The background of the cover is an underwater photograph of the water's surface, showing ripples and light filtering through. The color transitions from a bright teal at the top to a dark, almost black blue at the bottom.

SCOFFERS

Responding to Those Who Deliberately
Overlook Creation and the Flood

SIMON TURPIN

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Overlook Creation and the Flood

SIMON TURPIN

First printing: August 2021

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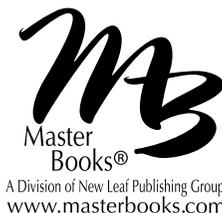
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Too many church leaders have wittingly or unwittingly undermined the authority of God's Word in Genesis, which has contributed to considerable damage generationally to the church and its effectiveness in the culture. In his book *Scoffers*, Simon Turpin uses his theological training, in-depth biblical research, and vast experience in the creation apologetic ministry to challenge those who would reject the Genesis account of creation and the Flood as literal history. A fresh approach to give needed understanding to God's revelation in Genesis, the age of the earth, and the promise of the final glorious redemption of creation. Another unique publication all Christians should devour.

*Ken Ham, CEO, Answers in Genesis, The Creation Museum
and The Ark Encounter*

In this book Simon shows why the events of creation and the global Flood are crucial to understanding the message of the Bible, especially the Gospel of salvation. The warnings given in the second letter of Peter are very relevant for today.

*Professor Stuart Burgess (BSc(Eng), PhD, CEng, FIMechE). Professor of
Engineering Design at the University of Bristol (UK).*

This book shows in crystal clear reasoning that if we accept the authority of God's Word as believers, and in particular the second epistle of Peter, then we must accept the supernatural creation of the world followed by the historical global, catastrophic Flood which is taught clearly in this epistle. Simon Turpin shows first the canonicity of 2 Peter and then using 2 Peter itself argues that the growing heresy within the church of believing Genesis to be a non-historical myth is precisely what Peter is warning would happen in the last days. Turpin rightly argues that these very days of apostasy are marked by many in the evangelical community not accepting the authority of Genesis, and that this is linked with an unbelief in the coming judgement upon the world and the Return of Christ. All Christian leaders need to read this excellent book, written by one who is a well-trained theologian.

*Professor Andy C. McIntosh (DSc, FIMA, C.Math, FEI, C.Eng, FInstP,
MIGEM, FRAeS). Emeritus Professor of Thermodynamics, School of
Chemical and Process Engineering, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK.*

*Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Engineering, Liberty University,
Lynchburg, VA, USA. Adjunct Professor, Crown Seminary, Knoxville,
Tennessee, USA.*

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“Scoffer” is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride (Proverbs 21:24).

For at least the last two hundred years, the Western world has openly scoffed (mocked) at Christians and at their beliefs about the Bible. Scoffing is basically argument by ridicule, an approach that the religious leaders of Jesus’ day often took to His teaching (Luke 16:14, 23:35). Much of the scoffing, or ridicule, Christians receive today comes from those who have rejected the Bible’s history, especially in Genesis 1–11. Those who scoff at Christianity, such as atheistic evolutionists or skeptics, often ridicule Christians who accept the belief in the supernatural creation of the world and a global Flood by calling them “fundamentalists,” “anti-intellectuals,” “extremists,” and “literalists.” Or they use other disparaging remarks like “dishonest,” “ignorant,” or “stupid” to describe those who argue for the biblical creation position. These sorts of arguments are known as epithet fallacies. Rather than using sound logical argumentation, they use biased emotional language to support a conclusion that is logically unproven in order to capitalize on people’s emotions. Logical fallacies are often seductive and tend to be persuasive for many people because they are very subtle. The news media, internet, and evolutionary literature are full of these emotionally charged arguments (often without making a logical case for their argument) against Christians and the Bible. You may have come across some of the following “arguments” and statements against the biblical creation position:

- “Evolution vs. Creationism.” This is a common way to frame the evolution vs. creation debate. By attaching “ism” to creation and not evolution, it subtly implies creation is a belief whereas evolution is science.
- “The six-day creation position is misleading, as it teaches people to believe nonsense and lies.” This is simply using emotional language

to try to persuade. It is also arbitrary, as the same can be said of the evolution position.

- “To be a creationist, you’d have to ignore tons of scientific evidence.” This remark is the fallacy of the question-begging epithet because it uses biased language (and not logic) to suggest that scientific evidence supports evolution.
- “Genesis teaches that God created the world in six days, but the best scientists tell us that the universe is billions of years old.” How do you know who are the best scientists? There are many PhD Christian scientists who believe in a young age for the universe.¹

Because evolutionary scientists view creation as religion veiled as *pseudoscience* and are generally unfamiliar with creationist arguments, they deliberately choose a strategy of scoffing when engaging with them. In his book *Replacing Darwin: The New Origin of Species*,² Dr. Nathaniel Jeanson gave critics of biblical creation the means by which to potentially tear down scientific models: he gave them testable predictions that future experiments could reveal to be true or false. Unfortunately, rather than engage his testable predictions, his critics prefer ignorance to his claims. Dr. Jeanson has witnessed the strategy firsthand in public debates on his genetic research. He notes:

...not only are professional scientists raised in a bubble and practice their careers in a bubble; they also deliberately choose to live in a bubble, ridiculing any opposition as outrageous and unworthy of serious consideration.³

Not only do evolutionists ignore the claims of biblical creationists, but they also argue creation is unscientific because it is not falsifiable, but then they appeal to scientific evidence to try and refute it. This just shows

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1. See Dr. Jason Lisle, “The Fallacy of the Question-Begging Epithet,” August 24, 2009, <https://answersingenesis.org/logic/the-fallacy-of-the-question-begging-epithet/>.
 2. In his book *Replacing Darwin*, Dr. Nathaniel Jeanson shows that creation science meets the golden standard of science, falsification, as he made several testable predictions, ranging from field studies to DNA mutation rates. See Dr. Nathaniel Jeanson, *Replacing Darwin: The New Origin of Species* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2017).
 3. Dr. Jeanson gives a specific example from an evolutionary scientist that he debated who admitted in a blog post years before the debate to employing a strategy of ridicule when it comes to dealing with creationists. See Dr. Nathaniel T. Jeanson, *Replacing Darwin Made Simple* (Petersburg, KY: Answers in Genesis, 2019), 79.

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the contradictory claims of evolutionists. If biblical creation is not falsifiable, then you cannot use evidence to try and refute it, and if it is testable (as Dr. Jeanson and others have shown), then it is scientific.

All the above arguments, however, are not based upon logic but are driven by pure emotion, and the Apostle Peter warned believers about being exploited through the “false words” of scoffers (2 Peter 2:3). The same “ignorant” and “unstable” people distort the meaning of Scripture to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16). We need to remember that “false words” from scoffers, which call into question the truth of God’s Word, have the power to deceive people, as they are meant to distract us from the truth. This was the approach the serpent (Satan, Revelation 12:9, 20:2) used when he came to Eve in the Garden, by taking God’s Word and reshaping it, saying: “Did God actually say?” (Genesis 3:1). Satan’s words, which were designed to get Eve to debate God’s Word, entertained the possibility that God did not know what was best. While God had commanded Adam not to eat from one tree, Satan told Eve it was “... any tree in the garden.” In other words, Satan presents God as the cosmic killjoy, someone who comes along and likes saying “no” to everything and everyone. In his temptation, Satan did not just point to the tree and simply say, “Go on, eat it,” but he re-describes reality in a way that is *false*.

This first step by Satan, that deceived Eve, began by distorting the truthfulness of God’s Word. As Adam and Eve found out, there are only tragic consequences when we reject God’s Word as the sole authority for our lives. Although once naked and without shame, after they disobeyed God, Adam and Eve realized they were naked and became ashamed. In that shame, they were alienated from God (Genesis 3:7). Eve gave in to temptation because she saw that the tree was 1) good for food, 2) pleasing to the eye, and 3) desirable for gaining wisdom (Genesis 3:6). These temptations correspond to John’s description of the things of this world: “The desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). This is a pattern of temptation that runs through Scripture: 1) start listening to the creature instead of the Creator; 2) follow our own impressions instead of God’s instructions; 3) make self-fulfilment the goal.

The prospect of these things seems good to life when, in fact, it leads to death. If you rebel against the God who gives life, what else is there but death? As Scripture states: “There is a way that seems right to a man,

but its end is the way to death” (Proverbs 14:12). In the Garden in Eden, Eve rejected the truth of God’s Word and instead chose to believe a falsehood about Him. In this act of disobedience, Eve chose to follow Satan’s “false words” over the truth of God’s Word, and it resulted in death (see Genesis 3:1–5, 8, 19; cf. 2:17).

The way to deal with “false words” from those who scoff at God’s Word is by standing on and proclaiming the truth and authority of God’s Word and not by conceding it. Jesus is our example here in that when He was tempted in the wilderness, He relied on the truth of God’s Word to defeat Satan (Matthew 4:1–10). Jesus overcame Satan’s temptations by quoting Scripture, saying to him, “It is written,” which has the force of or is equivalent to “that settles it,” and Jesus understood that the Word of God was sufficient for this. In fact, Jesus quoted Scripture, in context, to refute the “false words” of the religious teachers (scoffers) of His day in His many debates with them (see Matthew 15:1–9, 22:23–33).

Relevant to this book, however, are the scoffers and their teaching described in 2 Peter 3:

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” For they deliberately overlook this fact, *that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God*, and that by means of these *the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished*. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and

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then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:1–13; emphasis mine).

Peter tells us that in the last days (the era from Christ's first coming until His return; cf. Acts 2:17), scoffers will come scoffing at the belief that Christ will come again. They will base their ideas upon the assumption that the world has not changed, deliberately ignoring two major events in the history of the world:

1. God's supernatural creation of the world, and
2. God's judgment of the world by the historical, global, catastrophic Flood in the days of Noah.

Does this sound familiar? It should, because today's secular Western world is characterized by people who scoff at and ridicule the second coming of Christ and Christianity because they have already rejected the historicity of the accounts of supernatural creation of the world and the cataclysmic global Flood in Genesis, as they reason "scientific" knowledge (i.e., evolution and millions of years) makes it impossible to believe such things. For example, in an article in the English newspaper the *Independent*, the author, James Williams, an agnostic, scoffs at the Bible because of its supernatural content and believes that this is one of the reasons why the current generation of British young people are rejecting Christianity and becoming increasingly secular. Williams argues:

The problem for religion [Christianity] is that it can be very illogical. Take, for example, the idea of a talking snake, or people turning into salt, or a 600-year-old man building a boat to house every species of animal. This is what Darwin realised: such stories were just stories. Not fact, not truth. . . . As an agnostic and researcher

into creationism, I encounter many ultra-evangelical Christians who believe the Bible from first word to last, including the talking snake and story of Noah. These people show, in extremis, that belief and faith can be irrational and without evidence. . . .⁴

As a “researcher” into creationism, Mr. Williams should have known better than to say that Noah built a boat to house every species (*genus*) of animal, as creationists teach that Noah took two of every kind (*family*) of animal onto the Ark (see Genesis 6:20). This article, like many others, was not about research or truth but simply about scoffing at the Christian faith. There can be no doubt that the current generation of young people in the Western world, who have been indoctrinated in a secular worldview, find the content of the Bible illogical. This is not because of logic or reason, but it is due to their secular worldview. It is important to realize that the secular worldview separates the heart and mind, whereas the Bible brings them together (Matthew 22:37). The secular worldview regularly confuses emotion with truth, and feelings with logic. The secular worldview is based upon human autonomy, the belief that man determines what is right and wrong and that morality must be judged by the values of this present age. The worldview behind secularism is evolutionary naturalism, the belief that nature is all there is, and man is just the end result of a cosmic accident. In this worldview, reality is what we make it because there is no God (or even purpose) that created it, maintains it, or declares any absolutes; therefore, we can construct the world around us through our thought, language, and autonomous human reason. The reason secular thought finds Christianity illogical is not because it is illogical or irrational (as logic and reason only make sense if the God of the Bible exists) but because of its supernatural content (i.e., supernatural creation, a talking snake, a global Flood, the virgin birth, miracles of Jesus, the Resurrection, etc.). The point of ultimate conflict between secularism and Christianity is in their basic presuppositions. The foundational presupposition for secularists is autonomous human reason as the only way to understand human opinions and actions. For Christians it is divine revelation, the truth of God’s Word, that is the foundation for all truth.

4. See James Williams, “How Better Education Has Built a More Secular Britain,” *Independent*, September 14, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/how-better-education-has-built-a-more-secular-britain-a7947091.html>.

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Nevertheless, although secularists say they reject the Bible because of its illogical claims, for some reason, they have no problem with believing the universe came from nowhere and no reason and believing in the miracle that a single cell produced all the variations of species that we now see today. Or that dinosaurs evolved into birds or even the belief that people evolved from ape-like creatures. All of these things are very illogical and are without evidence and are believed upon because of a particular worldview (i.e., evolutionary naturalism).

Sadly, it's not just unbelievers who scoff at what the Bible says about the creation of the heavens and earth in six consecutive 24-hour days, the global Flood, and the age of the earth. Today there are many influential Christian leaders who, because they have accepted the secular assumptions of naturalism and uniformitarianism, are helping to scoff (maybe unwittingly) at the fact that God created everything supernaturally in six days just a few thousand years ago. One of the leading Christian apologists in the world today, William Lane Craig, professor of philosophy at Houston Baptist University and research professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology (Biola University), is one of these people:

...I've seen a comparable statistic that says that over 50% of evangelical pastors think that the world is less than ten thousand years old. Now, when you think about that ... that is just hugely embarrassing; that over half of our ministers really believe that the universe is only around ten thousand years old. This is just scientifically nonsense, and yet this is the view that the majority of our pastors hold. It's really quite shocking when you think about it.⁵

The reason Dr. Craig finds it “embarrassing” and “shocking” that Christians would believe what the Bible says about the creation of the world in the Book of Genesis is because he has already been convinced by the arguments for millions of years of geological history and the big bang. Because of the influence of the secular view of the origins of the world, Dr. Craig has also had to alter his view on the inerrancy of Scripture (believing in limited inerrancy⁶), has rejected Adam and Eve as the first

5. See William Lane Craig, “Dr. Craig on Collins vs Dawkins on Design of Universe,” January 20, 2013, <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/media/reasonable-faith-podcast/dr.-craig-on-collins-vs-dawkins-on-design-of-universe/>.

6. See William Lane Craig, “What Price Biblical Inerrancy?” Reasonable Faith, July 1, 2007, <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/what-price-biblical-errancy>.

humans who were supernaturally created by God,⁷ believes that the Flood mentioned in Genesis 6–8 was only a local flood, is only reasonably confident of the virgin birth,⁸ and even suggests Jesus in His humanity held false beliefs (e.g., on creation and the Flood).⁹ Dr. Craig’s doubt over these vital doctrines flows out of his rejection of the sufficiency and inerrancy of Scripture in order to defend the Christian faith. Instead, he argues for what he calls “Mere Christianity.”¹⁰ The problem with “Mere Christianity” is not only does it narrowly defend the nature of the Christian worldview, but most importantly, it leaves out the gospel. A Bible that is not sufficient to define the gospel or is only limited in its inerrancy is not enough for the claim that Jesus Christ is Creator of all things, that He lived a perfect life, died a substitutionary death on the Cross, and rose again on the third day, conquering sin and death (see Hebrews 1:1–3, 4:15, 9:28; 1 Corinthians 15:4).¹¹ These are supernatural claims, and they must be grounded in supernatural revelation. We need to realize that there are consequences to ideas. Many Christians are often unaware of (or simply do not care about) the devastating consequences for synthesizing the belief in millions of years with the Bible. Christians, like Dr. Craig, who accept the idea of millions of years are unwittingly helping to erode belief in other vital doctrines of the Christian faith (i.e., inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture, historicity of Genesis 1–11, etc.).

When the Apostle Peter wrote to believers in his second letter, he was trying to stir up their minds by way of reminder so that they would be ready for the coming attacks of the scoffers of his day. Just as with every generation, Christians today again need that reminder, as there are scoffers still around! For the last two hundred years, the scoffers have been mounting a particular attack on the foundation of Scripture (Gen-

7. See W.L. Craig, “Focus on Adam and Eve,” Podcast transcript, reasonablefaith.org, September 9, 2018.

8. See Nicholas Kristof, Professor, “Was Jesus Really Born to a Virgin? I question William Lane Craig of Talbot School of Theology and Houston Baptist University about Christianity,” December 21, 2018, nytimes.com.

9. See William Lane Craig, “Should OT Difficulties Be an Obstacle to Christian Belief?” Reasonable Faith, April 16, 2017, <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/should-ot-difficulties-be-an-obstacle-to-christian-belief>.

10. The “Mere Christianity” apologetic solely defends the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith (Trinity, Deity of Christ, etc.) affirmed by all the Christian confessions, whether Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, or Coptic.

11. The words in this sentence are not original to me; I heard apologist Dr. James White say something similar to this.

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esis 1–11) and helping to erode confidence in it and other parts of the Bible connected to it. This is why, when it comes to the discussion over the supernatural creation of the world in six days and the global Flood, many people mistakenly think that the issue only involves the interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis. It is important to remember that the teachings of the New Testament are also significant to this debate. Peter's understanding of these two events is key, as it helps us see how the Apostle read Genesis. This in turn informs our understanding of the issue of the earth's age. Unfortunately, many Christians today reject the idea of the supernatural creation of the world in six days and the global Flood of Noah's day. This rejection has nothing to do with what the Bible teaches but is an implication of accepting the idea that the earth is millions of years old. The Apostle Peter clearly understood that the early chapters of Genesis refer to a supernatural creation and global Flood, and he used that understanding to counter the arguments of the scoffers in his time. These biblical events in the Book of Genesis are so important to understand, as they are foundational for:

- Understanding Scriptures, authority, clarity, and inerrancy
- Understanding God's goodness in creation
- Understanding the origin of death and suffering
- Understanding the origin and nature of sin
- Understanding the reality of salvation from sin
- Understanding God's purpose and patience in judgment
- Understanding how the global Flood is key to understanding the age of the earth
- Understanding God's roles as Judge and Saviour in redemptive history
- Understanding the final redemption of creation with the new heavens and earth

The purpose of this book is to show that while there are those, both inside and outside the Church, who choose to scoff at what the Bible says about the supernatural creation of the world (chapter 6) and the cataclysmic global Flood (chapter 7), they do so not based upon any evidence but upon philosophical (uniformitarian) presuppositions (chapters 4 and 5). Due to the effects of uniformitarian thinking in the Western world, many pastors and teachers today no longer exhort or

instruct their congregations correctly when it comes to understanding Genesis 1–11 as actual events that took place in space-time history. Because of this compromise with evolution and millions of years, many evangelical theologians today are beginning to interpret the creation and Flood accounts as myth rather than history (chapter 2) and redefine vital biblical doctrines like inerrancy so that it takes into account human error (chapter 3). God’s judgment of the whole world in the past by the Flood (and Sodom and Gomorrah) also helps us understand the purpose of this judgment and why He continues to wait patiently to once again judge the world in righteousness (chapters 8 and 9). It is also important to understand that it is not just the beginning of the Bible that is affected by compromise with evolution and millions of years, as it also affects how we view the redemption of creation with the new heavens and earth (chapter 10).

The teaching of evolution and millions of years has had, and is continuing to have, a devastating effect on the body of Christ worldwide. I hope this book shows why the events of biblical history, specifically creation and the global Flood, are important to the coherence of the whole of the narrative of the biblical narrative which culminates in the restoration of creation in the new heavens and earth. We must realize that any attempt to synthesize theistic evolution or old-earth creation with the Bible will just not work, and it only helps erode the redemptive history (creation-fall, redemption, and consummation) set forth in Scripture.

CHAPTER ONE

PETER'S SECOND EPISTLE?

2 Peter 3:1

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved (2 Peter 3:1a).

In order to have a proper understanding of any book or letter, it is helpful to know who wrote it, why they wrote it, the people they were writing to, and when it was written. This is especially important with 2 Peter, as it is one of the most-attacked books of the New Testament. The letter of 2 Peter is probably one of the most neglected and criticized in all the New Testament. It seems it is one of the least preached, studied, and referenced by Christians in the Church today. There may well be reasons for this, such as the issues to do with authorship, its date, the complex passages on the future judgment of the world, and its condemnation of false teachers (scoffers). In a post-modern world, which says there is no wrong thinking (orthodoxy or heresy), to have a book that says there is wrong thinking (false teaching) may be a reason that it does not make it first on a preacher's list for a new sermon series. However, this is the very reason 2 Peter should be top of our preaching list, as false teachers are very real, and they will wreak havoc in the life of the Church. Second Peter then is a well-timed corrective to our post-modern way of thinking.

One of the issues that may not be known to many Christians about 2 Peter is that it is one of the most-disputed books in the canon of the New Testament. This is because critical scholars would argue that Peter did not write this letter, as he had died long before it was written. These critical

scholars would claim, along with some who would consider themselves evangelical scholars, that 2 Peter is pseudonymous, written sometime in the late 1st century or early 2nd century (A.D. 80–150). A pseudonymous letter is one that has been written by a person who writes a book under a false name. These scholars would offer a number of reasons for this:

1. The supposed historical inconsistencies (i.e., the reference to Paul’s letters as Scripture).¹
2. The letter’s relationship with 1 Peter and how to resolve the language and style of 2 Peter with the New Testament portrait of the Apostle.
3. The similarities between 2 Peter and Jude indicate Peter copied from Jude.
4. Its struggle for canonical status in the Early Church.

The suggestion that 2 Peter is a pseudonymous work is a serious challenge to the authenticity of the letter. The problem with the idea that 2 Peter is pseudonymous would mean it’s a forgery and not compatible with the inspiration of Scripture. Despite these claims, the internal evidence of the letter confirms that the Apostle Peter is the author. The Lord has placed 2 Peter in the canon of the New Testament for a reason, and therefore we must pay close attention to what it teaches, as it has much relevancy for the Church today.

Authorship

The author of 2 Peter is the Apostle Peter, Simon Bar-Jonah (Matthew 16:17), the fisherman who grew up in Bethsaida (John 1:44) along the coast of the Sea of Galilee. This is the claim of the letter, that it is written by “Simeon Peter,” with the form Simeon being used — Συμεών *Symeōn* (2 Peter 1:1) — which is used of Peter only in Acts 15:14. If the author was pseudonymous, then why not use the form of address in 1 Peter or another title used for Peter in the New Testament? The claim that the letter was written by Peter also appears in 3:1: “This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved.” It’s not just that the name “Peter” appears in the letter but that it also makes positive

1. Many critical scholars assume that the New Testament canon had not developed that early, but this has been shown not to be the case. For a refutation of the late date for the New Testament canon, see Michael Kruger, *The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

claims to be the person that bears that name and recounts events that took place in Jesus' life. The author presents himself as someone who was actually an eyewitness of the event of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ (1:16–18); he mentions that the Lord had shown him that His death was close (1:14; cf. John 21:15–19) and identifies himself as a close associate of the Apostle Paul (2 Peter 3:15). Given the personal nature of these statements, it is difficult to see how a pseudepigraphal author could write such words with any authority.

Peter was called into ministry by Jesus (Mark 1:16–18) and was one of His original 12 disciples (Mark 3:13–16). A man of great boldness, courage, and self-confidence, Peter would not only physically defend Jesus (John 18:10) but also deny that he knew Him (Mark 14:66–72), though he was later restored to fellowship by Jesus after His resurrection (John 21:15–19). Peter was a key leader in the Early Church and preached the very first sermon, at Pentecost, when three thousand people were saved on that day (Acts 2:14–41). He not only continually defended the faith by boldly preaching the gospel, but he also suffered greatly for it (Acts 4:8–12, 5:17–18, 40–41, 12:1–5). As one of the leaders in the Early Church, he was, according to the Apostle Paul, called to minister to his fellow Jewish people (Galatians 2:8). Nevertheless, God also used him to minister to people from the nations (*ethnos*, Acts 10, 15:7; cf. 1 Peter 1:1).

Is 2 Peter pseudonymous? As we have already seen, the personal statements in the letter suggest not, but there are also other reasons to reject pseudonymity. Second Peter's emphasis on truth (2 Peter 1:12, 2:12) and warning about false teachers who "will exploit you with false words" (2 Peter 2:3) is hard to reconcile with someone who is writing falsely about who he is. Also, the words, concerning the transfiguration, "we were eyewitnesses" and "we heard" (2 Peter 1:16, 18), cannot be easily said by someone writing in a pseudepigraphal way. Moreover, would this be a principle early Christians would be fine with? Not at all! We need to remember that authorship was very important for early Christians.² They believed in apostolic authority. The Apostle Paul cautions against pseudonymous writing in 2 Thessalonians 2:2: ". . . not to be quickly

2. People may argue that if authorship was so important for early Christians, then why was the letter to the Hebrews accepted into the canon, as we don't know who wrote it? Even though we don't know definitively who the author of Hebrews was, we do know he was part of the apostolic circle (Hebrews 2:3, 13:23).

shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.”³ The idea that Peter did not write 2 Peter but it is still Scripture is an incoherent statement; it’s like saying falsehood is inspired.

There is another reason why 2 Peter is not pseudonymous. When books or letters are written in different time periods, they obviously reflect the time period in which they are written. For example, if Peter was written in the 2nd century, then we would expect it to address some of the key concerns of the 2nd century Church, such as: the fading hope of the *parousia* (second coming of Jesus),⁴ discussion of the institutional structure of the church (i.e., bishops, hierarchy of leadership structure), or credal language (i.e., new ways of expressing doctrine). If 2 Peter was a 2nd-century document written by a pseudonymous author, then what was his motive for writing it? Second Peter lacks the concerns of the state of the Church in the 2nd century.⁵

The difference in style of writing between 1 and 2 Peter may be explained by the use of secretaries (1 Peter 5:12). Peter may have written one letter himself and used a secretary for the other or even for both. It is also important to recognize that there are lots of problems with stylistic objections between the two letters, as they are often very subjective and overlook obvious reasons why an author would use different vocabulary and style (i.e., setting, context, and audience). The stylistic differences reflect different pastoral situations. For example, 1 Peter is written to encourage believers who are facing suffering for their faith (1 Peter 1:6, 3:14). On the other hand, 2 Peter is written to warn believers about false teachers. Furthermore, writing in his second epistle, Peter is at a different stage in his life, although only a few years apart from 1 Peter, as he knows that he is near death and so is leaving a farewell address (2 Peter 1:12–15). Even though there are differences in the style of writing, we should not overlook the many thematic links between epistles:⁶

3. The irony of this is that critical scholars argue that 2 Thessalonians is pseudonymous.

4. Peter reminds believers that the *parousia* is something that is very real and a factor in the life of the believer.

5. See Thomas Schreiner, *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Peter, Jude*, Vol. 37 (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 268–270.

6. Simon J. Kistemaker, “2 Peter,” in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*, ed. Michael J. Kruger (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 473.

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1 Peter	Theme	2 Peter
1:10–12	inspiration of the Old Testament	1:19–21
1:2	doctrine of election	1:10
1:23	doctrine of the new birth	1:4
2:11–12	need for holiness	1:5–9
3:20	Noah and his family protected	2:5
4:2–4	immorality and judgment	2:10–22
4:7–11	exhortation to Christian living	3:14–18
4:11	doxology	3:18

The question of 2 Peter's literary relationship to the letter of Jude is brought up because there are at least 19 of the 25 verses in Jude that have a parallel in 2 Peter, some of which are:

2 Peter	Jude
denying the Master, 2:1	denying the Master, v. 4
condemnation of false teachers, 2:3	condemnation of false teachers, v. 4
angels kept in darkness, 2:4	angels kept in darkness, v. 6
Sodom and Gomorrah, 2:6	Sodom and Gomorrah, v. 7
slander of celestial beings, 2:11	slander of celestial beings, v. 8
blaspheme about matters of which they are ignorant, 2:12	blaspheme all that they do not understand, v. 10
followed the way of Balaam, 2:15	Balaam's error, v. 11
blackest darkness reserved for false teachers, 2:17	blackest darkness reserved for false teachers, v. 13
scoffers in the last days, 3:3	scoffers in the last days, v. 18

How then should we understand this literary relationship? There are at least three options suggested by scholars:

1. Second Peter copied from Jude.
2. Jude copied from 2 Peter.
3. Both copied from a common source.

The first option is the most popular view among scholars (although not all believe this), but this is largely because of the assumed pseudonymity

of 2 Peter. The third option seems unnecessary because why appeal to hypothetical sources when we can appeal to Jude and 2 Peter? While there is no easy solution, as it is a complicated question, my preferred option is that Jude used 2 Peter as his source.⁷ The only clue we have to this is that verses 17–18 of Jude seem to be quoting another apostolic source: “But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, ‘In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.’” The words “the apostles . . . said to you” could well point to Jude using Peter’s writing as his source. Given that the author of 2 Peter is Peter, then there is no reason to think Jude was not dependent on Peter.⁸

Destination and Date

Because Peter was the author of the letter, it must have been written before his death, which was imminent at the time of writing (2 Peter 1:14). According to tradition, Peter was martyred in Rome under the Roman Emperor Nero, who died in A.D. 68; therefore, it must have been written before then. Also, because Peter mentions Paul’s letters (plural, 3:16), it cannot have been written until at least most of his letters were penned; therefore, it cannot come before the mid-60s. So, it was probably written somewhere around A.D. 64–68.

There is not a lot to go on for the origin of the letter, but if written by Peter, then it was probably written in Rome (cf. 1 Peter 5:13),⁹ as this is where tradition tells us he was before his death. The letter’s destination, like its origin, is hard to know, as again, there is so little information to go on. The fact that 2 Peter seems to be writing to the same people as 1 Peter gives us a clue (2 Peter 3:1). It is therefore likely that he is writing to “. . . those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. . .” (1 Peter 1:1).

Canonicity

Second Peter was not accepted into the canon of Scripture without a struggle. One of the reasons for this is that there were other letters that

7. Literary dependence does not call into question the inspiration of Scripture (see Luke 1:1–4).

8. See Simon J. Kistemaker, “Jude,” in *A Biblical – Theological Introduction to the New Testament – The Gospel Realized*, ed. Michael J. Kruger (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 510.

9. The reference to Babylon in 1 Peter suggests that Peter wrote from Rome. Babylon was a code name for Rome (the enemy of God; cf. Isaiah 13–14, 46–47; Jeremiah 50–51).

were forgeries (e.g., *The Gospel of Peter*, *The Acts of Peter*, *The Apocalypse of Peter*) around the second century claiming to be written by Peter. Again, the irony of the claim that 2 Peter is pseudonymous is that some Early Church fathers objected to its being in the canon because they did not think Peter wrote it. The Early Church did not accept books that were pseudonymous, as they cared about whether the author was really who he claimed he was. The Early Church father and historian of Christianity Eusebius (A.D. 263–339), in his compilation on Early Church history, tells his readers that although 2 Peter was disputed, it was not unknown but recognized by many (*Hist. eccl.* 3.25). Irenaeus (A.D. 130–202), bishop of Lyon, seems to have had access to 2 Peter as the wording of 3:8, “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,” is very close to what he wrote (*Haer.* 5.23.2). Other Early Church fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150–215), also appear to accept 2 Peter as Scripture (*Hist. eccl.* 6.14.1):

Eventually the church coalesced around 2 Peter, and it was received as authentic by such figures as Jerome, Athanasius, and Augustine, as well as the councils of Laodicea (ca. 360) and Carthage (ca. 397).¹⁰

Although there were doubts originally, there is no valid reason to doubt that 2 Peter is a part of the canon of Scripture.

Purpose

As has already been mentioned, 2 Peter includes a “last testament” or “farewell speech” in the form of a letter, as Peter acknowledges that his death is close at hand (2 Peter 1:12–15).¹¹ Last testaments generally include two things: 1) moral exhortation and 2) discussion on the future (eschatology). There are a number of reasons for Peter’s writing, but the main thrust that dominates throughout the letter is that of dealing with false teachers (2 Peter 1:16, 2:1–22, 3:3). Peter knew he was coming to

10. Kistemaker, “2 Peter,” 475.

11. Kistemaker notes: “Since most known examples of testamentary texts are forgeries, scholars have suggested that 2 Peter must therefore be a forgery. However, such a conclusion does not necessarily follow. Although, 2 Peter certainly shares certain features with the testamentary genre, it lacks others. For instance, it does not record a ‘heavenly journey’ of Peter — something often found in other testamentary literature. But the most important difference is that 2 Peter is in the form of a *letter* — a feature lacking in all testamentary literature up to this period.” Kistemaker, “2 Peter,” 475.

the end of his earthly life, and so he sought to warn of the danger of these false teachers and encourage believers to live holy lives (2 Peter 1:14, 3:11). These false teachers were trying to influence Peter's readers in a certain moral direction. The reason for this rejection of moral boundaries by the false teachers was the idea that the second coming (*parousia*) of Jesus in final judgment would not happen (2 Peter 3:4).

What is the philosophy behind the false teaching? Well, there is no consensus among scholars as to what the philosophy is. Some say it was Gnosticism, but if 2 Peter was written in the mid-60s, this would be too early for the emergence of Gnosticism. Others have identified Epicureanism as a possibility, but scholars have raised doubts about this as well.¹² It may be that the false teachers had “. . . a philosophy that is otherwise not attested in the New Testament or extant extrabiblical literature, similar to the ‘Colossian heresy,’ which likewise appears to have been unique and local.”¹³ Although we cannot be exactly certain as to the philosophy behind the false teachers, we do know that these false teachers are basically stating four things:

1. that there has been no divine intervention since the beginning of creation
2. that there is no reward for good or punishment for evil
3. that Jesus had not returned within the time frame of the first generation of the original Apostles
4. that Jesus would therefore not return and bring a final divine judgment

This thinking that is advocated by Peter's opponents is very similar to the things being denied in our world today by naturalistic evolutionists. The message of 2 Peter is immensely relevant to our modern world. The false teachers (scoffers) that Peter had to deal with were eschatological skeptics teaching that Christ is not coming back and that God will judge sin, which results in moral freedom (I can live how I want). False teachers are not a thing of the past; they come about at every stage of the Church. There were false teachers in the Old and New Testaments; they contin-

12. See Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude: PNTC* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 133–136.

13. Andreas J. Kostenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 96.

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ued after the Apostles died out, and they continue until this day. In light of the false teaching, Peter sums up his message to believers in the final verses:

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen (2 Peter 3:17–18).

Whereas false teachers have an external association with God (2 Peter 2:1), Peter wants his readers to continually grow in a personal knowledge of God — the Lord Jesus (2 Peter 1:1).