‘How long are we to remain here? And when will come the harvest of our reward?’” And Jeremiel the archangel answered them and said, “When the number of those like yourselves is completed; for he has weighed the age in the balance, and measured the times by measure, and numbered the times by number; and he will not move or arouse them until that measure is fulfilled” (4 Ezra 4:28–29.33–37).

It seems that a more appropriate translation of the verb *σπεύδω* than ‘accelerate’ would be, in the context of Peter’s argument, ‘to strive strenuously’, ‘to make efforts’, ‘to toil’.²⁸⁶ The phonetically close verb *σπουδάζω* used in verse 14 also with the verb *προσδοκάω* has a similar meaning. Peter uses another wordplay based on sounds (paronomasia): *προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας* (verse 12a) and *προσδοκῶντες σπουδάσατε* (verse 14a) and on the affinity of the verb *σπουδάζω* with the verb *σπεύδω*.²⁸⁷ In fact, one can speak here of two paronomasias which deviate somewhat from the classical definition of this figure. The first is *προσδοκῶντας* and *προσδοκῶντες*; it is based on the same participle in different cases. The second is *σπεύδοντας* and *σπουδάσατε*; this is based on the probable origin of both verbs from the Proto-Indo-European stem *(s)p(h)eu-d-*.

The meaning of *σπεύδω* as ‘to toil’ fits well with the aforementioned familiar concept of apocalyptic literature of showing the parallel development of lawlessness

286 See *σπεύδω* in the intransitive sense; Z. Abramowiczówna, *Słownik grecko-polski*, vol. 4, Warsaw 1965, p. 87. A similar proposal is given by D.F. Watson and T. Callan, p. 210, who propose here instead of “hasten” the phrase “eagerly seeking” and cite passages where the lexeme *σπουδ-* occurs (2 Pet 1:5.10.15, 3:14). Also J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 367 allows for “an earnestly desiring” or equivalent translation, claiming that it is justified on linguistic grounds.

287 W. Bauder, *σπουδή*, NIDNTT, p. 1168.

and righteousness in the times immediately preceding the day of the Lord. The unrighteous are displacing the coming of judgement; the righteous are toiling in the preservation of godliness, living among the ungodly and suffering because of their conduct (cf. 2 Pet 2:7–8 and the experience of Lot, which once again proves to be eschatologically typological). This causes them to look forward with longing and even a certain impatience to the end of the old times and the advent of a new reality in which injustice and evil have no place, but happiness and peace reign (Isa 60:21–22, Sir 36:7). ApBaSy 84:10–11 encourages perseverance in prayer and mutual admonition in an eschatological context similar to Peter’s, also invoking God’s mercy: “And at all times make request perseveringly and pray diligently with your whole heart that the Mighty One may be reconciled to you, and that He may not reckon the multitude of your sins, but remember the rectitude of your fathers. For if He judge us not according to the multitude of His mercies, woe unto all us who are born”. The request for the coming of the kingdom is found in the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:10a, Luke 11:2); it must be added, however, that it is immediately followed by submission to God’s will (Matt 6:10b). Early Christian literature also testifies to an intense anticipation of the parousia. Moreover, believers even hope that God will shorten this waiting time in order to spare them suffering (cf. *Barn.* 4:3), However, there is no mention here of any attempt to influence God.

The direct complement for the verb προσδοκάω is the expression ἡ παρουσία τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας “parousia/the coming of the day of God”. With the verb στεύδω, the expression should be read as accusativus temporis answering the question of “how long”. Thus, the faithful should wait and toil, living a holy and pious life among the ungodly, “until the parousia/coming of the day of God”.

Attention is drawn here to the New Testament’s unique formula “the day of God”,²⁸⁸ which replaces the phrase ἡμέρα κυρίου “the day of the Lord” used earlier (2 Pet 3:10) and much more common in biblical literature. This is most likely the equivalent of phrases occurring in Jewish apocalyptic texts with a periphrastic indication of God as, for example, in ApBaSy 55:6: “And if with the expectation wherewith you do expect the day of the Mighty One you are so overcome, What (wilt you be) when you shall come to its advent?”. These are also reflected in Christian apocalypticism, e. g. Rev 16:14: ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ μεγάλη τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορ “the great day of God Almighty”. All these examples refer to the day of God’s judgment. One may wonder whether the narrator of 2 Peter distinguishes in any way between ἡμέρα κυρίου “the day of the Lord” in 3:10 and ἡμέρα τοῦ θεοῦ “the day of God” in 3:12. Most likely not²⁸⁹ and just as previously the title “Lord” without any additional

288 D. J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 294.

289 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 325; D.J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 294; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1019; D.J. Moo, *2 Peter; Jude*, p. 198.

attributes was treated as bi-referential, so now the term “God” must be bireferential as well. It denotes both God the Father and Jesus Christ, as in 2 Pet 1:1 (θεός ἡμῶν καὶ σωτὴρ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός) and in 2 Pet 1:3, where the referent of “divine power” is also God the Father and Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Pet 1:2).

The understanding of the noun παρουσία also proves problematic. In 2 Pet 1:16 and 3:4, as in most New Testament texts, the term refers to the coming of Jesus Christ and is theologically loaded.²⁹⁰ In 2 Pet 3:12a, however, it seems more neutral, simply describing the coming or advent of the day of judgement (as in ApBaSy 55:6 quoted above or without any theological context in 1 Cor 16:17, 2 Cor 7:6.7, Phil 1:26, 2:12). However, given Peter’s strategy of understanding the terms used in 2:12 in relation to their earlier uses and the birefringent tendencies, in addition to the summary of previous argumentation, typical of peroratio, it can be assumed that the expression “parousia of the day of God” synthesises the prophetic and apostolic doctrine of the day of God/Lord with the apostolic message of the parousia of Jesus Christ, to whom God has given all authority, competence and power to carry out the eschatological judgement (cf. 2 Pet 1:16–18).

In verse 12b, the narrator returns to an abbreviated description of the Lord’s day. He introduces it with the phrase δι’ ἣν which is to be understood causally: “by which day”, “because of that day”. He uses a similar formula of δι’ ὃν in 3:6 regarding the word of God by which the world – κόσμος was destroyed by the waters of the flood. He now uses imagery familiar from the destruction of Sodom, which was destroyed by fire sent down from heaven (Gen 19:24–25). This may partly explain the restriction of the imagery to only depicting the burning and drowning heavens. However, the purpose of the reminder of eschatological events is quite different from before. The narrator no longer has a warning in mind, but an encouragement to view the end times in a positive way. This is partly foreshadowed in 3:12a by the suggestion to look forward to the day of the Lord and toil until it comes, for, as 4 Ezra 4:27 states, “[the world] will not be able to bring the things that have been promised to the righteous in their appointed times, because this age is full of sadness and infirmities”. The destruction of the old world is thus now presented as a turning point and the beginning of a new reality (cf. 2 Pet 3:13).

When describing eschatological events in 2 Pet 3:12b, the narrator uses almost the same phrases that he had already used in 2 Pet 3:10bc.²⁹¹ The additional verbs here are πυρούμενοι and τήκεται (πυρόομαι and τήκομαι). The first accentuates, it seems, primarily the mode of destruction, i. e. flames, the second, being a New Testament *hapax legomenon*,²⁹² the effects of the high temperature, i. e. the melting

290 Matt 24:3.27.37.39, 1 Cor 15:23, 1 Thess 2:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23, 2 Thess 2:1.8.9, Jas 5:7.8, 1 John 2:28.

291 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:10b–11a.

292 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 326.

of the heavenly bodies. Of note is the variation in the forms of the verbs λυθήσονται and τήκεται. The first is used in futurum, which is natural in relation to a narrative of an apocalyptic nature. The second occurs in ind. praes., which would have to be considered the equivalent of futurum. In Peter's narrative it serves to further dynamise the description.

It has already been mentioned that, in contrast to 3:10b–11a, the narrator here confines himself to indicating only what fate will befall the old heavens. This may be due firstly to the reference to the story of Sodom, which was destroyed by fire from heaven. Secondly, the assumption that part two of the imagery, that of the earth, the audience can reconstruct. Thus, they will receive a picture of the whole world destroyed by fire (cf. Isa 66:16, Mic 1:4, Nah 1:6, Zeph 1:18, Mal 3:2.19, Acts 2:19, 2 Thess 1:7–8, Rev 9:18, 18:8, 1 En 1:6).²⁹³ The narrator has used *pars pro toto* synecdoche, but in fact he has in mind the whole world, heaven and earth, which is evidenced not only by the references to 3:5.6.7.10b–d, but also to 3:13, where a new heaven and a new earth are mentioned. When juxtaposed, verses 12 and 13 form a chiasm with addition:

A. Waiting and toiling 12aα

- B. (until) the coming of the day of God 12aβ,
- C. because of which the heavens burning will be destroyed, and the heavenly bodies, burning, are melted 12b.
- C'. New heavens and a new earth 13aα,
- B'. according to His promise 13aβ

A' we await 13b

- C'' in whom righteousness/justice dwells 13c.

One can now clearly see how elements hitherto interpreted negatively as foreshadowing punishment and annihilation can be viewed positively by the righteous/believers: thanks to the coming of the day of the Lord (B), which is the fulfilment of God's promise (B'), the old heavens and the old earth will be destroyed (C) so that their place can be taken by the new heavens and the new earth (C'), in which righteousness dwells (C'). This is the expectation of the righteous (A') and therefore they are ready to toil and persevere in godliness among the ungodly until the advent of the new reality (A).

Verse 13 begins by defining the object of expectation, which is at the same time an element of the realisation of God's promise related to the coming of the day of the Lord. As has been repeatedly pointed out, the certainty that God's promise relating to the end times will be realised is based on narratives belonging to Jewish

²⁹³ See analysis of 2 Pet 3:7 and 3:10b–11a.

tradition interpreted in a typological key and using an eschatological hermeneutic. This concerns both the negative elements – the foreshadowing of punishment and its exile (the Flood, Sodom) – and the positive elements (the rescue of Noah and Lot). The latter are now highlighted by the narrator of 2 Peter. He emphasises that God's promise is essentially a soteriological promise, for its most important element is the announcement of the creation of a new heaven and a new earth and the salvation of the righteous (2 Pet 2:14).

The concept of ἐπάγγελμα has already been used in 2 Peter; three times in noun form (1:4 as ἐπάγγελμα; 3:4.9 as ἐπαγγελία) and once in verb form (2:19 as ἐπαγγελλόμενοι). This juxtaposition shows that, in contrast to the bare promises made by false teachers, God's promises are always fulfilled. The content of God's promises in 2 Pet 3:4 was the parousia; in 2 Pet 3:9 also primarily the second coming of Jesus and the coming of the eschatological judgement. Since in 3:11b–15a the narrator tries to synthesise the meanings of the terms used earlier, it can be assumed that the ἐπάγγελμα in 3:13a includes both the parousia and the coming of the day of the Lord, which are no longer identified only with judgment but also with the new creation. These new in 2 Peter, positive emphases related to the eschatological promise are obviously taken from the prophetic tradition. "Ἔσται γὰρ ὁ οὐρανὸς καινὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ καινὴ" "I am creating new heavens and a new earth" as the prophet Isaiah assures (Isa 65:17) and specifies that, like the first heavens and earth, they will be created by God: ὁ οὐρανὸς καινὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ καινὴ ἃ ἐγὼ ποιῶ (Isa 66:22). They are also present in intertestamental Jewish apocalyptic.²⁹⁴ "Uriel, the holy angel [...] showed me all their [celestial bodies'] laws exactly as they are, and how it is with regard to all the years of the world and unto eternity, till the new creation is accomplished which dureth till eternity" (1 En 72:1–2); "And the angel of the presence [...] took the tables of the divisions [...] from the day of the [new] creation when the heavens and the earth shall be renewed and all their creation according to the powers of the heaven, and according to all the creation of the earth, [...] and all the luminaries be renewed for healing and for peace and for blessing for all the elect of Israel" (Jub 1:28). According to ApBaSy 57:2, the hope of a new earth and a new heaven was already born in the time of Abraham: "belief in the coming judgment was then generated, And hope of the world that was to be renewed was then built up, And the promise of the life that should come hereafter was implanted". The narrator of 2 Peter places it, by means of his hermeneutics, in the times of Noah. Pseudo-Philo in *The Biblical Antiquities (Liber antiquitates biblicae)* does likewise, placing the eschatological promise of renewal immediately after the Flood:

294 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1022.

I will not again spoil the earth with the water of a flood, [...] until I remember them that dwell on the earth, even until the times are fulfilled. [...] I may render unto every man according to his works and according to the fruit of their imaginations, even until I judge between the soul and the flesh. And the world shall rest, and death shall be quenched, and Hell shall shut his mouth. And the earth shall not be without birth, neither barren for them that dwell therein: and none shall be polluted that hath been justified in me. And there shall be another earth and another heaven, even an everlasting habitation (3:9–10).

Of course, the conviction of a new heaven and a new earth to appear in the end times is present in the New Testament literature (Rom 8:19–21, Rev 21:1), although it must be admitted that, compared to Jewish apocalyptic literature, the descriptions of the new creation are very sparing in it. All the more so since apocalyptic literature, based on the texts of Isaiah (e. g. Isa 11:4–5, 32:16–19, 60:21), does not limit itself to the material aspects of the new creation; on the contrary, it very much emphasises its spiritual aspects and the moral order²⁹⁵ with justice, blessing, wisdom and peace at the forefront:

“But for the elect there shall be light and joy and peace, And they shall inherit the earth. And then there shall be bestowed upon the elect wisdom, And they shall all live and never again sin, Either through ungodliness or through pride: But they who are wise shall be humble. And they shall not again transgress, Nor shall they sin all the days of their life, Nor shall they die of (the divine) anger or wrath, But they shall complete the number of the days of their life. And their lives shall be increased in peace, And the years of their joy shall be multiplied, In eternal gladness and peace, All the days of their life” (1 En 5:7–9).

And all the children of men shall become righteous, and all nations shall offer adoration and shall praise Me, and all shall worship Me. And the earth shall be cleansed from all defilement, and from all sin, and from all punishment, and from all torment, and I will never again send (them) upon it from generation to generation and for ever (1 En 10:21–22); Then will I cause Mine Elect One to dwell among them [the righteous]. And I will transform the heaven and make it an eternal blessing and light And I will transform the earth and make it a blessing: And I will cause Mine elect ones to dwell upon it: But the sinners and evil-doers shall not set foot thereon (1 En 45:4–5).

[...] all the righteous who shall escape the Lord’s great judgment, shall be collected in the great aeon, for the righteous the great aeon will begin, and they will live eternally, and then too there will be amongst them neither labour, nor sickness, nor humiliation, nor anxiety, nor need, nor brutality, nor night, nor darkness, but great light (2 En 65:5–7).

295 Ibid., p. 1023.

And he shall gather together a holy people, whom he shall lead in righteousness. He will not allow iniquity to dwell among them, and no evil person will dwell with them. And he shall judge the tribes of the people that has been sanctified by the Lord his God [...] For he shall know them, that they are all sons of their God (PssSol 17:28(26).30).

Very close to Peter's argument, also in lexical terms, seems to be the treatment of 4 Ezra 7:113–114, where the same positive perception of judgment and the moral orientation of the new reality appears: "But the day of judgment will be the end of this age and the beginning of the immortal age to come, in which corruption has passed away, sinful indulgence has come to an end, unbelief has been cut off, and righteousness has increased and truth has appeared" (cf. also Rom 14:17, 1 Cor 6:9–10, Rev 21:27, 22:15).

The feature of the new world emphasised by the narrator of 2 Peter in 13b is justice. Unlike the verbs describing the coming of the day of the Lord and the destruction of heaven and earth, which are used in *futurum*, the complement about the dwelling of justice is given in *ind. praes.* – κατοικεῖ. It is possible to consider this form as the equivalent of *futurum* and translate "in which righteousness/justice will dwell" or more literally "in which righteousness permanently resides in its house".²⁹⁶ However, it can be considered that the narrator used this form deliberately to mark the continuum between the righteous conduct of the converted believers, which, once started before the day of the Lord, will be nurtured and developed in the new reality (cf. 2 Pet 3:11b).

The narrator of the letter uses the noun "righteousness/justice" three times: in 1:1, 2:5 and 2:21. In 2:21, the term refers to the fulfilment of God's will as expressed in the commandments. In 2:5, it is the content of the preaching of Noah, who, according to Jewish tradition, called for repentance and following the path of righteousness and proclaimed justice, which, alongside merciful patience, is a fundamental attribute of God.²⁹⁷ The function of justice as an attribute of God is marked most clearly in the expression ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ in 1:1, where it refers to God's just, or saving, action.²⁹⁸ It is viewed so positively in most ST texts and is associated with mercy, goodness and grace. It is this aspect, characteristic of the oldest Jewish tradition, that the narrator of 2 Peter also emphasises in 3:13 by even personalising justice.²⁹⁹ This is superimposed on the Greek provenance of judicial and legal justice that appears in the LXX and in intertestamental literature. Although at first glance it appears to be in the background here, in fact the narrator includes it. This is because, as

296 F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 332.

297 See analysis of 2 Pet 2:5b.

298 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:1.

299 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 211.

with other key concepts, he synthesises previous meanings in *peroratio*. Because of this synthesis, justice is not specified in any way. This means that the righteousness dwelling in the new post-eschatological reality is seen both as God's salvific action by which the faithful could be saved (cf. Isa 32:16), and as the judgement that ended the existence of the old heavens and the old earth, and finally as the way of life of the faithful, constantly and perfectly doing God's will (Matt 6:10),³⁰⁰ in which they had already exercised themselves in temporality.

Such new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells, should be expected by the faithful. The narrator uses the verb προσδοκᾶω for the second time, but uses the first-person plural ind. praes. act. form προσδοκῶμεν for it. This means that these expectations are common to all generations of Christians, both the apostolic generation represented by Peter and the generation of later recipients of the letter up to the end times. It is possible to extend these expectations also to the righteous living in the time before Christ's first coming. Their representatives would be the prophets – authors of biblical and extra-biblical texts describing this new reality, who are, as Ignatius of Antioch put it in the Epistle to the Magnesians already quoted, spiritual disciples of Christ (*IgnMagn* 9:2). This is also mentioned in *1 Clem.* 35:4: "Let us therefore earnestly strive to be found in the number of those that wait for Him, in order that we may share in His promised gifts", which describes the eschatological promises as gifts more broadly than 2 Peter, but in the same spirit:

How blessed and wonderful, beloved, are the gifts of God! Life in immortality, splendour in righteousness, truth in perfect confidence, faith in assurance, self-control in holiness! And all these fall under the cognizance of our understandings [now]; what then shall those things be which are prepared for such as wait for Him? (*1 Clem.* 35:1–3).

As mentioned when analysing verse 11b, the use of first-person plural in verse 13 could also justify the use of the personal pronoun ἡμεῖς already in the first part of the encouragement to live a life of holiness and piety. But even if the recommendations are addressed only to the recipients of the letter, especially those living after Peter's death, the use of the 1 pers. pl is meant to convince them that the expectation of the fulfilment of God's eschatological promises present in the prophetic and apostolic message and in subsequent Christian teaching is a common experience of all believers.

It may come as a surprise that Peter placed the mention of righteousness as an addition at the end of the sentence, rather than immediately after the statement

300 D. J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 295 considers that the idea of justice in 2 Pet 3:13b corresponds to the request "Thy will be done" from the Lord's Prayer.

about the new heavens and new earth. However, this seems to be a deliberate action, for in this way justice is more strongly emphasised. As already mentioned, it bridges the gap between pre- and post-eschatological realities:³⁰¹ practising justice before the day of judgement already makes it possible, at least in part, to share in the new reality³⁰² and in that justice which is one of God's essential qualities, and thus to share in the divine nature (cf. 2 Pet 1:3).

This bridging understanding of justice finds justification in verse 14, which begins with the causative δὴ ‘therefore’, ‘because of this cause.’ The pronoun ταῦτα ‘this’ refers to the new heavens and the new earth, which constitute the content of God's eschatological promise.³⁰³ Just as earlier the promise of participation in the new reality where righteousness dwells provided the motivation to undertake a godly life, so here the promise provides the motivation to strive hard for God to declare the faithful to be blameless and spotless. One can clearly see the shift in emphasis from temporality and Christian practice to the end times, the ontic status of the faithful and the saving work of God.

2 Pet 3:14 can be seen as the beginning of a transitional summary of Peter's attempt to orient the audience towards a positive perception of eschatological events. Its transition is emphasised by the addressative phrase ἀγαπητοί, already used in 3:1 and 3:8. Further elements of the summary are also expressed in terms familiar from the narrator's previous reflections, who now additionally uses wordplays in addition to synthesising their meanings. For the third time in this short passage he uses the verb προσδοκάω (the second time in part. praes. act.). Instead of σπεύδω, as in verse 12a, he adds to it the similar-sounding verb σπουδάζω in imperativa aoristi activi. As mentioned, the phonetic similarity, which when juxtaposing προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας and προσδοκῶντες σπουδάσατε forms a paronomasia, is overlaid by the semantic similarity and etymological affinity of σπεύδω and σπουδάζω. The subject σπουδ- has already been used by the narrator of 2 Peter in 1:5 as an accusativus modi in the expression σπουδῆν πᾶσαν and in 1:10 and 1:15 as a verb: σπουδάσατε and σπουδάσω. Each time it expressed zeal, diligence, intensity, implying effort, toil put into the activity being performed. G.L. Green even considers

301 This bridging is also recognised by M. Luther, who interprets it by referring to the explanation of whether man will dwell on earth or in heaven: “Here some may disquiet themselves as to whether the saints shall have their station in heaven or on earth. The text seems to imply that man shall dwell upon the earth, – yet so that all heaven and earth shall be a paradise wherein God dwells, for God dwells not alone in heaven, but in all places, wherefore the elect shall be also even where He is”; *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude Preached and Explained by Martin Luther III* (V.12, 13).

302 R.C.H. Lenski, *Interpretation of 1 and II Epistles of Peter*, p. 350 considers that the term “new” in v. 13 actually means “next”, i. e. the next stage of the world created by God, which world will be renewed, perfected. rather than created completely anew.

303 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 206.

this to be Peter's favourite term for expressing a call to diligence and diligence.³⁰⁴ Verse 2 Pet 1:10 seems crucial here, where the narrator encouraged the recipients to make strenuous efforts not to squander what baptism gives and commits them to, aware that this requires commitment and can be difficult. He now develops this thought in an ontological context and from an eschatological perspective.

For this perspective and context undoubtedly the verb εὐρίσκω is decisive; it is used in inf. aor. pass., which should be interpreted as passivum theologicum. It is God who is to find the recipients as blameless and spotless. One can see the opposition here between the use of the verb εὐρίσκω in 3:10d with the negative particle and in this verse: "the earth will not be found" is contrasted with "you may be found for Him". In both cases the agent is God. Being "not found" means annihilation, being "found" means salvation. The basic semitic meaning of the verb εὐρίσκω connotes courts and investigations.³⁰⁵ The faithful will be found as blameless and spotless as a result of a judicial investigation by God (cf. John 18:38, 19:4,6, Acts 13:28, 24:20, Gal 2:17, Phil 3:9, Rev 3:2).

The soteriological meaning of the pronoun αὐτός referring to God/Lord is rarely seen here. The dative αὐτῷ is most often interpreted as dat. auctoris – "that you may be found by Him", but this would be somewhat redundant with passivum theologicum, which already contains information about God as the agent. It is more likely, therefore, to be dat. commodi – "that you may be found for Him". This would mean that God Himself, as a result of the investigation, will find the faithful to be undefiled and spotless for Him. In other words – this is not to say that the believers are absolutely righteous and sinless, but that they have become so – have been found – in the eyes of God. This corresponds very well with Peter's attempt to see reality from God's perspective. The narrator first carried it out by juxtaposing human and divine perspectives on the time of the supposedly delayed parousia. Now he attempts to look at the righteous as God will see (find) them in the end times. Since 2 Pet 3:15b–16 refers to the writings of the apostle Paul, it can be assumed that for Peter, as for Paul, the righteousness and impeccability of the faithful comes from Jesus and is not their own merit (cf. especially Gal 2:17, Phil 3:9, where Paul also uses the construction with the verb εὐρίσκω).³⁰⁶

By referring to the believers as ἄσπιλοι and ἀώμῃτοι, the narrator is again using a play on words. He refers simultaneously to his text in 2:13c and to the source material. In 2 Pet 2:13c, the ungodly are referred to as σπίλοι καὶ μῶμοι. On the basis of associations with the use of the adjective μῶμοι in particular in the cultic (Lev 1:33, 22:20, 21:21) and wisdom (Sir 11:31, 33, 18:15, 20:24, 33:23, 47:20) texts,

304 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1028.

305 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 326; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1028; D.J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 207.

306 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:15b–16b.

they were considered unfit to serve God and unfit for the Church, just as animals with blemishes and imperfect priests are unfit for sacrificial worship. As stained and with blemishes in the moral sense, they cannot in turn stand before God and serve Him in His eternal kingdom,³⁰⁷ a new reality. Now Peter refers *à rebours* to that formula and calls the believers ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμόμητοι. He uses alliteration based on *α-privativum*. The merism,³⁰⁸ characteristic of Semitic rhetoric, should be regarded as another element of following the Septuagint. Above all, however, Peter wants to portray the believers as fit to serve God in both present and future realities, because God has found them to be blameless and spotless for Himself. This depiction of the faithful as a community of the elect, fit for God's service because without physical or moral blemish, is also present in intertestamental Jewish literature, which, like 2 Peter, refers to images from the Torah. In 1QS^a 2:3–9, one can read that

no man affected by any of the impurities of man should enter into God's fellowship [...] no one whose body has been contaminated, having paralysed legs or hands, lame, blind, deaf, mute, nor anyone whose body has been contaminated by any infirmity visible to the eyes, nor a tottering old man unable to stand still in the assembly – these may not come to officiate in the assembly of notable men (cf. also 1QM 7:4–7 with a similar description with regard to the participants in the eschatological war).

In the NT, the terms used by Peter appear infrequently. The adjective ἄσπιλος occurs only three times – in 1 Tim 6:14 in reference to the commandment, in Jas 1:27 in reference to those who are free from the influence of the world, and in 1 Pet 1:19, where Christ as the sacrificial lamb is called ἄμωμος and ἄσπιλος: “[you have been redeemed] with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb”. In contrast, the Petrine term ἀμόμητος is *hapax legomenon*.³⁰⁹ It is considered synonymous with the adjective ἄμωμος occurring in the example already quoted from 1 Pet 1:19, similarly in Heb 9:14 and in contexts reminiscent of 2 Pet 3:14 – Rev 14:5 and Jude 24, very often with other terms of blamelessness, purity, holiness – Phil 2:15, Eph 1:4, 2:27, Col 1:22. Morphologically it is derived from the negated adjective μόμητος ‘reprehensible’, which in turn is a derivative of the verb μωμάομαι – ‘to reprove’, ‘to scold’; ἀμόμητος therefore denotes someone who is not subject to reproof, who cannot be reproached.³¹⁰ The references to Christ as sacrifice and a certain literary stability of ἄμωμος/ἀμόμητος and ἄσπιλος or their equivalents may indicate that such a formula functioned in a Christian setting, most likely in texts

307 See analysis of 2 Pet 2:13.

308 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 326.

309 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 327; F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 336; in Phil 2:15 a similar sounding and morphological term ἀμεμπτος is used – without reproach.

310 F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 336.

of a liturgical nature.³¹¹ This would be confirmed by the use of a similar formula in *1 Clem.* 29:1: “Let us then draw near to Him with holiness of spirit, lifting up pure and undefiled hands ἀγνάς καὶ ἀμιάντους χεῖρας unto Him, loving our gracious and merciful Father, who has made us partakers in the blessings of His elect”.

This liturgical and cultic roots taken over from Jewish tradition is of course superimposed on the moral meaning of the terms ἀμώμητος and ἄσπιλος and their equivalents which are also close to Greek tradition, as well as the eschatological-community context³¹² which is also present in New Testament writings (Phil 2:15, Eph 1:4, 2:27, 1 Tim 6:13, cf. 1 Cor 1:8, 1 Thess 3:13, 5:23) and early Christian writings, e. g. in *The Shepherd* in Vision 4:2: “If then you prepare yourselves, and repent with all your heart, [...] if your heart be pure and spotless, and you spend the rest of the days of your life in serving the Lord blamelessly” (cultic roots) and in Vision 4:3: “But the white part is the age that is to come, in which the elect of God will dwell, since those elected by God to eternal life will be spotless and pure” (ethical and eschatological context).

Peter takes into account all aspects arising from *Sitz im Leben* of the terms ἄμωμος/ἀμώμητος and ἄσπιλος, while emphasising their soteriological and ontological significance and links to the eschatological promises received at baptism. The lexical associations with Christ’s sacrifice indicate that it is through this sacrifice that believers are seen (found) by God like Jesus himself – as unblemished and without spot. Here Peter’s soteriological thesis seems particularly close to Paul’s account in Col 1:22 νῦν δὲ ἀποκατήλλαξεν ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου παραστήσαι ὑμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους καὶ ἀνεγκλήτους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ “he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through his death, to present you holy, without blemish, and irreproachable before him”. This ontological status was given to the believers at baptism, which, as the narrator of 2 Peter mentions in 1:10, is a cleansing from formerly committed sins. In order to maintain this status, believers must not only accept this cleansing in an act of declared faith, but also actively manifest their faith and true knowledge of Jesus Christ – using and developing their baptismal gifts and living a holy and godly life (1:3–4.5–8, 3:11b). As can be seen, Peter makes a very strong connection between this ontological status of believers as unblemished and without spot and baptism. Earlier he had focused on the visible and temporal consequences of baptism – the actions that set Christians apart from

311 Cf. the liturgical scepticism of D.J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 208.

312 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 327; H.J. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 248–249 also sees separatist tendencies in Peter’s cultic terms and references: in order to preserve spiritual perfection and impeccability, Christians must separate themselves from the world of corruption (cf. 1 Pet 1:4), just as in Old Testament worship what was holy and belonged to God had to be separated from the impure realm of the profane.

other communities. But even then he argued that the gifts and the great and wonderful promises of baptism are eschatological, for they will enable believers to share in the divine nature and lead them without stumbling into the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:4.9–11). He now focuses on the ontological-soteriological aspects and elaborates on the statements in 1:10 concerning the believer's vocation and election.

The link between 3:14 and 1:10 is not coincidental. It can already be seen at the rhetorical level (the relationship between exordial and perorational themes; the use of merisms in relation to the faithful – the recipients of the letter, addressing them directly by means of addressative phrases and the transitive character of the text) and at the lexical level, as shown in the table below:

2 Pet 1:10	2 Pet 3:14
Διὸ μαλλον, ἀδελφοί, σπουδάσατε βεβαίαν ὑμῶν τὴν κλήσιν καὶ ἐκλογὴν ποιεῖσθαι	Διό, ἀγαπητοί, σπουδάσατε ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμώμητοι αὐτῷ εὐρεθῆναι
Therefore, rather, brethren, be diligent/strive earnestly that certain/confirmed your vocation and election may be made	Therefore, beloved, be diligent/strive earnestly that you blameless and without spot may be found [by God] for Him

On a theological level, the thesis βεβαίαν ὑμῶν τὴν κλήσιν καὶ ἐκλογὴν ποιεῖσθαι is developed “so that your calling and election may be made certain/confirmed”. As already pointed out when analysing 2 Pet 1:10,³¹³ the adjective βεβαίος signifies the certainty and constancy of the baptismal promises (verses 3–4, 10c–11), but the guarantee of the fulfilment of these promises and the inclusion of believers among the called and elected ones is not based on human efforts but on God's salvific actions, which the narrator has indicated in his typical manner by *passivum theologicum* ποιεῖσθαι. Now likewise – it is not human endeavour that makes the faithful considered blameless and spotless, but God's saving actions culminating in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (a lamb without stain and without blemish). So the ultimate confirmation of the calling and election of the faithful at baptism is/will be to find them unblemished and without spot when the day of the Lord comes. And just as calling and election is God's exclusive prerogative, so the recognition of the faithful as unblemished and without plans is His exclusive competence.

313 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:10.

Such a clear combination of baptismal and eschatological themes is not unique in early Christian writing of the late first/early second century. In an even more explicit and obvious way, the author of *2 Clem.* links them: “how can we hope to enter into the royal residence of God unless we keep our baptism holy and undefiled?” (*2 Clem.* 6:9).

Peter adds that the faithful will be found “in peace”. The notion of εἰρήνη has already occurred in the salutation formula in 2 Pet 1:2³¹⁴ and has been read in an eschatological and soteriological and existential context as an inner joy resulting from reconciliation and a personal connection and relationship with God,³¹⁵ not as an “emotional soothing”.³¹⁶ Together with righteousness, as the cited texts especially the intertestamental ones showed (e. g. 1 En 5:7–9, 10:21–22, 94:1–4), it is an essential component of future reality. It is no coincidence that in this concluding Petrine reflection these two elements are given equal prominence – righteousness as the final addition in verse 13: “in whom [the new heavens and the new earth] righteousness dwells”; peace as the final addition in verse 14: “that you, as blameless and without spot, may be [by God] found for Him in peace”. Just as before righteousness, so now the peace resulting from reconciliation with God and relationship with Him in the temporal can be seen as a bridging element connecting present and future realities.

The theological addition to the summary transition concerning the interpretation of the doctrine of the day of the Lord/Day of God is found in verse 15a. The narrator of 2 Peter once again returns to the saving patience of the Lord (cf. 3:9c) and commands the faithful to regard it as an expression of saving mercy. The title “Lord”, used in the expression τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν μακροθυμία “patience of our Lord”, is to be treated in the same way as in 3:9a, thus bi-referentially.³¹⁷ The verb ἠγέομαι has already been used in 3:9a when demonstrating the false teachers’ misunderstanding of delay. The narrator, using a wordplay based on placing the same terms in different contexts, now uses ἠγέομαι as a directive for Christians: μακροθυμίαν σωτηρίαν ἠγεῖσθε “consider the patience/forbearance of our Lord as salvation/rescue”.³¹⁸ This clause is elliptical, as it omits the key concept of βραδύτητα “delay” which is central to the whole polemic. However, it is easy to reconstruct all the elements of Peter’s injunction: unlike the false teachers, who regard the delay of the parousia and the judgement as evidence of the non-fulfilment of the eschatological promise, the

314 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 215.

315 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:2.

316 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1029; D.J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 208; F. Mickiewicz, *List św. Judy. Drugi List św. Piotra*, p. 337.

317 Differently D.J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 295, who argues that the title κυρίως in 3:15a refers to God (the Father) rather than Christ; similarly D.J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 208.

318 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 208.

faithful – certainty of the fulfilment of the promises received at baptism – should regard the delay of the coming of the day of the Lord as an expression of God’s merciful patience, which is tantamount to a rescue.

The noun σωτηρία ‘rescue’ has a double meaning. First, it signifies rescue from God’s wrath on the day of judgment (3:10–12, cf. also the rescue of Noah in 2:5b and Lot in 2:7), and second, entry into the eternal kingdom and participation in the divine nature (3:13, cf. the promises in 1:3–4, 10–11).³¹⁹ The guarantor of the believers’ salvation is God’s patience, through which people were given time to repent. This motif already resonated with the typological narratives in chapter 2: some managed to make use of the time given (Noah and his family, Lot), while others, by postponing conversion, did not make it in time before the annihilation. In the conclusion, which is also an interpretation of Peter’s eschatological hermeneutics, the narrator once again encourages a proper – soteriological – assessment of God’s patience and the delay it entails. Viewed from a human perspective, delay is sometimes interpreted in different ways. A negative interpretation leads to eschatological scepticism and immorality; a positive interpretation, offered by the narrator of 2 Pet, to conversion understood as the continual exercise of baptismal gifts enabling a life of piety and holiness as befits those cleansed from sin. Conversion, as the apocalyptic literature cited above (ApBaSyr 85:8–15) and the early Christian contemporary 2 Peter (*1 Clem.* 23:5, *2 Clem.* 16:1) argues, must be hurried because one does not know when the time to show patience to the faithful will end, and it can happen unexpectedly quickly. The placement of the mention of patience at the end of this soteriological reflection is also intended to emphasise that it is not human efforts but precisely God’s merciful patience that signifies salvation.

2.14 D₅. Prophetic and apostolic teaching (2 Pet 3:15b–16b)

^{15b}Just as our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you,

^{16a}That is, in all the letters, speaking in them of these [things]. ^{16b}In them [the letters] there are some [elements] that are difficult to understand.

After another stage of the interpretation of the prophetic and apostolic teaching, the narrator of 2 Peter returns to its sources. In order to give credibility to his message and demonstrate the coherence and unity of the entire apostolic teaching, he refers to what the apostle Paul wrote in his letters. In this way, Peter in *peroratio* returns to the theme of faith which he had already touched upon in *prescriptio* (1:1). The recipients of the letter based their faith, which brought them the dignity of

319 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1031.

children of God, on the teaching preached not by Peter but by other apostles,³²⁰ perhaps precisely by Paul. Regardless of by whom the teaching is preached and how it is expressed, it contains the same content that comes from God himself. This makes it essential that the apostolic teaching should be treated in the same way as the prophetic message, which, preached at different times by different people, contains the same salvific message. It seems, however, that Peter's essential aim is to show, above all, the coherence of apostolic teaching in terms of eschatology and eschatologically oriented morality.

A certain parallel can be seen here with how the narrator of 2 Peter sought to give credibility to his message in chapter 1. There, he first invoked the testimony of the apostles (1:16–18) and then the prophetic teaching (1:19a); now the prophetic and apostolic teaching is further supported by Paul's message. This mutual authentication is thus arranged in chiasm, which is one of Peter's favourite rhetorical figures:

- A. apostolic testimony – Peter's – 1:16–18;
- B. prophetic teaching – 1:19–21;
- B' prophetic and apostolic teaching – 3:2,5–7.10b–11a;
- A' apostolic testimony – Paul's – 3:16b–17.

Thus, as the narrator of 2 Peter argues, the teaching conveyed by the various apostles based on prophetic attitudes is consistent in content. However, its interpretation can become problematic, especially if it deals with difficult issues and is communicated in language far from unambiguous and if it is done without the support of divine wisdom (3:16c–17).

In order to support his considerations from the transition in 3:14–15a, the narrator of 2 Peter refers in verse 15b to what the apostle Paul wrote. He calls Paul *ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἡμῶν ἀδελφός* “our beloved brother”. Such an attentiveness towards Paul seemed quite questionable to many scholars, especially in the light of the Petro-Pauline controversy exaggerated from the beginning of the nineteenth century by F.Ch. Taurus.³²¹ Peter was supposed to represent a Christianity very much rooted in the Jewish tradition, based on the Law of Moses, which believers coming from a pagan background should also accept in its entirety. Paul, on the contrary, was to preach freedom from the precepts of Judaism for ethno-Christians.³²² The belief that there was a conflict between Peter and Paul was based on the account in Gal 2:11–14, where Paul describes how he publicly rebuked Peter, who, while

320 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:1.

321 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1032.

322 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 209; R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 328.

in Antioch, initially had no objections to fraternise with Helleno-Christians who did not observe Jewish rituals and customs. The situation changed when Judaizers came to the city from Jerusalem invoking James, the Lord's brother. Then Peter began to distance himself from the ethno-Christians, demanding that they adopt Jewish customs.³²³ As it seems, F. Ch. Baur and the Tübingen school overestimated the significance of this conflict,³²⁴ ignoring the fact that the Antioch incident was woven into the account of Paul's sojourn in Jerusalem, where James, Cephas and John, named as pillars of the church, gave their right hands to Paul and Barnabas and recognised them as apostles sent with the gospel to the uncircumcised (Gal 2:1–9). In the remainder of Ga Paul gives the substance of the doctrine of justification through faith in Jesus Christ and not through the fulfilment of the law. He emphasises that it is a doctrine preached both by him and by Peter, the Jews, which is why he uses the first-person plural: ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι [...] καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν “We, who are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles, [yet] who know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified” (Gal 2:15–16). Acts 15:7–12 also show the harmony between Paul and Peter. It is Peter who, at the so-called Council of Jerusalem, declares that there is no difference between Judeo-Christians and ethno-Christians, and that both will be saved through faith and the grace of Jesus (Acts 15:9.11).

This egalitarianism resonates very clearly in 2 Peter. From the outset, the narrator emphasises that all Christians have received a faith that gives them equal dignity as children of God (2 Pet 1:1). He goes on to refer to both the Jewish tradition and the Hellenistic tradition, and tries to integrate them, giving both a Christian perspective. He thus proceeds in the same way as Paul, who must be considered the forerunner of such integration and harmonisation. The esteem with which Peter expresses himself about Paul is thus fully justified. Added to this is the conviction, expressed further on, that Paul is an inspired writer and that his writings are considered normative for Christians faithfully adhering to prophetic and apostolic teaching.

In calling Paul “his beloved brother”, the narrator of 2 Peter uses terms that he has already used in his letter. As in the analysis of 2 Pet 3:11b–15a, the meaning of both terms must now be derived primarily from previous contexts. The noun ἀδελφός had already appeared in 2 Pet 1:10 in the plural when referring to the recipients. There he was referring to the relationships prevailing in the Christian communities,

323 J. Gnilka, *Piotr i Rzym. Obraz Piotra w pierwszych dwu wiekach*, Polish transl. W. Szymona, Kraków 2002, p. 118–123.

324 *Ibid.*, *Piotr i Rzym*, p. 123 emphasises several times that this conflict was temporary and intractable.

which were regarded as true families.³²⁵ In a similar sense Paul himself uses the term ἀδελφοί “brethren” in his letters (e. g. Rom 1:13, 7:1.4, 10:1, 16:17, 1 Cor 1:10.11.26, 2:1, 3:1, 4:6, 7:24.29, 14:6.20.26.39, 2 Cor 1:8, 8:1, Gal 1:11, 4:12.28.31, Phil 3:1.13.17, 1 Thess 1:4, 2:1.9.14.17, 5:12.14), thus expressing a bond with the recipients. But the apostle also uses the term ἀδελφός “brother” in the singular to refer to his close associates (1 Cor 1:1, 2 Cor 1:1, 2:13, 8:18.22, Eph 6:21, Phil 2:25, Col 1:1, 4:7, 1 Thess 3:2, Phlm 1). It can be assumed that the preachers of the Gospel, or apostles in the broad sense of the word, called each other brothers in the ministry, expressing above all their equality. In order to emphasise their common vocation and mission, the term is used by the narrator of 2 Peter in relation to Paul.

Peter, however, not only calls Paul a brother in the ministry of preaching the Gospel, but he also adds the emotional phrase ἀγαπητός “beloved”. This is how he addressed his recipients in 3:1.8.14 (17) to get their attention and to express his feelings towards them. Paul, on the other hand, called Tychicus (Eph 6:21, Col 4:7) and Onesimus (Col 4:9) as his “beloved brother” ὁ ἀγαπητός ἀδελφός (singular), he referred to Epaphras as “our beloved fellow slave” ὁ ἀγαπητός συνδοῦλος (Col 1:7), Philemon as “our beloved and our co-worker” ὁ ἀγαπητός καὶ συνεργός (Phlm 1), and Luke as “the beloved physician” ὁ ἰατρὸς ὁ ἀγαπητός (Col 4:14). Epaenetus is simply “my beloved” ὁ ἀγαπητός μου (Rom 16:5), likewise Stachys (Rom 16:9) and Persis (Rom 16:12), and Ampliatus is “my beloved in the Lord” ὁ ἀγαπητός μου ἐν κυρίῳ (Rom 16:8). Timothy in 1 Cor 4:17 is called “the beloved son” of τέκνον ἀγαπητόν (cf. also Acts 15:25, Rom 16:12, 3 John 1). All these examples speak in favour of considering the phrase “beloved brother” in 2 Pet 3:15b not only as a conventional expression, but as an exponent of the true affection,³²⁶ spiritual bond and kindness³²⁷ of Peter towards Paul.

The phrase “our beloved brother” is understood quite differently by Tobias Nicklas.³²⁸ Starting from the same premises – the earlier use of the phrase’s components in the letter – he indicates that Peter treats Paul in a patronising way. Firstly – Paul is named in the same way as the other “beloved brothers”, the recipients of the letter. Secondly, nowhere is Paul called an apostle. Therefore, Paul’s praise is uttered here with a trace of irony. Since Paul’s letters enjoyed authority in Christian circles at the turn of the second century, Peter cannot afford to discredit them. But he may try to undermine Paul’s own authority by denying him the title of apostle and treating him like any other Christian. Despite a certain amount of appeal, Nicklas’ thesis does not seem convincing, especially in the light of the other terms used by Peter

325 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:7 and the concept of φιλαδελφία.

326 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 327.

327 F. Mickiewicz, *Autorytet apostołów w Kościele pierwotnym w świetle Drugiego Listu św. Piotra, “Seminare”* 39 (2018), no. 2, p. 17.

328 T. Nicklas, *Petrus-Diskurse in Alexandria*, p. 110.

to describe the status of Paul's writings, and in the light of early Christian writings written at a similar time to 2 Peter.³²⁹

Bauckham³³⁰ additionally draws attention to the pronoun ἡμῶν “our”, which can be understood in three ways. First, egalitarian – as a reference to all Christians. Such an understanding would correspond with the use of the term “brethren” in the letters of Peter and Paul to refer to the recipients, members of Christian communities, which are considered spiritual families. Paul would therefore be considered an equal member of the Christian community to all. Secondly, in reference to Peter's circle, that is, the circle of Peter's associates in Rome. This would also correspond with some of the uses of the term our brother in Paul's letters (e. g. 1 Thess 3:2 in relation to Timothy). Peter would thus count Paul among the helpers in the work of preaching the gospel. Thirdly, the term “our” would indicate a group of apostles in the broad sense of the word – preachers of the Gospel and founders of local churches (cf. e. g. 2 Cor 8:22–23, where a careful distinction is made between Titus – “my companion” κοινωνός ἐμός and “our brethren” – “the messengers of the churches” ἀδελφοὶ ἡμῶν ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν), who have received the legitimacy of their mission from God, thus act and teach in a manner reminiscent of the activity of the earlier prophets (cf. 2 Pet 3:2). In the latter case, personal acquaintance is not even required between the envoys of the churches.³³¹

This third understanding of the pronoun ἡμῶν seems most likely in the context of 2 Pet 3:15b. It is confirmed by the Gnostic Letter of Peter to Philip from Nag Hammadi (second/third century AD). In the prescript there is a reference to “our beloved brother and our fellow apostle”, later in the letter the sender, speaking on behalf of the other apostles (here the Twelve), uses the addressive “our brother”:

Now I want you to know, our brother, that we received orders from our Lord and the Savior of the whole world that we should come together to give instruction and preach in the salvation which was promised us by our Lord Jesus Christ [...]. Therefore would it be agreeable to you, our brother, to come according to the orders of our God Jesus?

329 T. Nicklas (ibid.) further references to Paul and his writings he also reads as an expression of protectionism. He finds particularly ironic the combination of verses 15 and 16: despite all the wisdom given to him, Paul writes things that cause difficulty, i. e. things that need to be subjected to a proper interpretation. Proper interpretation here is Peter's exclusive competence. So Peter would arbitrarily establish himself as the authority entitled to explain Paul's writings, the one-man *magisterium*.

330 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 327.

331 For more on the shared dignity of Peter and Paul as apostles, see D. Tomczyk, *Postrzeganie Pawła przez Piotra na podstawie zaimka „nasz” w 2 P 3,15*, “Biblica et Patristica Thoruniensia” 14 (2021), no. 1, p. 97–110.

This meaning also corresponds with the further characterisation of Paul as endowed with wisdom and with the recognition of his letters as inspired. Furthermore, Paul's apostolic dignity and the confirmation of his mission among the Gentiles are attested in Gal 2:1–9 and in Acts 15:2–3.25. This is also reflected in the early Christian tradition, e. g. in *1 Clem.* 5:3–6, where Peter and Paul are mentioned side by side as holy apostles who endured persecution:³³² “Let us set before our eyes the illustrious apostles. Peter [...] endured [...] numerous labours [...]. Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance [...]. After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith”. Ignatius of Antioch regards the commands of Peter and Paul as equally normative: “I do not, as Peter and Paul, issue commandments unto you. They were apostles; I am but a condemned man: they were free, while I am, even until now, a servant” (*IgnRom* 4:3). Irenaeus of Lyon, in describing the spread of the Gospel, mentions Peter and Paul together as the founders of the Church in Rome. Nor does he make any distinction between them when he mentions the sanctioning of the apostolic mission by the Holy Spirit:

For, after our Lord rose from the dead, [the apostles] were invested with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came down [upon them], were filled from all [His gifts], and had perfect knowledge: they departed to the ends of the earth, preaching the glad tidings of the good things [sent] from God to us, and proclaiming the peace of heaven to men, who indeed do all equally and individually possess the Gospel of God. [...] Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. [...] Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul (*Adv. Haer.* III 1:1, III 3:2).

Dionysius, bishop of Corinth (the second century), quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea, in the Letter to the Romans, expresses the equality of the apostleship of Peter and Paul by attributing to both of them the mission and establishment of the local Churches in Rome, Corinth, Italy: “You have thus by such an admonition bound together the planting of Peter and of Paul at Rome and Corinth. For both of them planted and likewise taught us in our Corinth. And they taught together in like manner in Italy, and suffered martyrdom at the same time” (*HE* II 25:8).

The apostolic dignity of Peter and Paul is shown as equal, which may indicate a tradition already stabilised in this respect at the time of the writing of 2 Peter, when – especially in the Roman Church – the two apostles were regarded as the

332 This is probably the oldest extra-biblical testimony to the joint mention of Peter and Paul – see J. Gnlika, *Piotr i Rzym*, p. 133.

two greatest Christian authorities.³³³ One can even perceive a certain primacy of Paul here, since the narrator of 2 Peter gives credence to his teaching by references to his letters, which he considers equal to Scripture (2 Pet 3:16c). Surely this is a different situation from that known from the account of Paul himself, who had to defend his – questioned by many – apostleship.

The great respect for Paul and his writings is evidenced by the claim that Paul Παῦλος κατὰ τὴν δουεῖαν αὐτῷ σοφίαν ἔγραψεν “wrote according to the wisdom given to him”. The reference to the apostle’s given wisdom is an expression of the conviction that the Pauline writings are inspired. But it also serves to show the contrast between Paul’s inspiration, involving submission to God’s wisdom, and the misunderstanding of his letters and of Scripture in general caused by under-education and vacillation (2 Pet 3:16c). In this way, the narrator of 2 Peter returns again to exordial issues and the crucial question of the proper and improper interpretation of internal and external prophetic and apostolic texts (2 Pet 1:20–21). Paul’s submission to God’s rather than his own wisdom in proclaiming the gospel (cf. 1 Cor 1:17–31, 2:3–5.6–7) represents the attitude of a true prophet communicating God’s unadulterated revelation (cf. internal interpretation) to the people.³³⁴ Such revelation also requires an inspired explanation (cf. external interpretation),³³⁵ which false teachers do not provide because they lack God’s wisdom.³³⁶

The belief that Paul’s wisdom is in fact God’s wisdom given to him is evidenced by the part. aor. pass. δοθεῖσα which, as *passivum theologicum*, indicates that the benefactor, the giver of wisdom, is God Himself; and the gift – implying the aorist – is complete, total, fully sufficient to carry out the mission entrusted by God. In his letters, Paul uses a similar formula with regard to grace (e. g. Rom 12:3, 15:15, Gal 2:9, Eph 3:2.7). Particularly significant is 1 Cor 3:10, where, immediately after mentioning the grace given to him κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι, the apostle describes himself metaphorically as a wise builder σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων, who lays the foundations of faith. In this context, God-given grace signifies the legitimacy of the message and the ability to proclaim the gospel. In Rom 12:6,

333 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 328; A. van den Hoek., *Peter without Paul: Aspects of Primordial Role of Simon Peter in an Early Christian Context*, [in:] *The Early Reception and Appropriation of the Apostle Peter (60–800 CE)*, ed. R. Dijkstra, Leiden-Boston 2020, p. 203 notes that there was a long tradition in Rome referring to two similar (twin) figures. He mentions the legendary founders Romulus and Remus and the mythological brothers Castor and Pollux, and from this he derives the early Christian belief in the two apostles Peter and Paul as the founders of the Church in Rome.

334 This theme is further elaborated by Hilary of Arles in his treatise on the seven Catholic letters, arguing that this particular wisdom, different from wisdom acquired by studying, was given to Paul on the road to Damascus; *Ojcowie Kościoła komentują Biblię*, p. 148.

335 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:20.

336 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:16cd.

charisms are referred to in the same way – as various gifts given to us according to grace. This would mean that Paul’s wisdom could be considered a special charisma, a gift enabling one to understand God’s designs (Wis 7:7.15, 9:17), one that was enjoyed by wise men and prophets alike (Prov 2:6, Dan 1:19 LXX), leaders of Israel (Ezra 7:25 LXX, cf. Matt 12:42, Luke 11:31), inspired speakers (Luke 21:15, Acts 6:10), teachers (Mark 6:2) and apostles (1 Cor 2:3–5, Col 1:28), as well as believers seeking to properly understand God’s message conveyed by prophets and apostles (Eph 1:17, Col 1:9, Jas 1:5). This confirms the suggestion, described above, of the dual function of the mention of wisdom, which is necessary to communicate God’s unadulterated revelation and to read that revelation in the same way, without succumbing to the pernicious influences of human wisdom (cf. 2 Pet 3:1).

Respect for Paul, his mission and the conviction of the inspiration of his writings, expressed in formulas similar to that of Peter or even more hagiographic, is characteristic of early Christian writing. Polycarp of Smyrna in his Epistle to the Philippians also draws attention to Paul’s wisdom, although he does not emphasise as strongly as Peter (and Paul himself) that it is God-given wisdom: “For neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom 2 Peter 3:15 of the blessed and glorified Paul” (*PolPhil* 3:2). Clement of Rome emphasises the inspiration of Paul’s writings: “Take up the epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul. What did he write to you at the time when the gospel first began to be preached? Truly, under the inspiration of the Spirit, ἐπ’ ἀληθείας πνευματικῶς he wrote to you concerning himself, and Cephas, and Apollos” (*1 Clem.* 47:1–3). For Ignatius of Antioch, the consistency of Paul’s teaching and life, is a model to follow: “You are initiated into the mysteries of the Gospel with Paul, the holy, the martyred, the deservedly most happy, at whose feet may I be found, when I shall attain to God” (*IgnEph* 12:2).

Sometimes, on the basis of this respect towards Paul, attempts are made to establish the time of the composition of 2 Peter. In doing so, tendencies towards a late dating, i. e. to the first/second century or early second century, prevail. The main argument would be the similarity in the perception of Paul’s authority by the narrator of 2 Peter and the early Christian writers. Above, attention has already been drawn to a certain stabilisation of Paul’s position as an apostle, which may be indicative of the emergence of 2 Peter after the epistles, in which it is Paul who must give credence to himself. A parallel can be seen here to the account of Acts 15:4–11, where the Antioch incident is not mentioned and Peter acts as Paul’s spokesman. This, in turn, would seem to argue for the close timing of the two writings – Acts and 2 Peter – so around 85–90.

The purpose of 2 Pet 3:15b–16b, however, as mentioned, is not to authenticate Paul’s teaching, but rather to authenticate the narrator speaking on behalf of Peter. Pointing to Paul and calling him a “beloved brother,” thus emphasising the bonding of the apostles and their common mission, may have a similar function to the reference to Peter’s biography in 1:16–18. In chapter 1, the narrator emphasised that

his teaching was based on direct apostolic testimony, corroborating and confirming the prophetic message. Now he adds to this the correspondence with what Paul preached, having unquestionable authority among the recipients of the letter, who most likely already knew Paul's writings well, treated them as normative, and so collected, transcribed and circulated them. In this way, by referring at the beginning of the letter to Peter and at the end to Paul, the narrator in fact alludes to the Petro-Pauline tradition already referred to in this study, established in Rome at the end of the first century (cf. *1 Clem.* 5:3–6, cited above; *IgnRom* 4:3, *HE* II 25:8, *Adv. Haer.* III 1:1, III 33:2). Its roots, however, are to be sought somewhat earlier, already in the 60s of the first century in connection with the martyrdom of Peter (c. 64) and Paul (c. 66–67)³³⁷ in Rome.

At first glance, it seems that the references to Paul's writings here are very specific. In 2 Pet 3:15b the narrator refers to what Paul "wrote to you", in 3:16a to "all the letters". However, it is not possible to identify clearly which Pauline texts are in question for three reasons. Firstly, because it is difficult to specify the support for what content of Peter's message is meant. As Bauckham notes,³³⁸ in 2 Peter the references to Paul are quite general, the narrator of the letter has so far not shown any particular familiarity with, let alone direct dependence on, Pauline theology. Secondly – it is even more difficult to determine which letters of Paul would be those addressed to the recipients of 2 Pet, because the question of the recipients of 2 Peter and the narrow or broad understanding of the pronoun ὑμῖν³³⁹ remain unclear. Thirdly and finally, due to the unknown time of 2 Peter's composition, it is not possible to adjudicate whether the entire *Corpus Paulinum* or only a part of it composed of, for example, the Proto-Pauline letters or some other collection was already functioning among Christians as normative.

On the first question – which parts of Peter's argument would gain support from Paul's writings – the following possibilities are usually indicated: (a) support for 3:14, (b) support for 3:15a; (c) support for the content expressed in 3:14–15a;³⁴⁰ (d) support for the content present throughout Peter's argument so far. The most commonly indicated variant is a, b or c, justifying this with the adverb καθώς 'as', which would refer to the phrases immediately preceding 3:15b.³⁴¹ However, it can be treated somewhat more broadly, similar to the treatment of, for example, the adverbially used pronouns αὐτὸ τοῦτο in 1:5 with reference to everything said

337 J. Gnilka, *Paweł z Tarsu*, Polish transl. W. Szymona, Kraków 2001, p. 434; Gnilka adopts a different chronology and dates Paul's death to the year 56.

338 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 330.

339 Ibid.

340 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 215.

341 J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 370.

about the promises and gifts described in 2 Pet 1:3–4,³⁴² or the pronoun ταῦτα in 1:8 with reference to both the virtues in 1:5–7 and the gifts in 1:3–4.³⁴³

If one were to look for an analogy of 2 Pet 3:15a with Paul’s message, one would have to point primarily to Rom 2:4 (cf. also Rom 3:25–26, 9:22–23, 11:22–23).³⁴⁴ Thus, what “Paul wrote to you” would have to be identified with the Letter to the Romans, and thus consider that the recipients of 2 Peter are Christians in Rome. If the parallels are considered to be with 2 Pet 3:14 or 3:14–15a, the index of parallel texts expands, as does the list of recipients of 2 Peter. Indeed, the parenthesis, the object of which is the proper attitude of Christians in waiting for the fulfilment of the eschatological promises, is present in almost all the Pauline writings, sometimes in direct connection with divine patience, sometimes without such direct links (Rom 13:11–14, 1 Cor 7:29–32, 2 Cor 5:6–10, 7:1, 15:35, Gal 5:12, Eph 4:30–31, 5:5.16.27, 6:13, Phil 2:15–16, 3:20, 4:5, Col 3:4–6.23–25, 1 Thess 2:12, 3:13, 5:4–11, 2 Tim 3:1–5, Titus 2:12–14).³⁴⁵ It is most difficult to identify specific parallels between the narrator’s argumentation of 2 Peter so far and Paul’s texts. Usually,³⁴⁶ it is cited as the most important and recognisable due to lexical and motivic affinity:

2 Pet	Motif	Pauline texts
1:7	exercising fraternal love	1 Thess 4:9–10
1:13–14	a metaphor for leaving the body	2 Cor 5:1–4
2:18–20	liberation from corruption and the promise of freedom for God’s children	Rom 8:20–21,
2:19	surrender to the slavery of sin God’s patience	Rom 6:16
3:9c.5a	predestination of the faithful not to the wrath of God	Rom 2:4
3:9d–e	the wish that they attain salvation	1 Thess 5:9
3:10	the day of the Lord like a thief	1 Thess 5:2.4

The second issue – identifying the common audience of Paul’s letters and those of 2 Peter – seems even more difficult. First of all, because the narrator of 2 Peter does not specify to which communities his letter is addressed.³⁴⁷ Nor is it resolved by possible content parallels. As already mentioned, if one considers the similarity of motifs in 2 Pet 3:15a and Rom 2:4, one would have to identify the Roman community as the group of recipients. Taking into account the motivic and lexical similarity

342 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:5.

343 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:8.

344 See, for example, K.H. Schelkle, p. 236; D.J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 25.

345 Ibid., p. 209–210; R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 330; F. Mickiewicz, *Autorytet apostołów w Kościele pierwotnym w świetle Drugiego Listu św. Piotra*, p. 18.

346 T. Callan, *The Soteriology of the Second Letter of Peter*, *Biblica* 84 (2001), no. 4, p. 552–553, 556–557; D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 215.

347 See Introduction (vol. 1).

presented in the table – one would also have to point to Romans or Thessalonians. But if the eschatological parenthesis is also taken into account, it appears that the recipients of 2 Peter could be all the communities to which Paul addressed his letters. This long list is sometimes narrowed down on the assumption that 2 Peter was written to the same audience as 1 Peter (cf. 2 Pet 3:1),³⁴⁸ i. e. the Christians in Pontia, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. The common recipients of Peter's and Paul's letters would thus be the communities in Galatia and Asia, i. e. the Galatians, Ephesians and Colossians. Such a limitation, however, is not satisfactory because of the omission of the similarity of Peter's message with parts of Paul's letters to the Romans and Thessalonians. Perhaps, then, the communities in Rome and Thessalonica, to whom both Paul and the author of 2 Peter wrote, should also be added to the list of churches in Asia Minor, to which 1 Peter is also addressed.

A certain attempt to solve this problem would be to point to Paul's lost letter to the Laodiceans (cf. Col 4:16).³⁴⁹ It can be added to the above list, and it can be assumed that it contained much more material in common with 2 Pet. In addition to eschatological parenthesis, it could contain, for example, baptismal catechesis, doctrine of the end times, soteriological issues, explanations of what Christian freedom is all about, or the same hermeneutical assumptions that allow for a typological, eschatologically oriented interpretation of the biblical narratives. However, this would mean accepting the unlikely hypothesis that 2 Peter is not a circular letter but addressed to a specific community.³⁵⁰

The optimal solution to the question of the common recipients of Paul's and Peter's message seems to be to treat the pronoun ὑμῖν not only as a reference to the first historical recipients of the letters associated with specific communities, but more generally as a turn to all Christians,³⁵¹ regardless of the places and times in which they lived. Such a universal understanding of the pronoun ὑμῖν would fit well with the narrator of 2 Peter's conviction of the validity of the apostolic teaching among all generations of Christians. He himself, moreover, assumes that his letter will be treated in this way and read also after his death to the next generations until the end times (cf. 2 Pet 1:12,15) not in a single local community but in the whole Church. As already mentioned when analysing 2 Pet 1:12, he is not alone in expressing the universality and timelessness of the apostolic teaching in this way. When Polycarp of Smyrna, in his *Epistle to the Philippians* written about the year 107, mentions to his contemporary audience Paul's stay in Philippi and the apostle's letter to the townspeople, he writes that Paul was "with you" and "wrote to you": "For neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom of the

348 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:1.

349 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 330.

350 See Introduction (vol. 1).

351 See for example, J.N.D. Kelly, E.M. Sidebottom, W. Schräge.

blessed and glorified Paul. He, when among you, accurately and steadfastly taught the word of truth in the presence of those who were then alive. And when absent from you, he wrote you a letter” (*PolPhil* 3:2). In the same way, Ignatius of Antioch, also in the early second century, speaks of his contemporaries in Ephesus as being “initiated into the mysteries of the Gospel with Paul” (see *IgnEph* 12:2). This would mean that the phrase “Paul wrote to you” refers to Paul’s epistolography, which all believers accept as normative and valid, regardless of the communities to which it was originally addressed. This would also reveal that the authority of Paul’s letters were equated with the authority of Scripture in 3:16c.

Making the above assumption makes it possible to look at the expressions in 3:15b and 16a as synonymous parallelism. The first element καθὼς Παῦλος ἔγραψεν ὑμῖν “as Paul wrote to you” would be equivalent to the second element ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς “as in all the letters”. Moreover, the second element can be treated explicatively with respect to the first element. In this way, the narrator of 2 Peter, who, it has been said, does not draw inspiration directly from Paul’s teaching laid out in any particular letter, would be referring generally to Paul’s writings and explaining: as Paul wrote to you – all believers, that is, as [he wrote] in all the letters. One can now clearly see the appropriateness of the phrases ὑμῖν and ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς; the pronoun ye would thus indicate the recipients of all the letters. Such an explication has a dual function. On the one hand, it emphasises the fundamental coherence of Pauline teaching articulated in all the letters,³⁵² and on the other, it exposes the same fundamental coherence of Peter’s and Paul’s teaching, i. e. the universal, supra-local, timeless apostolic teaching.

The very phrase πᾶσαι αἱ ἐπιστολαί “all the letters” in verse 16 also poses problems. For its interpretation largely depends on the accepted – early or late – dating of 2 Peter. Undoubtedly, already at the time of Paul’s letters, many communities, especially those founded by the apostle, were transcribing, exchanging and collecting his writings (cf. Col 4:16). This practice was certainly followed by large churches such as Corinth and Ephesus. Thus, even during Paul’s lifetime, collections of his letters may have been formed, first locally, then increasingly widespread, surrounded by respect and treated as an authoritative apostolic interpretation of the Gospel.³⁵³ Assuming that 2 Peter is either an authentic or pseudonymous letter, but written before Peter’s death in 64, the term “all the letters” would therefore have to refer to a collection numbering, according to Harrington,³⁵⁴ at least three letters, most likely any of the Proto-Pauline ones.

352 J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 372.

353 F. Mickiewicz, *Autorytet apostołów w Kościele pierwotnym w świetle Drugiego Listu św. Piotra*, p. 18.

354 D. J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 295.

Perhaps copies of the letters were also kept by Paul's close associates, such as Timothy or Titus. It is possible that such copies were kept by Paul himself, a practice common among ancient writers.³⁵⁵ After the apostle's death, these copies were circulated among Christian communities. If 2 Peter is considered to be a pseudonymous letter but written shortly after the apostle's death, then the existing collection of Pauline letters in the 1960s/70s would also have to include the *Corpus Proto-Paulinum*. Among "all the letters" was probably Rom, 1 Thess,³⁵⁶ perhaps 1 Cor. A collection including Rom, 1 Cor and perhaps 1 Thess was also known to Clement of Rome (cf. *1 Clem.* 47:1–3 quoted above). Perhaps 2 Cor, Gal and Phil belonged to the same collection or a separate collection.

If 2 Peter is a pseudonymous epistle written at the end of the first or the turn of the first century, then the collection of "all" Paul's letters can be extended primarily to Eph and Col, as evidenced by the letters of early Christian writers.³⁵⁷ The author of 2 *Clem.* probably knew the Proto-Pauline letters and the Letter to the Ephesians, because he uses motifs present in Rom, 1 Cor, Gal and Eph. In 2 *Clem.* one can even find some allusions to the Deutero-Pauline letter, 2 Timothy. Ignatius of Antioch refers most readily to 1 Cor, but there are passages that testify to his knowledge of Rom, 1 Thess, Gal, Phil, Eph, Col and 1 Tim. The inclusion of 1 Tim and 2 Tim in these references may indicate that in circles close to the narrator of 2 Peter, the pastoral epistles were already considered canonical in the early second century. This would be confirmed by the Muratorian Canon, created in Rome around 170, which, however, treats pastoral letters (together with Phlm) somewhat differently from letters addressed to particular churches due to their individual recipients.³⁵⁸

As already mentioned, 2 Peter uses Pauline literature in a general way, without explicit direct references. This is reminiscent of the practice followed by Ignatius of Antioch in particular, who also refers to the unspecified "all" of Paul's letters: "who [Paul] in all his Epistles makes mention of you in Christ Jesus" (*IgnEph* 12:2). This resemblance and the way in which Paul is expressed with great affection, the desire for the message of Peter and Paul to be perpetuated in the minds of the audience as a coherent apostolic teaching, confirms that 2 Peter was probably written in the first/second century.³⁵⁹

355 R.E. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection*, Downers Grove 2004, p. 218.

356 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 331.

357 K.P. Donfried, *The Setting of Second Clement in Early Christianity*, Leiden 1974, p. 93–95.

358 The Muratorian Canon, however, does not mention 2 Peter – see Introduction (vol. 1).

359 See Introduction (vol. 1). D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 216, citing precisely the similarity with *IgnEph* 12:2, argue that 2 Peter must have been written after 107/108, considered to be the date when *IgnEph* was written.

In order to further emphasise the coherence of the Petrine and Pauline teaching, the narrator offers more than a mere comparison; he adds that Paul, in all his epistles known and recognised throughout the Christian ecumene as normative, “speaks of these things” λαλῶν ἐν αὐταῖς περὶ τούτων. This redundant addition, however, does not conclusively clarify what things the narrator of 2 Peter has in mind. The same variants appear here as with the interpretation of 3:15b, i. e. references to 3:14, to 3:15a, to 3:14–15a or to issues raised in the letter in general. Some light is shed on the meaning of “these things” by the later part of verse 16, in which the narrator mentions difficult, unclear things (3:16b) that are improperly explained (3:16c). Since the earlier improper explanations given by the false teachers mainly concerned eschatological issues, especially the interpretation of the delay of the parousia and the judgement, it can be assumed that the narrator also has them in mind now. In all likelihood, the heretics claimed that it was the eschatological scepticism they preached, with all its moral consequences, that was in line with Paul’s teaching (cf. 2 Thess 2:2–3 and 2 Tim 2:17–18, where Paul warns against those who claim that the final events are already coming to pass). Meanwhile, Peter claims the opposite – false teachers distort Paul’s teaching because they are unable to understand it. The Pauline message is essentially the same as Peter’s preaching, although heretics seek to accentuate the supposed differences between the two apostles’ message.³⁶⁰

Peter acknowledges that there are things in Paul’s letters that are difficult to understand. He refers to them as δυσνόητα. The term is quite rare, but appears in Hellenistic literature in the context of an oracle, a vision, some text difficult to understand because of its ambiguity. It is used, for example, when commenting on the answer the Delphic Pythia gave to a king asking whether to go to war: “If you go to war, you will destroy a great nation”. It remains unclear whether the destruction of a great nation means the defeat of the enemy or, on the contrary, the pogrom inflicted on one’s own nation.³⁶¹ Diogenes Laertius uses the term δυσνόητα in *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (IX 1:13), when he quotes an opinion on the treatise *On Nature* by Heraclitus of Ephesus:

You are the author of a treatise *On Nature* which is hard to understand and hard to interpret. In certain parts, if it be interpreted word for word, it seems to contain a power of speculation on the whole universe and all that goes on within it, which depends upon motion most divine; but for the most part judgement is suspended, so that even those who are the most conversant with literature are at a loss to know what is the right interpretation of your work.

360 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 215; J.H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 250.

361 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 211.

Hermas, in Similitude 9:14, explains why he keeps asking for clarification of the details of the parable: “I must, sir, [...] ask you of all things, because I am wholly unable to understand them; for all these things are great and glorious, and difficult for man to understand”.

The narrator of 2 Peter points out that in Paul’s letters only some things – *τινα* literally ‘some’ – are difficult to understand.³⁶² He does not give a clear answer as to whether this refers to complex, incomprehensible language, intricate theological issues that can be explained in different ways, or simple things that have proved difficult for false teachers to interpret. This ambiguity seems intentional; it resonates with the meaning of the term *δυσνόητα* and fits perfectly with Peter’s fond wordplays.

Researchers are divided when indicating the semantic dominance of *δυσνόητα* in 3:16b. Some favour the first variant and argue that the narrator of 2 Peter in the expression *ἐν αἷς ἔστιν δυσνόητά τινα* is indeed accentuating Paul’s difficult language and intricate style, which still cause exegetes many problems today.³⁶³ However, in light of how Peter himself writes and his proficient use of Greek, it is unlikely that he would have found Paul’s language difficult. Supporters of variant two³⁶⁴ recall that already in antiquity some theological issues raised by Paul were interpreted differently. As an example, they usually cite the doctrine of justification, which, wrongly and one-sidedly understood, had to be corrected by the author of the Letter of James (Jas 2:14–26).³⁶⁵ This is also referred to by Augustine in *Faith and Works* 14:22, when he writes that

Peter in his Second Letter very clearly encourages holiness of life and morals, prophesying that this world will pass away and that we look forward to new heavens and a new earth, which will be given to the righteous to inhabit. He also knew that some evil people take from some of Paul’s harsh sentences the justification to be confident of their salvation by faith alone, not at all concerned about living an upright life. That is why he mentioned that there are several difficult places in Paul’s letters. These people misrepresent them, as well as other writings, to their own destruction.³⁶⁶

362 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 331; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1037.

363 See for example, F. Mickiewicz, *Autorytet apostołów w Kościele pierwotnym w świetle Drugiego Listu św. Piotra*, p. 18.

364 See, for example, D.J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 295; D.J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 212.

365 For the apparent controversy between Paul and James, see K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *A Structural Commentary on the So-Called Antilegomena*, vol. 1: *The Letter of James: Wisdom that Comes from Above* (Eastern and Central European Voices 3.1), Göttingen 2021, p. 11, 42–43, 166–175.

366 *Ojcowie Kościoła komentują Biblię*, p. 148. In the same vein, M. Luther put it: “[Peter] has yet seen that many unstable spirits wrested and perverted St. Paul in his words and doctrines, inasmuch as some things in his Epistles are hard to be understood, – as when he speaks in this way, ‘that no one is justified by works, but by faith alone;’ so, too, ‘the law is given to make sin more gross;’ so,

In the *Eight Questions of Dulcitus* 1:5, on the other hand, the Bishop of Hippo claims that it is a matter of deriving from Paul's letters the doctrine of the possibility of attaining salvation without conversion and repentance:

those things that Peter says are difficult to understand in his writings and that people must not pervert to their own ruin. Thus, against the clearest witness of the scriptures, they assure the gaining of salvation for those who are most wicked, who cling most obstinately to their own wickedness and who have not changed through correction or repentance.³⁶⁷

In the context of 2 Peter, the things that are difficult for heretics to understand in Paul's letters could therefore include, above all, eschatology and Christian freedom.³⁶⁸

However, the narrator of 2 Peter seems to go a step further and spices his statement with a pinch of irony: some essentially simple and obvious things in the Pauline texts are difficult to understand for the false teachers who misinterpret them, just as they also misinterpret other inspired Scriptures (16b) which clearly speak of the coming of the day of the Lord and of judgement. This characteristic *vituperatio* sarcasm, further revealed in the characterisation of heretics as ἀμαθεῖς καὶ αστήρικτοι “unlearned and unstable” (16c) makes the third variant the most likely semantic dominant of δυσνόητα.

2.15 E₅. Interpretation of apostolic teaching: α. False interpretation (2 Pet 3:16c–17)

^{16c}Which [these difficult things] the unlearned and unstable distort as well as other scriptures to their own destruction. ¹⁷You, then, beloved, knowing [that all] beforehand, beware lest, seduced by the error of the unrighteous, you fall away from your own stability.

After presenting another element concerning the prophetic and apostolic teaching, the narrator, as previously, moves on to interpretation. He states unambiguously that both Paul's teaching and the eschatological content of other Scriptures are

too, 'where sin abounded, there grace much more abounds,' and more passages of the same sort. For when men hear such, then they say, if that is true, we will go on indolently, and do no good work, and so be righteous, as men even now say, that we forbid good works; for if one so perverts St. Paul's own words, what wonder is it that they should, in like manner, pervert ours?"; *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude Preached and Explained by Martin Luther III* (V.15,16).

³⁶⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *The Works of Saint Augustin*, vol. 12: *Responses to Miscellaneous Questions*, English transl. B. Ramsey, New York 2008.

³⁶⁸ D. J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 296.

distorted. He returns to the issues mentioned in *exordium* that the authority of the apostolic testimony and that of the prophetic testimony confirm each other (1:16–19). Together with the statements in 15b–16b, verse 16c forms a syllogism:

- a. Peter's teaching does not differ from Paul's (15b–16b);
- b. Paul's teaching is inspired (15b);
- c. Paul's inspired teaching happens to be distorted like other Scriptures (16c), i. e. Paul's teaching is treated in the same way as other Scriptures;
- d. conclusion: Peter's teaching in line with that of Paul is also sometimes distorted in the same way as other Scriptures.

Drawing this conclusion allows us to recall and summarise the main theme of the letter – the interpretation of the inspired teaching on the end times. The false interpretation leading to annihilation has been given far more space by the narrator than the correct interpretation, which leads to salvation. Not surprisingly, such proportions also appear in the final summary of Peter's reflection in 3:16c–17:

- a. 3:16c–17c – false interpretation;
- b. 3:17d – correct interpretation.

Attention is drawn to the frame structure of this passage, which is emphasised by a wordplay applied by the narrator for the contradictory but similar-sounding concepts ἀστήρικτοι in 16c and στηριγμός in 17d. The axis connecting the two concepts is, of course, the interpretation of Christian eschatological teaching: the wrong interpretation of it leads to instability, the right one to stability.

Verse 16c begins with a metonymy indicating the characteristics of those who make false interpretations of:³⁶⁹ ἀμαθεῖς and ἀστήρικτοι. Here, the narrator uses one of his favourite rhetorical device – the alliteration introduced by *α-privativum*. Earlier, in 3:14, he applied the same device to the believers, whom he called ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀνώμητοι. The claim that only “the ignorant/unlearned and unstable” have a difficulty of interpreting certain places in the apostle Paul's letters undoubtedly constitutes a vituperative element, contrasting with the esteem towards Paul who received wisdom from God. This contrast persists on a semantic level as well as on a theological level. Paul's wisdom as a synonym for inspiration refers to the internal interpretation of God's message; the ignorance, or lack of wisdom in the false teachers, to the external interpretation (1:20–21). These themes were already addressed by the narrator of 2 Peter in *exordium* (1:20–21); now he seems to address them anew and finally clarify his conception of internal and external inspiration.

369 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 216.

Whereas in 1:20–21 he concentrated on the former and indicated the latter only implicitly, in *peroratio* he treats both types of inspiration equally. Paul's inspiration undoubtedly resembles prophetic inspiration, which is why his letters have been equated with the writings whose authors are prophets *sensu largo*, who do not interfere with the content of the transmitted word.³⁷⁰ For a proper explanation of such prophecies, external inspiration is necessary to ensure that they are read according to God's intention and not according to the interpreter's own ideas and concepts.

The term ἀμαθεῖς in the Bible and early Christian literature belongs to *hapax legomena*.³⁷¹ Among Greek-speaking Jewish writers, it is used by Josephus Flavius in *Ant.* XII 4:6: “those that had then the best reputation for instructing youth, the rest of his children, by reason of their sloth, and unwillingness to take pains, returned to him foolish and unlearned (ἀνόητοι καὶ ἀμαθεῖς).” It is also used by Plutarch in *How a Young Man Should Study Poems*, when he describes undereducated poets trying to instil misconceptions about the deities. Etymologically, the term ἀμαθής means someone who is unlearned. As already mentioned, the ignorance of the false interpreters is juxtaposed by Peter at the theological level with the wisdom Paul received from God and denotes the lack of God's wisdom, i. e. the lack of spiritual competence needed to properly explicate Paul's letters and Scriptures.³⁷² On a semantic level and with the use of *vituperatio*, ἀμαθής denotes someone poorly educated, an ignorant person who thinks he is a sage, but in fact lacks wisdom. There is no doubt that the disparaging term “ignorant/unlearned” refers to false teachers who think that the philosophical knowledge (cf. human wisdom in 1 Cor 1:19–20.22.25) they possess is sufficient to explain the Scriptures. Meanwhile, as the narrator of 2 Peter argues, turning God's message into a philosophy leads to perdition.

The second term ἀστήρικτοι has already been used in 2:14, where it referred to people whose faith is still unstable, wobbly and who are easy prey for false teachers. According to the strategy employed by the narrator, who uses the terms used earlier now in a similar sense, the term would have to be considered to refer to followers of false teaching, those who are victims of false teachers caught in the lure of sophisticated but deceitful words and acquiescence to a promiscuous lifestyle (cf. 2:18). The phrase ἀμαθεῖς καὶ ἀστήρικτοι would therefore denote two groups of people making a false interpretation – the undereducated pseudo teachers (cf. 2:12, 3:5) and the unstable followers of their doctrine (2:14),³⁷³ whose understanding

370 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:20–21.

371 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 331.

372 Ibid.

373 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1037; R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 331.

and experience of Christian doctrine and faith is still quite superficial and therefore easily deceived.³⁷⁴

However, if one takes into account the narrator of 2 Peter's predilection for the use of merisms – 2:13 σπίλοι καὶ μῶμοι; 3:14 ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμώμητοι, the identification in the phrase ἀμαθεῖς καὶ ἀστήρικτοι of references to two groups is no longer so certain. Perhaps as before, like Flavius (ἀνόητοι καὶ ἀμαθεῖς), Peter is describing one group – false teachers who not only lack the intellectual and spiritual competence to explain the Scriptures properly, but also stability in the faith, since they want to philosophise and paganise Christianity (cf. 2:19). It is also difficult to suppose that the newly-acquired proponents of the anti-eschatological heresy would themselves interpret the inspired Scriptures. Furthermore, on the assumption that the metonymy of the “unlearned and unstable” refers to only one group – the false teachers – the juxtaposition of their instability with the stability of the faithful – the recipients of the letter – resonates more strongly.

False interpretation is described by the narrator using the verb στρεβλώω, which means ‘to twist’, ‘to distort’, ‘to misrepresent things that are difficult to explain.’ The problem of distorting the word of God is also described by Polycarp of Smyrna in *The Epistle to the Philippians* 7:1; among these distortions he also mentions the denial of eschatological judgment: “For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is antichrist; and whosoever does not confess the testimony of the cross, is of the devil; and whosoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and says that there is neither a resurrection nor a judgment, he is the first-born of Satan.”³⁷⁵ Polycarp, however, uses a different verb from Peter, namely – μεθοδεύω ‘to deviate from the path’, ‘to swindle’, ‘to cheat’ (cf. Eph 4:14, 6:11, where the noun μεθοδεῖα appears). In a slightly later writing, the pseudo-Clementine Epistle of Peter to James 2:4, Peter himself complains that his words are already being transformed during his lifetime so that the Law can be dissolved and uses the verb μετασχηματίζω ‘to change’, ‘to transform’.

Based on the meanings of the synonyms, it can be assumed that στρεβλώω in 2 Pet 3:16c means either a rejection of some teaching present in Paul's texts or such a manipulation of the apostle's words as to make them appear to support heretical views. Most likely both meanings overlap here³⁷⁶ and depend on the issues raised by Paul and the false teachers. If the texts are concerned with eschatology and its inevitability and imminence, eschatological scepticism rejecting judgment and

374 Ibid.

375 The devil's inspiration in distorting the message of Scripture is also seen by John of Damascus, who writes in the *Life of Barlaam and Josaphat* XVI: “for the enemy of our souls hath made them decline from the straight road, and divided them by strange teachings, and taught them to interpret certain sayings of the Scriptures falsely”.

376 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 332; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1038.

accusing God of failing to fulfil his promises (cf. Rom 13:11–12, 16:20, 1 Cor 7:29, Phil 4:5, 1 Thess 4:15) come to the fore, with the omission of Paul’s confirmation of judgment. If, on the other hand, the ethical message takes precedence, then heretics seek to justify their antinomianism with appeals to justification and liberation from the law (Rom 4:15, 5:20, 8:1, 1 Cor 6:12) and the offer of Christian freedom (2 Pet 2:19, Rom 8:2, 2 Cor 3:17, Gal 5:18, cf. Rom 3:8, 6:15, Gal 5:10.13, where Paul himself is aware that his teaching can be misunderstood and opposes such tendencies).³⁷⁷ This latter practice is not alien to Peter himself, who uses Paul’s authority to validate his teaching: by demonstrating the consistency of his message with Paul’s gospel, he legitimises it and lends it credibility before the letter’s audience, who held Paul’s writings in high esteem and regarded them as normative.

It turns out that it is not only Paul’s letters that have become subject to false interpretation. Heretics also distort other Scriptures, as indicated by juxtaposing the difficult places in Paul’s letters with other Scriptures for the false teachers by means of a comparative construction: ἃ οἱ ἁμαθεῖς καὶ ἀστήρικτοι στρεβλώσουσιν ὡς καὶ λοιπὰς γραφάς. The governing verb remains, of course, the verb στρεβλώω, which means that also the texts regarded as Scriptures at the time 2 Peter was being composed were subjected to the same two-way manipulation: on the one hand, mentions of judgment and parousia were eliminated in heretical teaching (cf. 2 Pet 2:1de and undermining the veracity or even rejecting the eschatological-parousia prophecies), on the other hand, the related ethical message was dressed up in deceptive words so that many would follow the indecent acts of the false teachers and desecrate the way of truth (cf. 2 Pet 2:1de–3a)³⁷⁸ and to convince many that judgment is idle and doom slumbers (cf. 2 Pet 2:3b).

The noun γραφή constitutes the second direct complement of the sentence in 16c after the relative pronoun ἃ referring to the expression δυσνόητα τινα. Undoubtedly, the notion of “Scripture” includes a reference to texts regarded as inspired in Jewish tradition. This is evidenced not only by the context, but also by some even technical use of the term with the definite genitive.³⁷⁹ Since Peter’s letter comes from a time before the final establishment of the OT canon, it can be assumed that, in addition to the books later recognised as canonical, the narrator also has in mind those of the intertestamental texts, presumably of an apocalyptic nature, which were popular among the recipients of his letter (cf. Gal 8:22, 2 Tim 3:16). On the other hand, one could narrow down this traditional Jewish account to those texts which lent

377 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 332; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1038; see also above – analysis of 2 Pet 2:19.

378 See analysis of 2 Pet 2:1–3.

379 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 333.

themselves, as it were, naturally to a Christological reading.³⁸⁰ But as the examples of 2 Pet 2:5–9 show, even primarily non-eschatological and non-Christological narratives subjected to an appropriate hermeneutic can be used typologically in support of apostolic teaching.

It should also be noted that in New Testament literature, hagiographers generally use the singular when referring to Scripture, as does the narrator of 2 Peter in 1:20–21. Now the hagiographer uses the plural, which may suggest that he has a wider collection in mind than just the texts of Jewish tradition.

An analysis of 2 Pet 1:16–18 has shown that the author of 2 Peter may have been familiar with Mark and Matthew, perhaps also with Luke, or at least with those passages later incorporated into the baptismal and transfiguration narratives. Their literary shape seems already stabilised, although interpretation still varies and depends on the narrative contexts.³⁸¹ In chapter 1, the narrator of 2 Peter separated the apostolic and prophetic testimonies. He understood the latter in a narrow sense as specific prophecies concerning the parousia lexically and thematically referring to the transfiguration (1:19a), and as prophecies more generally concerning the parousia and eschatologically oriented ethical teaching (1:19b–c), and broadly – as all that arose under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by the will of God and was written down (1:20–21). “Scripture” was thus a hypernym to “prophecy”, which was considered a hyponym. Since Peter uses terms used earlier in *peroratio*, “scriptures” in 3:16c must also be taken as a certain hypernym, a general, umbrella term. This time, however, no hypernyms are given, but they can be inferred from the data cited. Firstly, the term “scriptures” in 3:16c in the plural must be broader than the term “scripture” in 1:20, where the singular form is used. Secondly – since in 1:20 “scripture” included prophecies *sensu largo*, there must now be an element added to these prophecies. Most likely, then, these are the already written accounts of the apostles containing the logia of Jesus and/or elements confirming the dignity of Jesus as messiah, who received from God the eschatological powers of the Judge and the authority over the future kingdom (1:16–18).

The suggestion that Peter’s “scriptures” may refer to Jewish tradition and to the words of Jesus is confirmed by New Testament and early Christian writings. John 2:22, on the one hand, distinguishes between the Scriptures and the words of Jesus; on the other hand, it clearly equates their interpretation among the disciples of the Master of Nazareth. Moo³⁸² draws attention to the indirect practice of hagiographers who refer to those statements of Jesus that are based on OT as

380 Cf. Mark 12:10, Luke 24:27.32.45, John 5:39, 7:38.42, 13:18, 17:12, 19:24.28.36.37, 20:9, Acts 1:16, 8:32.35, Rom 1:2, 1 Cor 15:3–4, Gal 3:8.

381 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:16–18.

382 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 213; see also G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1039; R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 333.

Scripture. The flagship example is 1 Tim 5:18, which admittedly refers to Luke 10:7 and uses the formula λέγει γὰρ ἡ γραφή “For the scripture says”, but the quotation from Luke is based on the text in Deut 25:4. So it is in fact an indication of the primary text, the source text for Lk. Similarly, even at the beginning of the second century, the author of *2 Clem.* does the same, making an allusion to the Letter to the Ephesians attributed to Paul, which he regards as a Christological commentary on Gen 1:27: “for the Scripture, says, God created man male and female; the male is Christ, the female the church, [...] and that the Books and the Apostles teach that the church is not of the present, but from the beginning” (*2 Clem.* 14:2) and Polycarp of Smyrna, who juxtaposes the quotation from Ps 4:6 with the quotation from Eph 4:26: “For I trust that you are well versed in the Sacred Scriptures, and that nothing is hid from you; but to me this privilege is not yet granted. It is declared then in these Scriptures, Be angry, and sin not, and, Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Happy is he who remembers this, which I believe to be the case with you” (*PolPhil* 12:1). Earlier, however, in *PolPhil* 7:1 quoted above, Polycarp spoke of the transformations to which the sayings of the Lord are subjected. This suggests that he has in mind a literarily stabilised form of sayings, most likely known from the gospels, in which Jesus’ sayings are not merely quoting or commenting on ST. Dating from the same time, *2 Clem.* 13:4 not only considers the words of Jesus as the words of God: “For, whenever they hear from us that God says, No thank have ye, if you love them which love you, but you have thank, if you love your enemies and them which hate you” (cf. Luke 6:32.35), but also identifies them as “scripture” (*2 Clem.* 2:4): “another Scripture says, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (cf. Matt 9:13, Mark 22:17, Luke 5:32); likewise *The Epistle of Barnabas*: “Let us beware lest we be found [fulfilling that saying], as it is written, ‘Many are called, but few are chosen’” (*Barn.* 4:14) (cf. Matt 22:14).

It can therefore be assumed with a high degree of probability that 2 Pet 3:16c refers to those apostolic texts which were read out during Christian gatherings of a liturgical nature. They were either treated in the same way as the prophetic texts, i. e. as the word of God, especially if they recalled the utterances of Jesus (cf. *2 Clem.* 13:4), or as inspired Christocentric commentaries on the prophetic utterances (cf. *2 Clem.* 14:2). Since in 2 Peter inspiration is the primary criterion for the authority of the prophetic message and its apostolic interpretation (1:20–21), it is not surprising that in 3:16c the narrator equates the authority of the inspired prophecies, the apostolic transmission of Jesus’ words (cf. 3:2: μνησθῆναι τῶν προειρημένων ῥημάτων ὑπὸ ἁγίων προφητῶν καὶ τῆς ἀποστόλων ὑμῶν ἐντολῆς τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος “recall the words spoken earlier by the holy prophets and the commandment of our Lord and Saviour [given] by the apostles”) and Paul’s commentary (3:15b) of a Christological-eschatological and ethical nature.

This equality in inspiration and thus in authority is emphasised by the adjective λοιπός ‘other’, ‘remaining’. It appears relatively frequently in the NT. In Matt 25:11

it denotes the foolish virgins who, together with the precautionary virgins, belong to the bridegroom's retinue; in Luke 24:10, the women who, together with Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James, conveyed the news of the empty tomb to the apostles; in Matt 27:49, one of the groups of witnesses to Jesus' death; in Acts 28:9, the sick who wanted to be healed like Publius' father; in Rom 1:13, groups belonging to the Gentiles; in 1 Cor 9:5, that group among the apostles whose members took their wives on mission; in 2 Cor 12:13, a group of churches; in Phil 4:3, a group of Paul's co-workers; and so on. As can be seen, a component of a whole was described in this way. It can be assumed that Peter uses the adjective *λοιπός* in the same way. This would mean that, for the narrator of 2 Peter, Paul's letters and "the other Scriptures" constitute a whole, a group of inspired texts conveying God's true revelation, which did not originate in the will of man but in the will of God (2 Pet 1:20–21).

Peter's reflection in 3:16c is thus as follows: false teachers misinterpret, i. e. without inspiration but according to their own ideas, not only the clear teaching about the parousia in Paul's letters, which for them becomes difficult because it does not conform to erroneous ideas based on philosophy, but also the eschatological prophecies in the gospels and intertestamental literature and ST texts which, when subjected to an eschatological hermeneutic, foreshadow the events of the end times just as clearly as the narratives about angels, the Flood and Sodom quoted earlier. Added to this is the same process of misinterpreting Paul's Christian liberty and the ethical precepts contained in all inspired writings.

However, a misleading interpretation is not without consequences.³⁸³ It is not a question of some minor errors, but of such a falsification of the essence of the inspired message about the end times that one cannot see in the supposed delay of the parousia and judgment the patience of God giving time for conversion. Without conversion, in turn, it is impossible to be recognised by God as unblemished and without spot. In other words – a deceitful interpretation of Scripture closes the way to the eternal kingdom. The narrator of 2 Peter argues that forgers do so to their own destruction. He uses the strongly charged adjective *ἰδίος* "own" and the noun *ἀπώλεια*. Both terms were already used and both were pejorative. The adjective *ἰδίος* in 2 Pet 1:20–21 indicated a lack of both internal and intrinsic inspiration, i. e. the shaping of revelation according to human rather than divine will. In 2 Pet 3:7 only a false external interpretation, i. e. ideas of God's action shaped according to the heretics' own desires, was already described in this way (cf. *PolFil* 7:1). Now the narrator returns to this motif, linking *expressis verbis* the false interpretation of

383 This Petrine argument is aptly summarised by Symeon the New Theologian in *Catechesis* 15:2: "[Heretics] distorted the whole Scripture according to their own tastes and lusts. It was not the Scriptures that suffered, but those who committed the transgression"; *Ojcowie Kościoła komentują Biblię*, p. 149.

revelation to the eschatological annihilation of the forgers. The term ἀπώλεια ‘annihilation’ has already appeared in Peter’s reflection on several occasions, primarily in the context of judgment (2:3b, 3:7), but also in the context of the spread of false – pernicious – teaching (2:1c.e).

On the basis of previous uses of the terms ἰδίος and ἀπώλεια, the narrator of 2 Peter does not so much construct a new meaning for the phrase “own destruction” in 3:16c as synthesise previous judgements. It turns out that “one’s own destruction” is the final, irreversible, long-predicted doom that the false teachers prepare for themselves by preaching their own ideology, i. e. an eschatological scepticism that is not borne out by the inspired writings but is built on the basis of their own desires on an intellectual level (theory). The rejection of judgement and parousia entails antinomianism – yielding to one’s own desires on a physical level (practice). Thus, theory – the doctrine that heretics preach – and practice – the way of life they promote – are closely linked. Richard Bauckham draws attention above all to the false teachers’ removal of the eschatological element from Christian ethics.³⁸⁴ This has the effect of equating Christian ethics with Greek philosophical ethics, thereby depriving Christianity of its soteriological uniqueness and making it a heresy – one of many philosophical currents (cf. 2:1.19). A different emphasis is placed by G.L. Green,³⁸⁵ who rightly points out that the problem of the false teachers was not that they could not understand some passages of Scripture, but that they use their erroneous interpretation, based on philosophical speculation, to justify eschatological scepticism and immorality (cf. 2:19, 3:3–4). And immorality, promiscuity, iniquity, as Peter argued, as the opposite of leading a godly life, prevents them from attaining a share in the divine nature and entering the kingdom and being recognised by God as blameless and spotless (cf. 1:3–4, 10–11, 3:11.14).

False interpretation leading inevitably to destruction is to be strongly avoided, the narrator argues in verse 17. The warning is addressed directly to the audience and has the character of a concluding transition³⁸⁶ further emphasised by the emphatic pronoun ὑμεῖς “you”,³⁸⁷ the addressative ἀγαπητοί “beloved” and the resultative οὖν “then”. Alongside the warning section, the transfiguration also contains a positive message (verse 17d) formulated with expressions based paradoxically on the terminology used earlier for false teachers. Once again, the narrator’s predilection for wordplays is evident here.

In the first part of the transition, the compound verb προγινώσκω in the form of part. praes. act. draws attention. It refers to things of which the recipients of the

384 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 334.

385 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1041.

386 Somewhat differently, D.J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 212, who considers the phrase ἀγαπητοί as a transition indicating the main theme of the letter after a digression on Scripture.

387 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1042.

letter have prior knowledge. This verb is used, among others, by Josephus Flavius in *Ant.* II 5:6, when he quotes Josephus' comment explaining Pharaoh's dream of the fat and thin cows: "God foreshews what is to come upon men, not to grieve them; but that when they know it beforehand (προγινωκότες) they may by prudence make the actual experience of what is foretold the more tolerable".

A certain problem in 2 Pet 3:17a is the reconstruction of the object of this prior knowledge. For it can be treated narrowly or broadly. In the narrow sense – the object of prior knowledge is the actions of false teachers.³⁸⁸ The recipients of the letter being forewarned – προγινώσκοντες "knowing beforehand" – of the appearance of heretics and of their strategies for gaining followers (cf. 2 Pet 2:3a.14,18–19), they will be able to guard against the traps set for the faithful.

In the broader sense, it is necessary to take into account previous uses of the verb γινώσκω and its compound and of the nouns γνώσις and ἐπίγνωσις. In 2 Pet 1:20 and 3:3 the expression πρῶτον γινώσκοντες appeared as part of a formula referring to the recipients' knowledge of eschatology.³⁸⁹ The adverb πρῶτον was assigned a restrictive, epideictic or hierarchical function. In 3:3, the narrator was sensitising us to a certain sign of the end times, which is and will be the appearance of false teachers. In order for their message to be judged as heretical (3:3–4), however, it was presented against the background of the whole prophetic and apostolic teaching on eschatology and the eschatological hermeneutic applied to the primarily non-eschatological texts (3:5–7).

The nouns ἐπίγνωσις and γνώσις described the process of gaining knowledge not only as a committed acceptance of the contents fundamental to salvation, but also conversion (cf. 2 Pet 1:2).³⁹⁰ The eschatological prophetic and apostolic teaching, to which Christian ethics is also oriented, is fundamental to salvation and the basis of conversion. Thus, there is no reason to claim that this time compound verb προγινώσκω indicates something than its components. This is all the more so because, as has been pointed out repeatedly, the narrator of 2 Peter in *peroratio* makes use of concepts used earlier and does not fundamentally change their semantic fields. This would imply that what is meant here is a holistic eschatological knowledge/teaching that the recipients have previously received, which they are supposed to remember and recall all the time. In other words – by knowing the correct prophetic and apostolic teaching beforehand, the recipients of the letter, both the first historical recipients and the those who are to read the letter at a later

388 See among others, R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 336–337, who regards the participle προγινώσκοντες used in the present tense as a generic feature of the apocalyptic intertestamental writings: it is not a description of the reality observed by the narrator, but a prophetic prediction; cf. also D.J. Harrington, p. 296; D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 217.

389 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 212–213.

390 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:18a.

time, are able to guard against the heresy that leads to doom. This universality, timelessness and permanent topicality is indicated by the present tense of the participle *προγινώσκοντες*. The universality and timelessness apply to the entire eschatological teaching and thus to its individual elements, including the warnings against false teachers. In this way, Peter confirms his earlier theses: firstly, eschatological scepticism is inherent in heresies that have appeared and will continue to appear until the end times; secondly, if each such heresy is taken as a sign of the end times, it will be seen that Christians of all generations are living in the end times. This, in turn, is compatible with the recommendation not to focus on chronometric speculations (3:8), but to use the time given by God for conversion (3:9) and not to lose vigilance.

The main carrier of the warning is the verb *φυλάσσω* which already occurred in 2 Peter when describing the fate of the sinful angels (cf. 2 Pet 2:5) imprisoned in Tartarus until the day of judgement. Now its essential meaning does not change, but the context changes, which allows *φυλάσσω* to be seen positively. “Beware” in imp. praes. medii used here should be understood as the reflexive voice: “guard yourselves” and “guard one another.”³⁹¹ In all likelihood the two meanings overlap, but in both the accents are somewhat differently distributed. The reflexive meaning “guard yourselves” is more individual, the reciprocal meaning “guard one another” refers to a community, containing the suggestion that an element of mutual protection is the constant reminder of prophetic and apostolic teaching, or at least the community-oriented interpretation of Peter’s letter summarising that teaching (cf. 2 Pet 1:12.15). It is for this reason that the narrator of 2 Peter earlier declares that he wants to continually remind, and then calls for recalling and/or remembering this teaching in its pure, unadulterated form in order to avoid the misinterpretation suggested by false teachers.³⁹² The present tense of the imperative *φυλάσσεσθε* suggests – like part. praes. *προγινώσκοντες* earlier – that this is a timeless message, valid for all generations of Christians until the end times. For there may always be heretics denying judgement and parousia who are eager to entice unstable souls (cf. 2:14).

This shift from the earlier negative to the present positive context becomes understandable in the light of verse 17d, which, as mentioned, contains a positive transition component based on wordplay: *ἵνα μὴ ἐκπέσητε τοῦ ἰδίου στηριγμοῦ* “lest, seduced by the error of the unrighteous, you fall away from your own stability/firmness”. The verb *ἐκπίπτω* means to ‘to fall away’, ‘drop’, ‘to lose strength’, ‘to fall

391 Differently, G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1043, who believes that the verb *φυλάσσω* should be understood as ‘to avoid’ (cf. Luke 12:15, Acts 21:25, 2 Tim 4:15) rather than as ‘to guard, protect, uphold’.

392 D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 213.

away from something.’³⁹³ The aorist (con. aor. act.) indicates that it means to fall off completely, with no possibility of return. The closest to Peter’s usage seems to be the context of Gal 5:4, where the construction τῆς χάριτος ἐξεπέσατε is translated as “you have fallen from grace/fallen out of grace”. It is thus a periphrastic way of expressing the fall that leads to annihilation, used in early Christian literature.

The use of the verb (ἐκ)πίπτω without a complement is found in 2 *Clem.* 2:6–7: ἐκεῖνο γάρ ἐστιν μέγα καὶ θαυμαστόν οὐ τὰ ἐστῶτα στηρίζειν ἀλλὰ τὰ πίπτοντα. Οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠθέλησεν σῶσαι τὰ ἀπολλύμενα “For it is indeed a great and admirable thing to establish not the things which are standing, but those that are falling. Thus also did Christ desire to save the things which were perishing”. In both 2 Peter and 2 *Clem.* “falling” is contrasted with “strengthening”. Both hagiographers use the same root στηριγ- to express the idea of strengthening. However, the meaning of Peter’s στηριγμός, which belongs to the New Testament *hapax legomena*,³⁹⁴ can be inferred not only from the references to 2 *Clem.*, but also from the related lexis used in 2 Peter itself – 1:12, 2:14 and 3:16.³⁹⁵ The aforementioned wordplay proves extremely helpful here.

So far, in relation to the followers of the false teachers, the narrator of 2 Peter has used the opposite term ἀσήρικτοι (“unstable”) with *α-privativum*; now, in relation to the believers, he applies the description with the uncontradicted noun. He did exactly the opposite in 2:13 and 3:14 – first he called the ungodly using non-negated forms σπίλοι καὶ μῶμοι “defiled and stained”, and then he referred to the faithful by adding *α-privativum* – ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμώμητοι “unblemished and without spot”. Peter’s message here is clear – false teachers only succeed in winning over the “unstable” (cf. 2:18), the recipients of his letter should then not be “unstable”, but must retain ἰδίος στηριγμός stability in the apostolic teaching. In other words – they must take this apostolic teaching as their own ἰδίος. Here, the aforementioned double – individual and community-oriented – aspect of guarding is clearly revealed: not only should the whole community declare allegiance to this doctrine, but each member of the community should sincerely believe it and manifest it with a pious life made possible by baptismal gifts.

The negative connotations of the adjective ἰδίος in 2 Peter have already been mentioned. These are summarised in 3:16b in the expression πρὸς τὴν ἰδίαν αὐτῶν ἀπώλειαν “to their own destruction”. Now the narrator seems to neutralise this negative assessment by placing the adjective ἰδίος no longer among the volitional lexis and in opposition to God’s will, but in a positive context. The expression ἰδίος στηριγμός can thus be understood here as “one’s own” – in the individual

393 D. J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 297 here translates ἐκπίπτω very contextually as “change for the worse”.

394 *Ibid.*

395 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 217.

and communal sense – beliefs based on apostolic teaching, untainted by erroneous conclusions referring to philosophical (Epicurean) eschatological scepticism and to Cyrenaic hedonism (cf. 3:1).

This message of stability/strengthening was contrasted with the characteristics of the message of the false teachers. Their teaching was judged to be πλάνη τῶν ἀθέσμων “an error of the unrighteous”. Its real danger lies not only in its doctrinal errors but also in its power to influence, as described by the participle συναπαχθέντες. The verb συναπάγομαι ‘to be led astray’, ‘to be seduced’ suggests the attractiveness of this erroneous teaching (cf. Rom 12:16 and Gal 2:13, where the verb συναπάγομαι is also used to describe seduction in a positive and negative sense). This erroneous teaching proclaims ἀθέσμοι ‘unrighteous’, which means that the genitive τῶν ἀθέσμων should be interpreted as gen. subiectivus. This is how the narrator of 2 Peter described the inhabitants of Sodom in 2:7. This would mean that those who themselves live immoral lives without obeying any law are trying to seduce the faithful with their wandering πλάνη. It is therefore no coincidence that dat. instrumentalis πλάνη is used here. This noun was also already used by the narrator in 2:18 to describe the erroneous way of living in the lusts of the flesh and debauchery. In 2:15, the verb πλανᾶω formed from the same stem indicated a departure from the way of truth. Here the dual dimension of the term – theoretical and practical – is better grasped. To err/stray is, on the one hand, false, deceptive but attractive teaching (cf. Eph 4:14, 1 Thes. 2:3, 1 John 4:6),³⁹⁶ pointing the way, and on the other hand, equally attractive – hedonistic in the Cyrenaic sense – conduct. As can be seen, the heretical πλάνη has the same aspects as true faith and knowledge (cf. 1:2–8), just the opposite direction. It seems that by referring to these aspects, the narrator prepares the reader for the end of the letter, which raises the same issues as the beginning (3:18a).³⁹⁷ This, in turn, makes it possible to treat the whole letter as a text having an inclusive composition, framed by reflections on faith and knowledge.³⁹⁸

2.16 C'. Synthesis of faith and knowledge (2 Pet 3:18a)

^{18a} And grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Not only in *exordium*, but even in the prescript, the narrator suggests a return to the issues raised at the beginning of the letter and actually returns to them *expressis*

396 J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 374.

397 See analysis of 2 Pet 3:18a.

398 See Introduction (vol. 1).

verbis.³⁹⁹ He thus organises his material and builds the frame of the letter, in which the concepts of grace and knowledge play a key role. In the salutation formula in 1:2 there was a wish that “grace and peace may be multiplied/through/in the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord” χάρις καὶ εἰρήνη πληθυνθῆει ἐν ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν. From the phrases used then, Peter formulates an exhortation to grow in grace and knowledge αὐξάνετε δὲ ἐν χάριτι καὶ γνώσει. By means of the conjunction δέ, he links it directly to 3:17. Formally, 2 Pet 3:18a resembles 3:17a, where the predicate is also in imp. praes. Since the exhortation to watch over one another individually and mutually – φυλάσσεσθε (verse 17a) and to grow – αὐξάνετε (verse 18a) are complementary rather than excluding elements, the conjunction δέ should not be interpreted to express opposition but addition. This connection is even better seen in P⁷² C P 81. 307. 1175, where instead of αὐξάνετε there is a variant with imp. praes. αὐξάνεσθε compatible with φυλάσσεσθε. The analysis of verse 17 shows that the warning not to fall under the spell of the teachings of false teachers and lose stability in the faith includes a constant reminder of the prophetic and apostolic message; its reminding and updating leads to growth (αὔξησις).

The verb αὐξάνω in the NT is sometimes used in both a literal and a metaphorical sense. In the literal sense it describes the growth of, for example, plants (Matt 6:28, Mark 4:8, Luke 12:27), children (Luke 1:80, 2:40); in the metaphorical sense it refers to abstract concepts such as fame or activity (cf. John 3:30), faith (2 Cor 10:15), spirituality (Col 1:10). A special place occupy texts referring to the growth of the word of God/Gospel (Acts 6:7, 12:24, 19:20, Col 1:6). Peter seems to have in mind a particular spiritual development (growth) that is also noticeable externally as ethical conduct⁴⁰⁰ described in detail in the climactic sorites in 1:5–8.

Given the framework construction of the letter, “grow” in 3:18a can be taken as synonymous with “multiply”⁴⁰¹ of 1:2, since both the verb αὐξάνω and the verb πληθύνω are complemented with the expression ἐν γνώσει (3:18a)/ἐν ἐπιγνώσει (1:2). Similar semantics and metaphors based on the imagery of plants growing and bearing fruit appear in the conclusion of the aforementioned sorites (1:8), supporting the suggestion that spiritual growth in Peter is closely linked to the conduct and process of coming to know Jesus Christ.

This is easier to see when the three passages are juxtaposed:

399 D.F. Watson, T. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, p. 218.

400 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1046.

401 R.A. Reese, *2 Peter and Jude*, p. 177.

2 Pet 1:2	2 Pet 1:8	2 Pet 3:18a
<p>χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη πληθυνθείη</p> <p>ἐν ἐπίγνωσει τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν</p>	<p>Ταῦτα γὰρ ὑμῖν ὑπάρχοντα καὶ πλεονάζοντα οὐκ ἄργοις οὐδὲ ἀκάρπους κα- θήσθησιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐπίγνωσιν</p>	<p>Αὐξάνετε δὲ ἐν χάριτι καὶ γνώσει τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ</p>
<p>Grace to you and peace may be multiplied</p> <p>through/in the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord</p>	<p>And because you have this at your disposal and you multiply them, [they] do not make [you] idle and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ</p>	<p>Grow in the grace and knowledge of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ</p>

Although the noun γνώσις is used in 3:18a instead of the noun ἐπίγνωσις, which appeared in 1:2 and 1:8, there is little difference in the meaning of the two terms. As in 1:2b, the preposition ἐπι can be taken temporally as an exponent of a process stretched over time and intensity.⁴⁰² This would mean that, by beginning the reflection on “knowledge” in 1:2b, the hagiographer accentuates this process and dynamism through the use of the term ἐπίγνωσις. In 1:8, “knowing” ἐπίγνωσις is correlated with the progressive development of baptismal gifts and the practice of Christian virtues; it involves personal commitment and ongoing conversion. In 3:18a, the previous dynamic is somewhat slowed down. The term γνώσις appears, suggesting that the process of knowing, or at least the theoretical part of it, i. e. gaining knowledge of Jesus Christ, has been completed and that the knowledge gained is complete, as evidenced by the further elaborate Christological descriptor: γνώσις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ “knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”. Through the reminder, indeed the constant reminder of the prophetic and apostolic message, the recipients of the letter should constantly realise that the title Saviour also includes the competence of the eschatological judge and Jesus’ assumption of power in the end times. The eschatological perspective of “knowledge” continues to generate appropriate, ethical conduct and attitudes through which the spiritual commitment and growth of the faithful can be observed.

402 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:2b.

For the last time, the narrator of 2 Peter emphasises that not only the process of knowing the ἐπιγνώσις, but also the acquisition of full knowledge of the γνῶσις must be considered on two parallel levels – the theoretical and the practical. In the same way, moreover, as faith, which is not mentioned here, but which, as has been repeatedly pointed out, is for Peter synonymous with knowing/knowing. This synonymy is noted in the codices of the ninth and tenth centuries: P and 1175, where the dative of πίστει appears instead of γνώσει. A slightly different approach to this text is taken by Hilary of Arles, who in his treatise on the seven Catholic epistles identifies grace with faith. At the same time, he strongly emphasises the practical aspect of faith and knowledge: “Grow in grace, i. e. in the faith received at baptism, and in knowledge, i. e. in the practice of faith”.⁴⁰³

Next to the noun γνώσει in 2 Pet 3:18a, the phrase ἐν χάριτι is added in the primary position. The term χάρις had already appeared in 1:2, as part of the salutation. Now its theological significance is exposed. In the analysis of 2 Pet 1:2 we noted that the term is rooted in the ST and is associated with God’s favour, kindness and mercy on the one hand and God’s justice on the other. This leads to the conclusion that in the context of the letter as a whole, and especially the eschatological interpretation in 2 Pet 3, “grace” in 3:18a should be understood similarly to God’s patience in 3:9c and 3:15a. “Growing in grace” would thus mean making use of God-given time to repent and baptismal gifts to live a godly and holy life (2 Pet 1:3–4, 5–8, 3:11). This corresponds with eschatologically oriented knowledge and its theoretical and practical aspects. Such a contextual, particularistic understanding of “growing in grace” would undoubtedly be Peter’s contribution to the general, conventional understanding found in other NT writings, where it is primarily about experiencing God’s blessings and salvific gifts (cf. John 1:16, Acts 6:8, Rom 5:15, 17, 11:6, 12:3, Gal 1:15, 5:4, 1 Cor 15:10, 2 Cor 8:7, Eph 2:5, 8, Col 3:16, 2 Thess 2:16, 2 Tim 2:1, Titus 3:7, Heb 2:9, 13:9, 1 Pet 3:7, 4:10, 5:5, 12).⁴⁰⁴

Both χάρις and γνῶσις are in the genitive case τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ “of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”. In relation to each of the governing nouns, however, the genitive has different functions. In combination with χάρις, the predicate τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ can be treated as gen. subiectivus and/or gen. originis. This means that grace (patience) is a gift given by Jesus (gen. obiectivus) and comes from Jesus (gen. originis). With regard to γνῶσις, the complement τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ can also be understood as gen. subiectivus, obiectivus and originis, with the dominant meaning here – as in 1:2 and 1:8 – appearing to be gen. obiectivus: knowledge of Jesus.⁴⁰⁵ This involves

403 *Ojcowie Kościoła komentują Biblię*, p. 150.

404 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1047.

405 R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 338.

knowing Jesus as Lord and Saviour, i. e. the eschatological Ruler and Judge. But this meaning is overlaid by others which allow the expression γνώσις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ “knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” to be understood as knowledge derived from Jesus (gen. originis) and knowledge given by Jesus (gen. subiectivus) – cf. 1:16–18, 3:2, 16c, where in an explicit or implicit manner the narrator refers to events with Jesus or to his words. As with gen. obiectivus, gen. originis and gen. subiectivus also denote eschatological content: Jesus reveals himself as eschatological Judge and Ruler and reveals knowledge of the day of judgment and the end times (cf. Matt 24:27–31, 35–39, 42–44, Mark 13:24–26, 32–37, Luke 21:22, 25, 27–28, 35–36).

In this final extended Christological description, Jesus is called – in turn – κυρίος ἡμῶν “our Lord”, σωτήρ “Saviour” and Χριστός “Christ”. All the titles have already appeared in the letter. Most often the narrator referred to Jesus as Lord (1:2, 8, 11, 16, 2:11, 20, cf. 3:10, where the name of Jesus does not appear, but the context indicates that it refers to his coming), although it should be recalled that in 2:11 the title κυρίος points rather to God (the Father), and in 3:9, 15 it was considered bi-referential, denoting both God (the Father) and Jesus. The title σωτήρ “Saviour” was found to be more unambiguous. In 2 Pet 1:1, 11, 2:20 it is used with the name Jesus and the title Christ; in 2 Pet 3:2 only with the title κυρίος, but the context indicates that both κυρίος and σωτήρ refer to Jesus. As mentioned, the title of “Saviour” for Jesus is relatively rare in the NT and appears in late writings; it becomes more common in the first and second century, as reflected in early Christian literature.⁴⁰⁶ The origins of this title are to be found in Jewish tradition, but also in secular and religious Hellenistic literature. By placing this title of double origin at the end of the letter, the narrator thus recalls and, as it were, summarises his strategy of combining the two traditions. This seems fully justified, since in *peroratio* he often argued against turning Christianity into a philosophy, with which he associated eschatological scepticism. Therefore, in order not to create the impression of discrediting the Greek tradition, it became necessary to recall the integrative and Christianising strategy present throughout the letter.

The appearance of the titles “Lord” and “Saviour” at the end can also be theologically justified. As has already been said, the entire letter can be interpreted in terms of eschatology: Jesus as “Lord” is the eschatological Ruler who has received divine and royal “honour and glory” from God the Father (cf. 2 Pet 1:17), and as “Saviour” he will come not to allow the annihilation of the converted believers (cf. 2 Pet 3:9d), but to save them (cf. 2 Pet 2:9a) and to declare them “blameless and without spot” (cf. 2 Pet 3:14). This eschatological focus is also maintained in the concluding doxology of the letter – 3:18b.

406 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:1.

2.17 Doxology (2 Pet 3:18b)

^{18b}To Him be the glory now and until the day of eternity.

The letter concludes with a doxology. There is no doubt that such an ending has its roots in Jewish tradition; various forms of it can be found in the Old Testament texts (e. g. 1 Kings 29:11–13, Ps 22[21]:29, 62:12[61:13], 104[103]:31, 4 Macc 18:24), especially in the benediction formulas (1 Kings 16:36, Ps 41[40]:14, 89[88]:53, 106[105]:48, Dan 2:20, PssSol 17:3). Such formulas usually concluded prayers, sermons or constituted an independent act of praise to God (cf. Luke 2:14, 19:38, Rev 7:10, 19:1).⁴⁰⁷ As noted in the Introduction, the fact that 2 Peter ends with a doxology has prompted debate about the primary genre of Peter’s text, whether it is a homily to which epistolary elements were added, or whether the text was originally conceived as a letter to be read publicly at a Christian gathering.⁴⁰⁸

In ancient epistolography, the most conventional way of ending a letter, especially a private one, was to use a concluding formula containing good wishes, personal greetings, assurances of kindness and keeping in mind, sometimes a request to write back:⁴⁰⁹ “But you also write us, so that we may know in what conditions you are, and so that we may not be alarmed. Take care of yourself so that you are healthy and come to us healthy. Farewell”, wrote Polycrates to his father.⁴¹⁰ The greeting “Farewell” also appears in more official letters. Sometimes the final formula refers to the reasons and circumstances of the letter. Thus, for example, on the occasion of his children’s nuptials, the father of the newly married couple writes to the father of the bride and concludes his letter with a wish that “this union will be happy in every way, as it should be since god is associating him”.⁴¹¹ Didactic letters may have ended with some sort of maxim, a well-known aphorism, sometimes transformed by the narrator for the purpose of his argument, as is the case, for example, in one of Seneca’s letters to Lucilius: “but persons who live in rotten luxury and ease while others toil, are mere turtle-doves safe only because men despise them. Farewell” (*Moral Letters to Lucilius* 96:5).

The final benediction, doxology or prayer formula in ancient letters is relatively rare.⁴¹² Instead, it appears frequently in the New Testament epistles, usually together with general greetings or with the specification of recipients or senders of greetings (Rom 16:1–27, Phil 4:20–23, 1 Cor 16:19–24, 2 Cor 13:11–13,

407 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 407.

408 See Introduction (vol. 1).

409 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 406.

410 *Kłopoty młodego Polikratesa*, Polish transl. J. Schnayder, [in:] *List antyczny*, p. 5.

411 *Małżeństwo dzieci umacnia przyjaźń rodziców*, Polish transl. J. Schnayder, [in:] *List antyczny*, p. 77.

412 K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 407.

Eph 4:23–24, Col 4:15–18, 1 Thess 5:23–28, 2 Thess 3:16–18, 2 Tim 4:18–22, Titus 3:15, Phlm 23–25, Heb 13:24–25, 1 Pet 5:11–14, 2 John 12–13, 3 John 24–25). The doxological formulas are located in the New Testament epistolography in various places: at the end of a letter before or after the greetings, at the beginning (cf. Gal 1:5) or in the middle of a letter (Rom 11:36, Eph 3:20–21, 1 Tim 1:17, 6:16, 1 Pet 4:11). Similarly in early Christian writings: final doxologies are included in *1 Clem.* 65:2, *2 Clem.* 20:5, *MartPol* 21:1, *Diogn.* 12:9, but they can also be found in the body of a writing (*Didache* 8:2, 9:4, *1 Clem.* 20:12, 32:4, 43:6, 58:2, 61:3, 64:1, *MartPol* 14:3, 20:2).⁴¹³

The doxology in 2 Pet 3:18b is not linked to any salutation. In this respect, the ending of this letter resembles Jude 25. However, too many elements differ between the two doxologies to speak of direct dependencies of 2 Pet 3:18b on Jude 25. In most testimonies, Peter's doxological formula ends with an acclamation of liturgical provenance – ἀμήν. A similar ending is found in the majority of other New Testament and early Christian doxologies regardless of their location in letters.⁴¹⁴ However, in B 1175. 1243. 1739 and vg^{mss} this final acclamation does not appear; nor is it included in the main text by the NA28 editors. This absence is sometimes explained in two ways. First, as an involuntary omission by the copyist. This would imply that the original text had the acclamation and that it should be regarded as an integral part of the message.⁴¹⁵ Second, as a voluntary decision not to harmonise Peter's doxology with other New Testament doxologies. This would mean that originally 2 Pet 3:18b was devoid of this acclamation, and it was only under the influence of other New Testament doxologies that the copyists decided to introduce it.⁴¹⁶ The second option seems more likely, especially since the doxology in 2 Peter is not a typical liturgical formula, but a transformation that summarises Peter's eschatological reflection. It is possible to add these transformations, which include more than just the omission of the acclamation, to the same category of changes that the source material taken from the Letter of Jude previously underwent.

Typical doxologies in liturgical texts and/or prayers consist of four elements: (1) an indication of the recipient; (2) an expression of praise; (3) temporal expressions; (4) an acclamation by which the principal orant may be joined in praise by other participants in the assembly.⁴¹⁷ Peter, as has been said, makes his modifications to this scheme motivated by the Christological-eschatological reflection

413 Ibid.

414 Cf. Rom 1:25, 9:5, 11:36, 16:27, Gal 1:5, Eph 3:21, Phil 4:20, 1 Tim 1:17, 6:16, 2 Tim 4:18, 1 Pet 4:11, 5:11, Jude 25, Rev 1:6, 7:12, *1 Clem.* 20:12, 32:4, 43:6, 58:2, 61:3, 64:1, 65:2, *2 Clem.* 20:5, *Diogn.* 12:9, *MartPol* 14:3, 21:1; K. Wojciechowska, M. Rosik, *Expecting Mercy*, p. 416.

415 See for example, G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1050.

416 See for example, R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 336.

417 P.H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter*, p. 277.

present in the letter. In addition to the omission of acclamation, the reduction of the second element to only one term – δόξα “glory” – in the nominative is noteworthy. Also unusual is the first element – the addressee of the praise formula – and the third element – the unprecedented expression εἰς ἡμέραν αἰῶνος “to the day of eternity”.

The term δόξα appears in the singular in 2 Pet 1:3,17 and in the plural in 2 Pet 2:10. Here the narrator seems to give the term the meaning it had just in 1:3,17. In analysing these passages,⁴¹⁸ attention has been drawn to the eschatological orientation of Peter’s understanding of “glory” taken from the ST: God’s glory and salvation are to be proclaimed among all nations in the end times (cf. 1 Kings 16:24, Isa 12:2, Ps 72[71]:18, 96[95]:3, 117[116]:1). Already in 2 Pet 1:3, “glory” was a bi-referential concept, referring to both God (the Father) and Jesus. This is even more strongly emphasised in 2 Pet 1:17: the glory (and honour) due to God (the Father) is transferred in the transfiguration scene also to Jesus. This means that it now belongs both to God the Father and to Jesus, which confirms, on the one hand, Peter’s conviction of Jesus’ deity (cf. 1:1) and, on the other hand, alludes to the aforementioned Old Testament texts on the glory and salvation of God, and thus of Jesus, proclaimed in the end times. For in the end times, during the parousia anticipated by the transfiguration, Jesus’ glory and salvation will be fully revealed. It can now be seen that the naming of Jesus in 3:18a with the divine titles “Lord and Saviour” (cf. 2 Pet 1:1–2) is not an accident or convention, but is closely linked to these eschatological connotations of glory (cf. Phil 3:21, Col 3:4, 2 Thess 1:9, Titus 2:13, 1 Pet 4:13, 5:1).⁴¹⁹

The conviction that God the Father and Jesus Christ are equal in deity, as evidenced by their sharing of glory, may explain why Peter made only Jesus the addressee of the final praise. This is very rare in Christian doxologies; in the NT, the only texts of this kind are 2 Tim 4:18 and Rev 1:5–6, among early Christian writings, only *MartPol* 21:1: “Jesus Christ was reigning for ever, to whom be glory, honour, majesty and an eternal throne, from generation to generation, Amen”. In Gal 1:5, Heb 13:21, 1 Pet 4:11, in *1 Clem.* 20:11–12 (“the great Creator and Lord of all [...] does good to all, but most abundantly to us who have fled for refuge to His compassions through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory and majesty for ever and ever. Amen”) and in *1 Clem.* 50:7 (“This blessedness comes upon those who have been chosen by God through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”) and *1 Clem.* 58:2 (“who in lowliness of mind, with instant gentleness, and without repentance has observed the ordinances and appointments

418 See analysis of 2 Pet 1:3 and 1:17.

419 G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1049 sees in the use of these titles in relation to Jesus above all evidence of an advanced Christology.

given by God – the same shall obtain a place and name in the number of those who are being saved through Jesus Christ, through whom is glory to Him for ever and ever. Amen” it is not entirely clear whether the glory refers to God (the Father),⁴²⁰ or to Jesus Christ. Usually in the NT, praise, worship (and/or their equivalents) is given to God alone (e. g. Rom 1:25, 9:5, 11:36, Phil 4:20, 1 Tim 1:17, 6:16, 1 Pet 5:10–11), and if a binitarian formula appears, it is to God through Jesus Christ (e. g. Rom 16:27, Jude 25) or in Jesus Christ (e. g. Eph 3:21). Similarly, in early Christian writings: in *1 Clem.* 32:4, *1 Clem.* 43:6, *2 Clem.* 20:5, *MartPol* 20:2, God appears as the sole addressee of the doxology; in *1 Clem.* 61:3, *1 Clem.* 64:1, *1 Clem.* 65:2, *MartPol* 14:3 and *Diogn.* 12:9, praise is given to God through Jesus Christ.

A characteristic feature of doxological formulas is the absence of a judgment. They are usually reconstructed in optative form (may glory be [shown]), imperative form (may there be glory) or indicative form (glory is/belongs/belongs). The first two options turn the doxology into a prayer, a wish. So the third option is more likely here.⁴²¹ In the context of Peter’s Christological-eschatological reflections, it becomes clear that the glory that belongs to God also belongs to Jesus, since God has already given it to him. Although it will only be fully revealed in the end times, at the parousia, it is already an attribute of Christ to whom, as God, it is due honour and praise.

This is confirmed by the atypical temporal expression ending Peter’s doxology καὶ νῦν καὶ εἰς ἡμέραν αἰῶνος “now and until the day of eternity”. It includes two components – one referring to the present – νῦν, and the other to the eternity (future)⁴²² – εἰς ἡμέραν αἰῶνος. In terms of structure, therefore, it does not resemble the one-element, usually timeless New Testament formulas εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας “for ever” (Rom 1:25, 9:5, 11:36, 1 Pet 5:11) or εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων “for ever and ever” (Gal 1:5, Phil 4:20, 1 Tim 1:17, 1 Pet 4:11, cf. also *1 Clem.* 20:12, 32:4, 43:6, 58:2, 65:1, *2 Clem.* 20:5, *Diogn.* 12:9, *MartPol* 20:2, 21:1). It is closer to the binary or ternary formulas present in Jude 25 and *1 Clem.* 61: “both now and from generation to generation and for evermore”; *1 Clem.* 64: “both now and for evermore”; *MartPol* 14:3: “now and for the ages that are to come”. The prominence of the present element corresponds with the indicative reconstruction of the judgment in the doxology and with the main eschatological message of the letter: the impartation of divine glory and honour to Jesus at the transfiguration inaugurated his eschatological reign, which is already a fact of life but will be consummated at the parousia. Thus, all Christians are indeed living in the end times, all should be

420 See for example, J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, p. 375.

421 Ibid.; R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 336.

422 Ibid.

aware of God's merciful patience shown now, use the time given to them now for conversion and live a godly life through the use of – now – baptismal gifts.

The doxology concludes with an expression unique in the NT referring to the future εἰς ἡμέραν αἰῶνος. It refers to Sir 18:10:⁴²³ ὡς σταγὼν ὕδατος ἀπὸ θαλάσσης καὶ ψῆφος ἄμμου οὕτως ἔτη ἐν ἡμέρα αἰῶνος “Like a drop of water from the sea and a grain of sand, so are these few years among the days of eternity”. This thought is similar to that of 2 Pet 3:8 about time viewed from a human and divine perspective. Here, however, the phrase εἰς ἡμέραν αἰῶνος, by alluding to the expressions ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου (2 Pet 3:10) and ἡμέρα τοῦ θεοῦ (2 Pet 3:12), points to a future eschatology associated with the Second Coming of Jesus, which in 2 Pet 1:19c is portrayed as a ἡμέρα διαυγάσει “the day [which] dawns] and inaugurates a new era, eternity, i. e. new heavens and a new earth,⁴²⁴ without darkness symbolising evil and corruption (cf. 2 Pet 1:4,19c), but with righteousness reigning in them (2 Pet 3:13).

As can be seen, the doxology forms an integral part of Peter's Second Letter. The narrator summarises the eschatological message of his text using the lexis used earlier – δόξα and ἡμέρα/ἡμέρα αἰῶνος. He does this in his typical creative way. On the one hand, he refers back to meanings and images already evoked in the letter; on the other hand, by alluding to well-known praise formulas, he makes the audience aware of the great theological (eschatological) potential hidden in these oft-repeated sentences.

423 Ibid.; G.L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 1048.

424 Ibid.

3. Conclusions

In the history of exegesis, it is rare to find commentaries only devoted to the Second Letter of Peter. Usually, this letter is analysed together with the First Letter of Peter and/or the Letter of Jude, sometimes with all the NT general (Catholic) letters. In this publication, the Second Letter of Peter is commented on separately in order to emphasise its independence and draw attention to its originality.

However, it is impossible to overlook or ignore the connections between 2 Peter, 1 Peter and Jude. With 1 Peter, the Second Letter of Peter shares the person of the apostle Peter, to whom both texts are attributed; perhaps both originated in the so-called Petrine school or were part of the Petrine discourse. What 2 Peter shares with Jude is the similarity of motifs used in 2 Pet 2:2.3b–17 and the lexis used in both texts. The author of 2 Peter, however, makes no simple borrowings. On the contrary, these borrowings are very deliberate and precise. On the one hand, a characteristic phrase or image in Jude evokes the source text; on the other hand, it is evident that the narrator is engaged in a dialogue with the source text, often based on wordplay (as in the case of 2 Pet 2:13, where the feasts attended by the false teachers are called ἀπάται in reference to ἀγάπαι in Jude 12). Each borrowed image or motif is creatively transformed and, like the borrowed lexis, appears in a new context, especially a theological one. The author of 2 Peter applies a similar strategy to texts originally belonging to the Jewish tradition or taken from Greek literature. The common denominator of this strategy, which has been called an integrative strategy in the commentary *Proclaiming the Coming of the Lord*, is the theologisation and Christianisation of the source material. The narrator however uses his own recognisable intertextual strategy, which means that he can be considered not only as a writer who skilfully draws on a variety of sources, but also as an original author who is able, on the one hand, to refer to a source material and, on the other, to show the audience how to use this material in a creative way.

The originality, based on an intertextual integrative strategy, translates into a unique approach to theological ideas in 2 Peter. It is clearly noticeable when the letter is analysed structurally. The linear approach has often led to the conclusion that the text focuses on ethical aspects, parenesis and protreptics, whereas the structural approach reveals that the author is primarily interested in the interpretation of the prophetic and apostolic teaching on the parousia. He gives examples of false interpretation, but also presents the correct interpretation, which further translates into eschatology and soteriology.

The structure proposed in *Proclaiming the Coming of the Lord* also follows the integrative strategy of the author of 2 Peter. It combines elements of classical rhetoric,

which help to structure the epistolary material (also in terms of terminology), and elements of thematic and motivic Hebrew rhetoric, which in turn highlight the framework construction of the letter, as well as the recurring motif of the prophetic and apostolic teaching (D) and its interpretation (E). The author of 2 Peter begins his fundamental reflection on the doctrine of the parousia by recalling the scene of Jesus' transfiguration (1:16–18). The lexical similarities to the same episode described by the synoptics allow us to guess that the literary shape of the transfiguration narrative was already established at the time 2 Peter was written. It is not known whether the author of 2 Peter drew directly on the synoptic gospels, but it is known that he gave the whole scene a different interpretation from the evangelists. According to Peter, the transfiguration is to be understood as the inauguration of Jesus' eschatological authority, delegated to him by God the Father. Jesus already enjoys divine honour and glory, which has additional royal connotations, but this will only be fully revealed in the end times when the parousia – the second coming of Jesus with power – takes place. This is where Peter's hermeneutic, developed later, is explicitly revealed; he interprets the salvific events, as well as the Old Testament texts, from the perspective of eschatology. In 1:19–21, he explains that the eschatological power of Jesus was in fact announced by the prophets. It can easily be found in the inspired writings, provided they are interpreted properly.

In Peter's reflections on the essence of inspiration, it is a certain ambiguity or rather bi-referential aspect of the formula in verse 20 that draws attention: "no prophecy of Scripture happens/comes into being by one's own/private interpretation/becomes [a subject of] one's own interpretation". For it is not possible to determine unambiguously whether this refers to the process of prophecy formation itself, when the prophet faithfully repeats the divine will revealed to him without distorting anything, or to the interpretation of prophecies already written down. This ambiguity seems to have been introduced on purpose. It allows inspired texts to be considered on two levels – on the internal (intradiegetic) level and on the external (extradiegetic) level. At the latter level, interpretation already takes place using an eschatological, or in fact Christocentric and eschatological hermeneutic. The basic component of this methodological Petrine introduction is thus the assumption that the apostolic teaching on the parousia is already confirmed by the Old Testament writers and that the eschatological and parousia predictions of the Old Testament have been and will be fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

What the practical application of Peter's methodology looks like is shown by the examples in chapters 2 and 3. In chapter 2, interpretation on an internal level dominates. The material to be interpreted is the biblical text supplemented by elements of the haggadic midrash. It can be seen that these additions, characteristic of the Judaism of the Second Temple period, are considered by the narrator of 2 Peter to be as inspired as the original text. The narratives thus prepared are intended to make the audience aware of Peter's main idea: the right interpretation of God's

words, of God's revelation, leads to salvation, the wrong one leads to annihilation. In order to make all this comprehensible to the audience, Peter draws on well-known topoi: the sin of the angels, the Flood, the destruction of Sodom with the rain of sulphur and fire. He used then the motifs from Jude, but in a different way. The story of angels being cast into Tartarus and there awaiting the final judgment (2 Pet 2:4) seems to have a double significance in 2 Peter, for this motif is intended not only as an illustration of the false interpretation of angels' free will and service to God, but also as a commentary on 2 Pet 2:3b. In this very verse, Peter includes one of the key eschatological thoughts – the assertions that the judgment of old “is not idle” and the destruction “is not slumbering”, although this might seem so because of, among other things, the temporal distance between casting the rebels into Tartarus and the eschatological judgment. The temporal element and the supposed postponement of God's actions will be alluded to in the interpretation of chapter 3 at the external level.

In contrast to Jude, Peter mentions the rescue of Noah in the flood narrative. This introduces the issue of proper soteriological interpretation (this element was lacking in the angelological theme) of 2 Pet 2:5b. Ignoring God's will and the message of Noah, who is described as “heralding righteousness”, leads to ever-deepening injustice in the world, and ultimately to the annihilation of the world (2:5a.c). The misinterpretation here can be described as diluvial scepticism, a disbelief that God will indeed punish the unjust in a relatively short time, combined with scorn for the actions of Noah building the ark. Peter's narrative of the destruction of Sodom and the rescue of Lot was similar. Righteous Lot correctly interpreted the words about the destruction of Sodom and was saved (2:7–9a). The other inhabitants of the city would not listen to the message about the necessity to repent, remained ungodly and were consequently destroyed along with the city (2:6). This time this wrong attitude can be described as scepticism over the destruction by fire. The Sodomites, including Lot's relatives (sons-in-law) scoff at Lot's piety and his warnings, and do not believe that God can rain fire and brimstone on the city.

The issue of misinterpretation and manipulation of the word of God is addressed by Peter in 2:9b–22. Not only does he postpone it to a much later time, when the eschatological scepticism preached by false teachers will emerge and take root, but he also uses the example of Balaam here. It is meant to bridge the gap between explanations at the intradiegetic and the extradiegetic level. Balaam himself did not distort God's message regarding Israel; he had to convey God's blessing, even if he did not want to. So, there is no interference with prophecy on an internal level. But, gripped by madness (cf. 2 Pet 2:16), the soothsayer gives the Midianites a piece of advice that leads the Israelites to abandon Moses' doctrine that allegedly took away their freedom and to apostasy.

This seems to be the way false teachers proceed. They themselves do not introduce external themes into already existing and recognised prophecies; it is the

external interpretation of these prophecies based on eschatological scepticism that distorts and pollutes (cf. 2 Pet 3:1) the prophetic and apostolic teaching. Therefore, it needs to be constantly recalled in a pure form that is neither internally nor externally contaminated (2 Pet 3:2), even though the narrator faces derision, which is tantamount to a false interpretation (2 Pet 3:3–4). Remarkably, by pointing to a false interpretation, the narrator combines elements of distortion at the internal and external levels. On the internal level, it is about a taunting question beginning with the phrase *ποῦ ἔστιν*, well known to the readers from the LXX, with which heretics associate eschatological scepticism. On an external level, the distortion consists in failing to find eschatological elements in existing prophecies. In order to show how they should be found, Peter in chapter 3 returns to motifs from the narrative of the Flood and partly from the narrative of the destruction of Sodom. To this he adds ktiseological themes and proves that a foreshadowing of the end times can be discovered in almost every biblical narrative. It is only necessary to subject this message to a proper external interpretation, i. e. to read it in an eschatological key. Thus, the ktiseology, the story of creation, is a foreshadowing of the Flood, the story of destruction through the same divine word (3:5–6). The Jewish apocalyptic tradition recognises in the Flood an anticipation of doom in the end times. Peter construes the diluvial narrative in the same way. Similarly, the very existence of the present post-diluvial reality should be read as a foreshadowing of the end times, when heaven and earth will be consumed by fire (3:7), as Sodom was once destroyed. Furthermore, lessons must be learnt from the intradiegetic scepticism over the destruction by water or by fire. The readers should see to it that no eschatological scepticism takes hold and spreads in Christianity.

Further in the letter, as if in contrast to the previously dominant false interpretation, Peter reveals further dimensions of the correct interpretation of the primary and secondary eschatological texts. He also returns to the theme of 2:3b. Then he mentioned the negative aspects: judgment that is not idle and destruction that is not slumbering. Now (3:8–10a) he focuses on a positive aspect: God's patience. In both 2:3b and 3:8, chronometry is an important element. In 2:3b it was only implied. As mentioned, the temporal distance between the casting down of the sinful angels into Tartarus and their final judgement can seem very long and give a false impression of stagnation. The same applies to the alleged immutability of the world and the lack of God's interference from the beginning of creation until now. In the meantime, God's reckoning of time differs from human calculations, but none of the eschatological promises is forgotten and their fulfilment is by no means delayed (3:8), whether it be the promise of the application of the final punishment (2:3b) or the promise of entry into the kingdom of Jesus Christ after a permanent and manifested conversion in the Christian life (3:9). Any calculation as to when the fulfilment of these promises will occur, however, is doomed to failure in advance, although eschatological vigilance is recommended as much as possible (3:10a).

In the subsequent verses with the eschatological prophetic and apostolic teaching (3:10b–11a) the soteriological aspect of the correct interpretation is developed (3:11b–15a). The eschatological teaching should not only be associated with annihilation, but also with rescue and new creation. Thus, Peter again in the external interpretation seems to return to the theme of the rescue of the righteous (2:5b.7–9a). The final presentation of the prophetic and apostolic teaching (3:15b–16b) and its interpretation (16c–17c) involves a warning not to succumb to false teachers and their explanations, and an encouragement to firmly persevere in the correct teaching and its interpretation. The framing of the whole of Peter's discourse is revealed here. Verses 1:20–21, in the methodological introduction, contain the same sequence: negative aspect – positive aspect. The wrong interpretation, whether internal or external, has nothing to do with divine revelation and with divine inspiration; the right interpretation – internal and external – is in fact not the work of man and does not depend on his will, but comes from the Holy Spirit.

This main theological thought and hermeneutic of 2 Peter is complemented by a baptismal catechesis, which also accounts for the originality of Peter's message. It is no coincidence that the accumulation of positive aspects of the interpretation of eschatological teaching appears in 3:11b–15a. This fragment, due to its lexical similarity, can be seen as the development and explanation of the eschatological baptismal catechesis of 1:9–11. It is evident that baptismal gifts to cultivate virtues, the remembrance of being purified from sins, God's calling, election and protection from the fall (1:9–10) allow the faithful to be found by God at peace, without blemish and without spot in the end times (3:14). And only those without blemish can enter the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ (1:11), where righteousness dwells (3:13). Peter's baptismal teaching, especially about the gifts that help lead a godly life, escape corruption in the world, and cultivate Christian virtues growing out of faith, runs throughout the letter – in motifs, images and lexical parallels.

Of importance are also general reflections on faith and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. On the one hand, their theoretical aspects, which translate into prophetic and apostolic teaching, are emphasised; on the other hand, the author points to their practical aspects related to the baptismal gifts for the called and chosen. Thus, various traditions seem integrated in these reflections; they are explained in *exordium* analytically (1:1c–8) and synthetically (1:5–15), and only synthetically in *peroratio* (3:18a). The idea of integration is noticeable throughout the letter and at different levels: in the lexis, themes and genre.

The author of the Second Letter of Peter additionally explores theological and ethical side themes. In a unique way he addresses the divinity of Jesus (by means of the transfiguration scene in 2 Pet 1:16–18 and bi-referential formulas which can be applied both to God the Father and to Jesus, e. g. 2 Pet 1:1c; 3:2,9.15), the warning against turning Christianity into one of the pagan philosophical schools (2 Pet 2:19), the conviction of the need to cultivate Christian virtues with faith

coming to the fore as the starting point for all the others (2 Pet 1:5). Both the themes and the intertextual strategy testify to the erudition of the letter's author. The letter is thus an important testimony to the formation of Christian theology in the first and second century, to the theological image of the apostle Peter as an apocalypticist and eschatological hermeneuticist, and the most important New Testament document reflecting the process of forming a stance on the writings of the apostle Paul, which are to confirm Peter's approach to the prophetic and apostolic teaching about the end times.

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