

ORPHIC, ROMAN, JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TOURS OF HELL:
OBSERVATIONS ON THE *APOCALYPSE OF PETER*

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From brief mentions in the patristic literature it was known that early Christianity not only had an *Apocalypse of John* and an *Apocalypse of Paul* (*Visio Pauli*), which survived the ravages of the Middle Ages in several manuscripts,¹ but also an *Apocalypse of Peter* (henceforth: *Apoc. Pet.*). But not until the end of the nineteenth century (actually, the winter of 1886–7) was a late sixth- or early seventh-century codex with substantial fragments of the *Apoc. Pet.* in Greek found in the grave of, probably, a monk in Akhmim, ancient Panopolis. The codex was published almost at once and roused great interest among the leading classical and patristic scholars of its day, as the names of Harnack and Usener in the most recent critical apparatus still attest.² In 1910, however, the French scholar S. Grébaut published an Ethiopic text that not only was more complete, but also came closer to the Greek original, as was gradually realised.³ The situation became even more complicated in the years 1911 and 1924 through the separate publication of two fragments of the same, later fifth-century, miniature codex with small

¹ For a description and dating of these manuscripts see now T. Silverstein and A. Hilhorst, *Apocalypse of Paul. A New Critical Edition of Three Long Latin Versions* (Geneva: Cramer, 1997); L. Jiroušková, L., *Die Visio Pauli. Wege und Wandlungen einer orientalischen Apokryphe im lateinischen Mittelalter unter Einschluß der alttschechischen und deutschsprachigen Textzeugen* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

² For a discussion of the codex, its date and the circumstances of its findings see P. van Minnen, “The Greek Apocalypse of Peter,” in *The Apocalypse of Peter* (eds. J. Bremmer and I. Czachesz; Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha 7; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 15–39; see also his ‘The Akhmim Gospel of Peter,’ in *Das Evangelium nach Petrus* (eds. T.J. Kraus and T. Nicklas; TU 158; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2007), 53–60.

³ For the Ethiopic version I follow the translations of D. Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened* (SBLDS 97; Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 162–244, and P. Marrassini, in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens I* (ed. F. Bovon and P. Geoltrain; Bibliothèque de Pléiade; Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 755–74. For the Greek version I follow the recent edition and translation by T.J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, *Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse* (GCS Neue Folge 11; Neutestamentliche Apokryphen 1; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 81–138.

portions of a Greek text that was closer to the Ethiopian version than the Akhmim codex and was possibly written in Alexandria.⁴ Evidently, the text of the *Apoc. Pet.* was not painstakingly preserved but continuously adapted to changing theological insights and needs, like most apocalyptic texts, with the exception of the *Book of Revelation*. As the Ethiopic version was probably translated from an Arabic translation of a Greek original, one must conclude that older and newer versions of the *Apocalypse of Peter* continued to co-exist peacefully. The older form may well have been preserved by congregations that considered the text to be of the same value as the other canonical books of the New Testament. In fact, the mid-fifth-century church historian Sozomen (VII.19.9) relates that in the fifth century some Palestinian churches still read the *Apoc. Pet.* once a year.

In the end, the *Apoc. Pet.* did not survive because the Church considered it a heretical treatise and because of the much greater popularity of the, equally apocryphal, *Apocalypse of Paul*. Yet for the history of hell the *Apoc. Pet.* is of prime importance, as it was the first Christian treatise to describe, in great and often repulsive detail, the crimes and punishments of those suffering in hell, and thus became a great inspiration for imagined hellscape in later antiquity. It would transcend the space available here to comment here on the whole of the *Apoc. Pet.* in detail, and I will therefore limit my contribution to some observations on its date and place of origin (§1), its sins and punishments (§2) and, finally, on the origin and chronology of the tours of hell (§3).

1. THE DATE AND PLACE OF THE APOCALYPSE OF PETER

Unfortunately, we cannot be totally certain about its date and place of origin. The most prolific student of the *Apoc. Pet.* in recent times, Richard Bauckham, has strongly favoured a date under Bar Kokhba in Palestine, whose followers made a messianic claim on his behalf and who persecuted the Christians, both elements fitting the description in Chapter 2 of the *Apoc. Pet.* of a persecuting false Messiah.⁵ Peter van Minnen, on the other hand, considered the case not conclusively

⁴ See now Kraus and Nicklas, *Petrusevangelium und Petrusapokalypse*, 121–30.

⁵ R. Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NovTSup 93; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 187–94.

demonstrated and proposed Rome on the basis of the Roman martyrdom of Peter and the mention of the *Apoc. Pet.* at first place in the *Canon Muratori*.⁶ Bauckham had objected that the absence of any mention of the ruler cult argued against a Roman origin, but, as Van Minnen observes, the imperial cult was not very obtrusive in Rome itself. Yet Van Minnen's arguments are not conclusive either. Moreover, although the connection of *Apoc. Pet.* with Bar Kokhba is less persuasive,⁷ there is another argument for Palestine as well. Several indications suggest that *Apoc. Pet.* stands in a tradition that starts in *1 Enoch* and considered Mount Hermon in Upper Galilee as *the* place of revelation. As chapters 15–17 also contain references to Enochic literature, a connection with Palestine seems not unlikely.⁸

However, this is not the whole truth. Eibert Tigchelaar has observed that the sins in verses 9.2 and 3 are rather similar to those in verses 7.2 and 3. Moreover, in these cases the crimes do not fit the punishment, and the Ethiopic text uses here two first person singular pronouns, namely 'my righteous ones' and 'my righteousness'. He persuasively concludes that these verses must have been inserted into an already existing catalogue of sins.⁹ In other words, it is most likely that the author of the *Apoc. Pet.*, when writing his text, made freely use of another text. It seems reasonable to assume that this other text was composed in Egypt. There are three arguments in support of this contention. First, there is a reference to the worship of cats, which we also find in other Jewish Egyptian texts.¹⁰ Although the worship of cats was known outside Egypt, a reference to it in this context would make sense most in Egypt itself. Second, there is a repeated reference to *borboros*, 'mire', in the Greek version (23, 24, 31), which is lacking in the Ethiopic translation. Mire in Hades is well known from the Greek tradition and appears first in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where Heracles sees

⁶ Van Minnen, 'The Greek Apocalypse of Peter,' 30.

⁷ See most recently J.L. Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles. With Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on the First and Second Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 132f.

⁸ E.J.C. Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba? Considering the Date and Provenance of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter," in *Apocalypse of Peter* (Bremmer and Czachesz), 63–77 at 76f.

⁹ Tigchelaar, 'Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?' 72.

¹⁰ Wisd. 12:24; 15:18; *Letter to Aristaeus* 138; *Or. Sib.* 3:30–1, Frag. 3.22, 27–30, 5.278–80; Philo, *Decal.* 76–80, *De vita contemp.* 8, *Leg.* 139, 163. It is true that we find references to such worship also in Jewish Palestinian texts, such as *T. Mos.* 2.7; *Ps- Philo*, *L. A. B.* 44.5, but these are less specific.

those who wronged their guests, struck their parents or committed perjury lying in the mire (145–81, 273). From its other occurrences in Plato's *Phaedo* (69C) and *Republic* (363D), it is clear that the mention of *borboros* is typical of the Orphic picture of the underworld.¹¹ Now this tradition is well attested in Jewish circles in Alexandria, where the so-called *Testament of Orpheus* is a Jewish-Egyptian revision of an Orphic poem,¹² whereas Orphic literature is not readily demonstrable for Palestine.

Third, when we abstract the crimes in the *Apoc. Pet.* from the punishments and turn them into commandments, we get a whole series of commandments, such as 'do not kill', 'do not commit abortion', 'do not lend money' or 'stick to heterosexual relationships'. These commandments strongly resemble other gnomic *sententiae* in Egyptian and Jewish-Hellenistic literature. And indeed, it is precisely in Egypt that we find the instructional Demotic monostich and writings such as *Papyrus Insinger* or the *Instruction of Ankhsheshonqy*, which closely resemble the sayings of pseudo-Phocylides. It is highly instructive to see that most of the ethical 'commandments' can be paralleled in the latter.¹³ In particular we note that the first two positive instructions to derive from the punishments in the *Apoc. Pet.* are 'do not blaspheme the road of righteousness' and 'do not deviate from righteousness'. Similarly, pseudo-Phocylides starts and closes with the mention of righteousness, even if the text of verse 1 is not totally clear. Unfortunately, the results of this discussion permit two conclusions.

First, the *Apoc. Pet.* was first written in Palestine but revised by a Jewish-Christian author who used an Egyptian source or version, clearly was well educated and at home in Greek culture. This orientation is also supported by the fact that he used the Septuagint for his quotations of the Old Testament. Alternatively, it also cannot be excluded that the *Apoc. Pet.* was written by a similarly educated author

¹¹ For more references see J.N. Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 144 n. 89.

¹² C. Riedweg, *Jüdisch-hellenistische Imitation eines orphischen Hieros Logos* (Tübingen: Narr, 1993).

¹³ See the review of more recent literature on the background of Pseudo-Phocylides by P.W. van der Horst, "Pseudo-Phocylides Revisited," *JSP* 3 (1988): 3–30 at 4–14; M. Goff, "Hellenistic Instruction in Palestine and Egypt: Ben Sira and Papyrus Insinger," *JSJ* 36 (2005): 147–72.

in Egypt on the basis of a Palestinian text. We simply do not know.¹⁴ On the other hand, the date of the *Apoc. Pet.* is much less debated. At present there is a general consensus that it must date from the last decades of the first half of the second century AD, given its mention by Clement of Alexandria.¹⁵

From Palestine it was not far to Syria, and it is here that we find the earliest references to our Apocalypse, namely the *Epistula Apostolorum* and Theophilus of Antioch.¹⁶ To these regularly mentioned treatises we may now also add Lucian. After Glen Bowersock has persuasively argued that several passages from the Greek novels react to Christian rites or themes,¹⁷ it is perhaps less difficult to accept that in his *True Histories* Lucian uses the *Apocalypse of John* in his picture of the City of the Blessed and the *Apoc. Pet.* in his passage on the Isle of the Damned: after all, he mentioned Christians in both *Alexander of Abounoteichos* (25, 38) and *Peregrinus* (11–13).¹⁸ At the same time, Lucian's knowledge says something about the status of the *Apoc. Pet.*: evidently, it soon became known also outside its immediate milieu of origin. Unfortunately, the date and place of the *Second Sibylline Oracle*, which quotes the *Apoc. Pet.* extensively, is disputed and the most recent discussion has remained inconclusive.¹⁹

2. CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS

Having looked at its date and origin, let us now move on to the content. The Ethiopic version of the *Apoc. Pet.* starts with a number of questions, from the end of the world to Christ on the Mount of Olives. From the answers it is clear that the book was written in a time of

¹⁴ J. van Ruiten, "The Old Testament Quotations in the *Apocalypse of Peter*," in *Apocalypse of Peter* (Bremmer and Czachesz), 158–73.

¹⁵ Clem. Alex. *apud* Eusebius, *h.e.* 6.14.1, cf. Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 132.

¹⁶ Buchholz, *Your Eyes*, 45–50.

¹⁷ G. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1994).

¹⁸ P. von Möllendorff, *Auf der Suche nach der verlogenen Wahrheit. Lukians Wahre Geschichten* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 318–21 (*Apocalypse of John*), 427–30 (*Apoc. Pet.*). For Lucian's interest in Christianity see now J.N. Bremmer, "Peregrinus' Christian Career," in *Flores Florentino. Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez* (eds. A. Hilhorst, E. Puech and E. Tigchelaar; JSJSup 122; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 729–47.

¹⁹ Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 94–106.

persecution (ch. 2 E). When the last days have come, it says, we shall see a number of specific punishments of specific crimes that are listed in great detail. Subsequently, the apostles see Moses and Elijah appear, and they are shown paradise. Finally, heaven opens and Jesus is taken up with Moses and Elijah. However, in the Greek version the punishments have already taken place and the description of paradise precedes the description of hell instead of following it. In other words, the author of the Akhmim version had already edited the *Apoc. Pet.* to a considerable extent.

After this quick overview of the extant parts of the book let us take a closer look at the list of sins and punishments found in hell in the *Apoc. Pet.*, which I list here in summary manner.²⁰

<i>Sin</i>	<i>Punishment</i>
Blaspheming the way of righteousness (7.1–2 E; 22 G).	Hung from the tongue, fire.
Denied righteousness (7.3–4 E; 23 G).	Pit of burning mud.
Women who beautified themselves for adultery (7.5–6 E; 24a G).	Hung by the hair over bubbling mud.
Men who committed adultery with those women (7.7–8 E; 24b G).	Hung by the thighs (E; ‘feet’ G), head in the mud, crying, ‘We did not believe that we would come to this place.’
Murderers and their associates (7.9–11 E; 25 G).	Tormented by snakes and worms, their victims watching them and saying, ‘O God, righteous is thy judgement.’
Women who conceived children but procured abortion (8.1–4 E; 26 G).	Sit in a pool of discharge and excrement, with eyes burned by flames coming from their children opposite them.
Infanticide (8.5–10 E).	Flesh-eating animals come forth from the mothers’ rotten milk and torment the parents.
Persecuting and giving over the righteous ones (9.1–2 E; 27 G).	Sit in a dark place, burned waist-high, tortured by evil spirits, bowels eaten by worms.
Blaspheming and betraying righteousness (9.3 E; 28 G).	Chewing their tongues, eyes burnt out by fiery rods.

²⁰ Buchholz, *Your Eyes*, 308–11; Bauckham, *The Fate*, 166–7. I have adapted the scheme of I. Czachesz, “The Grotesque Body in the *Apocalypse of Peter*,” in *Apocalypse of Peter*, (Bremmer and Czachesz), 108–26 at 111–13.

False witnesses (9.4 E; 29 G).	Lips cut off, fire in the mouth and bowels.
Faith in wealth, but neglect of widows and orphans (9.5–7 E; 30 G).	Wearing rags, never ending pain, set on sharp and fiery stones.
Lending money and taking interest on the interest (10.1 E; 31 G).	Stand in a pool of excrement.
Those 'who cut their flesh' (not in G), homosexuals and lesbians (10.2–4 E; 32 G). ²¹	Endlessly throwing themselves into an abyss.
Those who made idols resembling animals, such as cats and lions (10.5–6 E; 33 G, which does not specify the nature of the idols).	Makers beat themselves with chains of fire (misunderstood by G).
Men and women that abandoned the commandment (G: way) of God and followed demons (10.7 E; 34 G).	Eternally burning.
Those who did not obey their parents (11.1–3 E).	Slip down rolling into a fiery place repeatedly.
Those who did not obey their parents, who did not follow the teaching of their fathers and did not honour those who were older (11.4–5 E).	Carnivorous birds torture them.
Maidens who did not retain their virginity until marriage (11.6–7 E).	Their flesh is torn apart.
Slaves who did not obey their masters (11.8–9 E).	Chewing their tongues, eternal fire.
Those who do charity and regard themselves righteous (12.1–3 E).	Blind and deaf pushing each other onto eternally burning coal.
Sorcerers and sorceresses (12.4–7 E).	Wheel of fire.

Albrecht Dieterich has already discussed the punishments at length in his learned, original, but rather speculative *Nekyia*.²² Several penalties have been imposed on the *talio* principle.²³ This is already clear at the beginning, were the blasphemers are hanging by their tongues, just as somewhat later the blasphemers have to chew their tongues, and false witnesses have their lips cut off.²⁴ We may compare Aristophanes' *Knights* (1362–3) where the prosecutor is thrown into a ravine with

²¹ One of the Ethiopic manuscripts adds 'idolatry', but this is most likely a gloss.

²² A. Dieterich, *Nekyia* (2nd ed.; Leipzig and Berlin: Akademie, 1913 [Repr. Darmstadt: WBG, 1969]), 205–9.

²³ M. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 75–77; J.P. Brown, *Israel and Hellas III* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2001), 27–30.

²⁴ For the Near Eastern background of this punishment see R. Rollinger, "Herodotus, Human Violence and the Ancient Near East," in *The World of Herodotus* (eds. V.

the demagogue Hyperbolus around his neck or Lucian's *Fugitives* (33) where the impostor philosopher is hung by his beard. Similarly, Lucian lets Kinyras, the kidnapper of Helen, but also the incestuous king of Cyprus, hang by his balls in his *True Histories*.²⁵ Not surprisingly, he is in this respect inspired by the *Apoc. Pet.*, even though in the latter adulterers are hung by their feet in the Greek version (24b G) and by their thighs in the Ethiopic translation (7:7–8 E).²⁶

In other cases, the connection is much less clear, such as when those trusting their wealth are rolling on sharp pebbles or when usurers are standing in the boiling mire. In fact, in the *Apoc. Pet.* the *talio* principle is used modestly and cannot be considered the organising principle of these penalties.²⁷ The picture of hell itself is partially inspired by Aristophanes and Plato (or Pseudo-Plato), from whom the author took the mire and the bad smells, but the burning mud seems to be the author's own invention, just as the stress on blood, which Lucian also happily took over in his *True Histories* (2:30). The great transgressors of Greek mythology seem to have been another source of inspiration. The continuing throwing down of lesbians from a great precipice, who then have to climb up in order to be thrown down again reminds one of Sisyphus, and the carnivorous birds that torture those that did not honour their parents and the elderly (11:4–5 E) recall Prometheus' vulture. Naturally, the traditional pagan sinners had no place any more in the *Apoc. Pet.*, but we already find the same 'emancipation' of the traditional punishments from the original sinners in Virgil's *Aeneid* VI,²⁸ and we may at least wonder if this separation was not already part of the common source.

The crimes can be grouped into certain categories,²⁹ even though there is always something arbitrary about such categorisations. The

Karageorghis and I. Taifacos; Nicosia: Foundation Anastasios Leventis, 2004), 121–50 at 141.

²⁵ D.B. Levine, "Lucian, *True History* 2, 26 reconsidered: lust and punishment," *Helios* 18 (1991): 31–33.

²⁶ Cf. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 89.

²⁷ Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 80 shows that at the most 40% of the punishments in *Apoc. Pet.* are based on the measure-for-measure principle; Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 503 overstates its presence in the *Apoc. Pet.* in contrast with that of the Sibyl.

²⁸ J. Zetzel, "Romane Memento: Justice and Judgment in *Aeneid* 6," *TAPA* 119 (1989): 263–84 at 269–70.

²⁹ Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?," 71 surely goes too far: "a haphazardly assembled collection of diverse sins, without a clear systematisation or an area of special attention," even though followed by Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 505.

largest one concerns the interrelated righteousness, blasphemy, idolatry and persecution (7), then comes sexuality and the relationships between the sexes (4), then concern for parents and slaves (5),³⁰ to which category we probably also have to count the concern for unborn or new-born children, which in pseudo-Phocylides (184–85) is included among the other sexual prescriptions, and this may be valid also for the concern for widows and orphans (2); finally, we find magic (1), usury (1) and murder (1).

It is extremely interesting to note these groupings, as our author certainly did not invent this procedure by himself. In fact, such groupings also occur in two other, only slightly earlier, hellscapes, viz in the *katabasis* of Virgil's *Aeneid* VI, of which the Orphic character was established by Eduard Norden in his great commentary,³¹ and in a third- or fourth-century papyrus from Bologna, of which the text seems to date of early imperial times and is generally accepted to be Orphic in character (fr. 717 Bernabé).³² In Virgil (*Aen.* 6.608–13), we find a list of sinners against the family and *familia*, then a brief list of their punishments (614–17), and then more sinners, mythological and historical (618–24). In the Orphic papyrus, we find a list of sinners (1–24), then the Erinyes and Harpies as agents of their punishments (25–46), and subsequently again sinners (47ff.). Both Virgil and the papyrus must go back to an older Orphic source (sources?),³³ which we no longer have, but which seems to have contained separate catalogues of sinners and their punishments.

³⁰ These belong together, see P. Derron, *Les Sentences du Pseudo-Phocylide* (Paris: Les belles Lettres, 1986), 31.

³¹ E. Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro Aeneis VI* (Leipzig: Akademie, 1927 [Repr. Darmstadt: WBG, 1967]). For Norden see most recently J. Rüpke, *Römische Religion bei Eduard Norden* (Marburg: Diagonal-Verlag, 1993); B. Kytzler et al. (eds), *Eduard Norden (1868–1941)* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994); W.M. Calder III and B. Huss, "Sed servendum officio..." *The Correspondence between Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and Eduard Norden (1892–1931)* (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1997); W.A. Schröder, *Der Altertumswissenschaftler Eduard Norden. Das Schicksal eines deutschen Gelehrten jüdischen Abkunft* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1999); A. Baumgarten, "Eduard Norden and His Students: a Contribution to a Portrait. Based on Three Archival Finds," *Scripta Class. Israel.* 25 (2006): 121–40.

³² For the text see now, with extensive bibliography and commentary, A. Bernabé, *Orphicorum et Orphicis similibus testimonia et fragmenta. Poetae Epici Graeci. Pars II. Fasc. 2* (Munich and Leipzig: Saur, 2006), 271–87, who notes on p. 271: 'omnia quae in papyro leguntur cum Orphica doctrina recentioris aetatis congruunt'.

³³ This has now been established by N. Horsfall, "P. Bonon.4 and Virgil, *Aen.*6, yet again," *ZPE* 96 (1993): 17–18.

However this may be, we must face the question of what consequences this grouping may lead to. Let us first note what we do *not* read. We do not hear anything about specific ritual or dogmatic transgressions. Most decent Jews, Christians and, probably, even some pagans would hardly have had a problem with the great majority of these implicit commandments. This may well be another indication that the prescriptions ultimately derived from Jewish Hellenistic ethical monostichs, as these also avoided all too explicit references to Jewish practices and doctrines.³⁴

Second, in Hellenistic Jewish precepts we often find sexuality first, closely followed by parents, the elderly and slaves.³⁵ This focus is still recognisable in our text where sexuality and the relationships between the sexes are also highly important, immediately followed by the parents and widows and orphans. In pseudo-Phocylides (4) we find wiles and murder immediately after the injunction about sexuality, and this combination must have been traditional.³⁶ That is probably why in the *Apoc. Pet.* murder immediately follows upon adultery and before the mention of abortion, which might be seen as the fruit of adulterous behaviour.

Third, the stress on blasphemy and persecution is somewhat surprising. Among Jews and Greeks we usually find the exhortation to honour both God and the parents;³⁷ one is also reminded of the exhortation of Phlegyas in Virgil's underworld: *discite iustitiam moniti et non temnere divos* (*Aen.* 6.620), on the content of which the major commentaries are remarkably silent. Here it seems that the focus on God and the threat of His denial during the persecutions has inspired our author to exalt God's position. That is why this category is represented most.

This does not necessarily mean that the persecutions mentioned were invented by our Christian author. In *1 Enoch* 108 we find not only blasphemers in the eternal fire (6), where the Ethiopic version of *1 Enoch* uses the same term as the *Apoc. Pet.*, but also a mention of those who 'were being trodden upon by evil people' (10) and who

³⁴ Van der Horst, 'Pseudo-Phocylides Revisited,' 1–12.

³⁵ P.W. van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 110–11.

³⁶ Van der Horst, ad loc., compares Wisd. 14:25f and *Barnabas* 20:1.

³⁷ Van der Horst, *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, 116–17 with many references; W. Wilson, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 82–3.

will be seated 'each one by one upon the throne of honour' (12). This combination of blasphemy, persecution and recompense suggests an origin in the times from before or during the Maccabean revolt. In fact, it seems that the notion of blasphemy became more prominent in the second century BC as a qualification of non-Jews or as a means of slighting ideological or religious Jewish opponents. It now became incorporated in lists of sins, such as 'sin, oppression, blasphemy and injustice' in *1 Enoch* (91:7; note also 96:7), but also in the Dead Sea Scrolls (*IQS* 4.10–11, 4Q372 1 13). Philo repeatedly expresses his horror at blasphemy, such as when the emperor requests worship (*Leg.* 368) or when the name of God is pronounced at unsuitable occasions (*Vita Moy.* 2.206), which in his view deserves capital punishment.³⁸ Unfortunately, though, it is not always clear what the exact meaning of blaspheming is. It seems that Hebrew *giddef* covers the whole spectre of negatively speaking to or about God as well as denying God's care and law. In each case, it is the context that determines the precise meaning of blasphemy.

Greeks and Romans were much less concerned with blasphemy, and the Emperor Tiberius, who sometimes had a healthy view of life, tersely commented: *deorum iniuriae dis curae* (*Tac. Ann.* 1.73). Early Christianity, however, followed its Jewish roots in this respect. Blasphemers perverted God's law, and that is why pseudo-Pauline letters can say that a slave should serve his master so that God's word would not be blasphemed (1 Tim 6:1) or that women should be chaste so that the word of God should not be blasphemed (Tit 2:5). Blasphemy, then, had a strong ethical content, which seems to have been lost in its modern usage.³⁹ This ethical meaning probably also explains the words 'blaspheming the way of righteousness' (9:3 E; 28 G). The expression 'the way of righteousness' is a relative newcomer in the Old Testament and not found before the book of Job. It often occurs in Proverbs, but also in Matthew (21:32) in the New Testament, where John came in the 'road of righteousness' and demanded righteousness of life in accordance with the will of God. Elsewhere in the NT we find the expression in 2 Peter 2:21 where the libertines leave this road. Pseudo-Phocylides (229–30) even ends with: 'These are the mysteries of

³⁸ H. Merkel, "Gotteslästerung," *RAC* 11 (1981): 1185–1201.

³⁹ A. Cabantous, *Blasphemy: Impious Speech in the West From the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002); D. Nash, *Blasphemy in the Christian World: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

righteousness; living by them may you live out a good life until the threshold of old age’.

In other words, *dikaiosyne* does not so much imply here a connection with faith and salvation, such as we find in Paul, but rather its contemporary Jewish meaning, which in itself was much influenced by a development of *dikaïos* in Hellenistic times, when the word became synonymous for an *honnête homme*. In Jewish circles this meant to be a decent person in accordance with the Law and, probably also according to our author, in obedience to God as well.⁴⁰ This obedience to God, precisely in times of persecution, must have made blasphemy an even more serious crime than it would have been anyway.⁴¹

My last example concerns certain sexual behaviour. The Ethiopic version states that those that hurl themselves continually from a height are those ‘that cut their flesh, those that had sexual relations with men. The women who are with them are those that have defiled one another, as a woman with a man’ (10:4 E). In the Greek version this has become: ‘these were the ones who defiled their bodies acting as women. And the women who were with them were those who lay with one another as a man with a woman’ (32b G). It is interesting to see that the recent French translation in the authoritative collection of apocryphal writings edited by Bovon and Geoltrain replaces the Ethiopic ‘cut the flesh’ with the less specific Greek ‘those who have defiled themselves’.⁴² Evidently, he finds the expression out of place here. My former colleague István Czachesz has suggested interpreting the expression as a reference to cultic tattooing.⁴³ What both of them did not notice is that pseudo-Phocylides (187) condemns castration in the same section as homosexuality and lesbian love. This proves once again the dependence of the *Apoc. Pet.* on Jewish texts, but also suggests that we should look to the Jewish background of Christianity for the background of the prohibition. It is noticeable that castration is not

⁴⁰ C. Spicq, *Notes de lexicographie néo-testamentaire. Supplément* (OBO 22.3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 128–39.

⁴¹ Unpersuasively, Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 510 interprets the blaspheming as ‘slandering’.

⁴² P. Marrassini *apud* Bovon and Geoltrain, *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, 767.

⁴³ For cultic tattooing and cutting in antiquity, Czachesz, “Grotesque Body,” 112 note 19, compares W. Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 81; D.E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 465–9; note also J.N. Bremmer, “Christelijke tatouages in de tijd van Jezus en nu,” in *Eric Bleumink op de huid gezeten* (ed. J.N. Bremmer; Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit, 2000), 11–19.

explicitly forbidden in the *Old Testament*: apparently, it was not practised sufficiently to be a threat to society. This changes in the Roman period, when both Philo (*Hyp.* in Eus. *PE* 8:7:7) and Josephus (*Contra Apionem* 2:270–1) speak out against it—presumably because they were confronted with the practice in everyday life. Understandably, Greeks and Romans were not in favour of the practice, and Greeks usually referred to it euphemistically.⁴⁴ As the emperor Domitian had forbidden castration, its mention here is more a survival from the Jewish background than an up-to-date crime, and it is not surprising that later versions of the *Apoc. Pet.* dropped it.

Homosexuality must have remained more common, even though in some pagan philosophical circles it came to be viewed negatively.⁴⁵ It was already prohibited in the Old Testament (Lev 18:22) and became heavily criticised by Jewish intellectuals like Philo and Josephus.⁴⁶ Consequently, its condemnation was incorporated into the New Testament and early Christian authors, and the continued condemnation in the *Apoc. Pet.* is therefore hardly a novelty. Lesbianism is perhaps a bit more surprising, as it is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It probably did not become visible in the man-dominated world of ancient Israel. This changed only slowly, as lesbian love is not mentioned by Philo or Josephus and is alluded to rather circumspectly by Paul in Rom 1:26. Its occurrence here therefore seems once again inspired by the Jewish tradition of pseudo-Phocylides (192), who may well have read or heard about it in Egypt where lesbian love is attested in both literary texts and magical spells.⁴⁷

It is clear that we have to look at the penalties in the *Apoc. Pet.* not in isolation but as an appropriation of a Jewish tradition by Jewish Christians living in the 130s or 140s. We can get an even better idea of the development of such penalties and their implicit ideas when we look at the *Apocalypse of Paul*. This Apocalypse was published about 400 and of course much better adapted to the radically changed situation

⁴⁴ Herodotus 8:106; Pseudo-Lucian, *Amores* 21; Heraclitus, *Letters* 9:4; E. Maass, “Eunuchos und Verwandtes,” *RhM* 74 (1925): 432–76 at 476; in general, R. Muth, “Kastration,” in *RAC* 20 (2004): 285–342.

⁴⁵ See F. Buffière, *Éros adolescent: la pédérastie dans la Grèce antique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1980), 485–90.

⁴⁶ Van der Horst, *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, 237–39.

⁴⁷ Texts: Herondas 6 and 7; Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3:14:171, 4:5:187. Spells: B. Brooten, *Love Between Women. Early Christian Responses to female Homoeroticism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 77–113.

through the victory of Christianity than the so much older *Apoc. Pet.* There is clearly a tendency to be original and thus some penalties are kept, whereas the place of punishment is changed. Whereas the *Apoc. Pet.*, like pseudo-Phocylides (184–5), still distinguished between abortion and exposure, we now only hear of abortion, and the preservation of female modesty has become more important. It is hardly surprising that the categories of the false witnesses, apostates, idolaters and persecutors no longer find a place. It is perhaps more surprising that the category of the slave has disappeared. On the other hand, we now find penalties introduced for those who break the fast too soon, for (metaphorically) blind pagans and for those who pretend to be ascetics.

3. THE NATURE AND CHRONOLOGY OF THE TOURS OF HELL

Where does this all leave us regarding the origin and chronology of the tours of hell? In her well-known book on the tours of hell, Martha Himmelfarb argued vigorously against Albrecht Dieterich (1866–1908) that the *Apocalypse of Peter* was not part of the Orphic-Pythagorean tradition but that ‘the various motifs in the Apocalypse of Peter, whatever their origin, have been shaped in consciousness of a Jewish and Christian literary tradition’.⁴⁸ However, even though Dieterich stressed the Greek background of the *Apoc. Pet.* too exclusively, he also notices, although merely in passing, that we cannot separate Greek and Jewish traditions too much and must allow for mutual influences.⁴⁹ This clearly is also the case with the *Apoc. Pet.* where Orphic influence is undeniable, given, for example, the occurrence of Orphic *borboros*, ‘mire’ (23, 24, 31 E).⁵⁰

Now when we look at the early tours of hell that we have been discussing, viz. Virgil’s *Aeneid VI*, the Bologna papyrus and the *Apoc. Pet.*, we can identify at least three important characteristics of the genre. First, as Himmelfarb observed, there is an important formal marker in that the visionary often asks: ‘who are these?’, and is answered by the guide of the vision with ‘these are those who...’, a phenomenon

⁴⁸ Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 67.

⁴⁹ Dieterich, *Nekyia*, 222.

⁵⁰ See my “The Apocalypse of Peter: Greek or Jewish?” in *Apocalypse of Peter* (Bremmer and Czachesz), 1–14 at 12–13, accepted by Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 141, with additional arguments.

that Himmelfarb traces back to Enoch's cosmic tour in the *Book of the Watchers*, which can be dated to before 200 BC but is probably not older than the third century.⁵¹ We may well find the demonstrative pronouns also in the *Aeneid*, as Lightfoot, following Himmelfarb, has recently noted: 'Demonstratives are formally absent from his (i.e. Aeneas') questions, but Aeneas' questions at 318–20 and 560–1 can be seen as rhetorical variations on the question 'who are these?' Of the Sibyl's replies, 322–30 contains *haec, ille, hi*; 562–627 contains three instances each of *hic* as adverb (580, 582, 608) and demonstrative pronoun (587, 621, 623), a rhetorical question answered by the Sibyl herself (574–7), and several relative clauses (583, 608, 610, 612) identifying individual sinners or groups.⁵² Although in the *Apoc. Pet.* the description of hell is not given in a question and answer form, it does contain the demonstrative pronouns and it is not difficult to think of the questions as implicit ones.

Second, in the tours of hell the visionary often needs a guide to understand what he sees or he is told what the guide sees. This is the case in the *Apoc. Pet.*, where Christ tells Peter about the sinners and their punishments, and in Virgil, where the Sibyl tells Aeneas about the sinners and their punishments. Yet there are no certain early Greek examples of such guides, and the Bologna papyrus seems to miss one, just as it also lacks the demonstrative pronouns and the question and answer form.

Third, the description of hell contains a list of sinners and their punishments. It may seem self evident to state this, but Himmelfarb failed to note that the *Book of Watchers* 17–22 lacks such a catalogue. However, such catalogues were most popular in Orphic literature, as Dieterich and Norden extensively demonstrated.⁵³

What conclusion can we draw from this survey? It seems that we have to do with two strands of tradition. First, there is the Enochic tour with its guide as well as questions and answers with the demonstrative pronouns. Second, there is the catalogue of sinners and punishments. Evidently, the tours of hell of the first centuries of our era could choose from those traditions and combine them in varying ways: with

⁵¹ Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 41–67.

⁵² Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 502–3, cf. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 49–50.

⁵³ Dieterich, *Nekyia*, 163–213; E. Norden, *Kleine Schriften zum klassischen Altertum* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1966 [1st ed.; 1893]), 229–31 and *Aeneis Buch VI*, 287f.

or without guides and with or without demonstrative pronouns. But they all contain the catalogue of sinners and punishments.

Now Virgil has the guide, the catalogue of sinners and, probably, the demonstrative pronouns. This raises the interesting question as to where he would have found these elements? The *Apoc. Pet.* clearly contains Enochic traditions,⁵⁴ but could Virgil have known those? Norden categorically rejected all Jewish influence on Virgil in his commentary,⁵⁵ but more recent discussions of Jewish-Sibylline influence on Virgil and Horace are more positive.⁵⁶ And indeed, Alexander Polyhistor, who worked in Rome during Virgil's lifetime, was demonstrably acquainted with Egyptian-Jewish Sibylline literature.⁵⁷ Now there are many points of contact between the Sibylline and Enochic traditions, and there seems to be no reason why the two traditions did not influence one another.⁵⁸ Thus it seems not improbable that among the Orphic literature that Virgil had read, there also were Jewish-Orphic *katabaseis* with Enochic influence. Unfortunately, however, we have so little left of that literature that all too certain conclusions would be misleading.

It is time to conclude. Inspired by the Orphic tradition, some Jews started to adapt the Greek crimes and penalties in the afterlife to their own tradition. This adaptation most likely took place in Egypt, probably in Alexandria. The early Christians, who in turn adapted the crimes to their own difficult situation in a time of persecution, appropriated this

⁵⁴ G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1. A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 87, 101; Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?" 76–77; Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 142.

⁵⁵ Norden, *Aeneis Buch VI*, 6. For Norden's attitude towards Judaism see J.E. Bauer, "Eduard Norden: Wahrheitsliebe und Judentum," in *Eduard Norden* (Kytzler), 205–23; Bremmer, "The Apocalypse of Peter: Greek or Jewish?" 3–4; R.G. Nisbet, *Collected Papers on Latin Literature* (ed. S.J. Harrison; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 75.

⁵⁶ C.W. MacLeod, *Collected Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 218–99 (on Horace's *Epode* 16.2); Nisbet, *Collected Papers*, 48–52, 64–5, 73–5, 163–4; L. Watson, *A Commentary on Horace's Epodes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 481–2, 489, 508, 511 (on Horace's *Epode* 16).

⁵⁷ Alexander Polyhistor *FGrH* 273 F 79 (4) quotes *Or. Sib.* 397–104, if probably in an older form than we have now, cf. E. Schürer, *The history of the Jewish people in the age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*, (3 vol.s Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973–1987), III.1, 646–7 (no Babylonian influence); R. Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles and Its Social Setting* (SVTP 17; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 167–71; Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 95.

⁵⁸ Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 70–77.

tradition. Later Christians were no longer plagued by persecutions and had developed different ideals and practices, which they also adapted once again. In the end, every Apocalypse has to be looked at as the product of a tradition that has been appropriated in a particular time and place.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ For corrections and comments I am most grateful to Ton Hilhorst, Eibert Tigchelaar and, especially, Nicholas Horsfall.