

The Second Epistle of Peter

Introduction

Author.

According to Church tradition the author was Peter the Apostle, however, this is much disputed :-

1. The epistle seems to rely on that of Jude, which many consider was not written until after Peter's death.
2. As pointed out by Jerome the language and style are completely different from those of the 1st epistle and so at least a second amanuensis must have been employed.
3. The effort that the author makes to identify himself with Peter – see 1:1, 'we' passage 1:13-18 and 3:1,2 and 'dropping' Paul's name in 3:15.
4. The assertion that the Apostolic age was the age of the perfect doctrine.

Historical Evidence.

This epistle is the least worthy to be included in the canon of the NT :-

- It does not appear in the Peshito Syriac version – considered to be the oldest version extant of the NT.
- It cannot be located in the writing of any of the 2nd, 3rd century fathers of the Church.
- Didymus the Blind (3rd -4th centuries) declared it spurious in his commentary on the epistle (although this assertion may be an error of the copyist).
- Clement of Alexandria (died in early 3rd century) does mention it but gave no indication of its authenticity.
- Origen (185-232) makes no mention of the epistle.
- Eusebius (c 260-340) and later writers considered it to be authentic.
- Jerome (c. 340 -420) considered it to canonical but added that many rejected it.
- It appears in the Sahidic (Coptic) version of the NT.

Internal Evidence.

There are so many coincidences between this epistle and the epistle of Jude that it is considered that one copied from the other. The favoured opinion is that Peter copied Jude and made this latter suitable for Gentile Christian reading. Both epistles warn their readers of the dangers of depraved living, false teachers, infiltrators who will 'twist' the meaning of the Scriptures for their own ends – so abusing Christian liberty and exhort them to keep the faith transmitted by the apostles and to avoid intemperate living.

Examples of coincidences :-

2 Peter 2:4-18

4 Εἰ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἀγγέλων ἀμαρτησάντων οὐκ ἐφείσατο, ἀλλὰ σειροῖς ζόφου
If for the God angels having sinned not spared, but in chains of darkness
ταρταρώσας παρέδωκεν εἰς κρίσιν τηρουμένου,

having cast to Tartarus given over into judgment being reserved,

5 καὶ ἀρχαίου κόσμου οὐκ ἐφείσατο, ἀλλὰ ὄγδοον Νῶε δικαιοσύνης κήρυκα
and ancient world not spared, but eighth Noah of righteousness a messenger
ἐφύλαξεν, κατακλυσμὸν κόσμου ἀσεβῶν ἐπάξας,
he guarded, a flood of world of ungodly having brought on,

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⁶ καὶ πόλεις Σοδόμων καὶ Γομόρρας τεφρώσας [καταστροφῇ]
and cities of Sodom and Gomorrah having turned to ashes [with an overthrow]
κατέκρινεν, ὑπόδειγμα μελλόντων ἀσεβέσιν τεθεικώς,
condemned, an example to the about to be ungodly having ordained,

⁷ καὶ δίκαιον Λώτ καταπονούμενον ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν ἀθέσμων ἐν ἀσελγείᾳ
and righteous Lot being troubled by the of the moral corruptness by shameful
ἀναστροφῆς ἐρρύσατο·
conduct he rescued;

⁸ βλέμματι γὰρ καὶ ἀκοῇ δίκαιος ἐγκατοικῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἡμέραν ἐξ ἡμέρας
in seeing for and in hearing righteous one dwelling among in the day after day
ψυχὴν δικαίαν ἀνόμοις ἔργοις ἐβασάνιζεν·
soul righteous with lawless works was tormenting;

⁹ οἶδεν κύριος εὐσεβεῖς ἐκ πειρασμοῦ ρύεσθαι, ἀδίκους δὲ εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως
has know Lord godly out of testing to deliver, unrighteous but into day of judgment
κολαζομένους τηρεῖν,
being punished to reserve,

¹⁰ μάλιστα δὲ τοὺς ὀπίσω σαρκὸς ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ μiasμοῦ πορευομένους καὶ κυριότητος
above all but the after flesh in craving of defilement following and despising
καταφρονοῦντας.
government.

Τολμηταὶ αὐθάδεις, δόξας οὐ τρέμουσιν βλασφημοῦντες,
Daring men self-willed, dignitaries not they fear blaspheming,

¹¹ ὅπου ἄγγελοι ἰσχυρῶς καὶ δυνάμει μείζονες ὄντες οὐ φέρουσιν κατ' αὐτῶν
whereas angels in strength and power greater being not do bring against them
[παρὰ κυρίῳ] βλάσφημον κρίσιν.
[before Lord] slanderous accusations.

¹² οὗτοι δὲ, ὡς ἄλογα ζῶα γεγεννημένα φυσικὰ εἰς ἄλωσιν καὶ φθορὰν
These but, as irrational animals having been born natural for catching and moral decay
ἐν οἷς ἀγνοοῦσιν βλασφημοῦντες, ἐν τῇ φθορᾷ αὐτῶν καὶ φθαρήσονται,
in which they are ignorant slandering, in the moral decay of them also they will be decayed,

¹³ ἀδικούμενοι μισθὸν ἀδικίας, ἡδονὴν ἡγούμενοι τὴν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τρυφήν, σπίλοι
unrighteousness a reward of iniquity, pleasure it accounting the in day self indulgence, spots
καὶ μῶμοι ἐν τρυφῶντες ἐν ταῖς ἀπάταις αὐτῶν συνευωχούμενοι ὑμῖν,
and blemishes delighting in the deceivings of them feasting along with you,

¹⁴ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες μεστοὺς μοιχαλίδος καὶ ἀκαταπάστους ἀμαρτίας, δελεάζοντες
eyes having full of an adulteress and unable to stop from sin, enticing
ψυχὰς ἀστηρίκτους, καρδίαν γεγυμνασμένην πλεονεξίας ἔχοντες, κατάρρας τέκνα·
souls unsteady, a heart having been trained of avarice having, of curse offspring;

¹⁵ καταλείποντες εὐθεῖαν ὁδὸν ἐπλανήθησαν, ἐξακολουθήσαντες τῇ ὁδῷ τοῦ Βαλαὰμ
forsaking a straight way they roamed off, having followed the way of the Balaam
τοῦ Βεωρ, ὃς μισθὸν ἀδικίας ἠγάπησεν,
the of Beor, who a reward unrighteousness loved,

¹⁶ ἔλεγξιν δὲ ἔσχεν ἰδίας παρανομίας· ὑποζύγιον
a rebuke and he had of own iniquities; a donkey
ἄφῶνον ἐν ἀνθρώπου φωνῇ φθεγξάμενον ἐκώλυσεν τὴν τοῦ προφήτου παραφροσίαν.
dumb in a man's voice having spoken hindered the of the prophet madness.

¹⁷ Οὗτοι εἰσιν πηγαὶ ἄνυδροι καὶ ὀμίχλαι ὑπὸ λαίλαπος ἐλαυνόμεναι, οἷς
These are springs dry and clouds by a storm having been driven, to whom
ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκότους τετήρηται.
the blackness of the darkness has been reserved.

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¹⁸ ὑπέρογκα γὰρ ματαιότητος φθειγόμενοι δελεάζουσιν ἐν ἐπιθυμίαις σαρκὸς ἀσελγείαις
Extravagant for of vanity speaking they entice in craving of flesh excesses τοὺς
ὀλίγως ἀποφεύγοντας τοὺς ἐν πλάνῃ ἀναστρεφόμενους,
the few escaping the in error living,

Jude 6-16

⁶ ἀγγέλους τε τοὺς μὴ τηρήσαντας τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχὴν ἀλλὰ ἀπολιπόντας τὸ ἴδιον
angels and the not having kept the themselves domain but having deserted the own
οἰκητήριον εἰς κρίσιν μεγάλης ἡμέρας δεσμοῖς αἰδίοις ὑπὸ ζόφον τετήρηκεν,
dwelling for judgment of great Day chains everlasting under blackness he has kept,
⁷ ὡς Σόδομα καὶ Γόμορρα καὶ αἱ περὶ αὐτὰς πόλεις τὸν ὅμοιον τρόπον τούτοις
as Sodom and Gomorra and the about them cities the like manner to these
ἐκπορνεύσασαι καὶ ἀπελθοῦσαι ὀπίσω σαρκὸς ἐτέρας, πρόκεινται δεῖγμα
having gone a whoring and having departed after flesh unnatural, are set before an example
πυρὸς αἰωνίου δίκην ὑπέχουσαι.
fire of eternal vengeance being held under.

⁸ Ὅμοίως μέντοι καὶ οὗτοι ἐνυπνιαζόμενοι σάρκα μὲν μιάνουσιν, κυριότητα δὲ ἀθετοῦσιν
Likewise indeed also these sensual dreaming flesh indeed pollute, lordship and disregard
δόξας δὲ βλασφημοῦσιν,
glories but they speak evil of,

⁹ Ὁ δὲ Μιχαὴλ ὁ ἀρχάγγελος, ὅτε τῷ διαβόλῳ διακρινόμενος διελέγετο περὶ
The but Michael the archangel, when with the Devil contending he was disputing about
τοῦ Μωϋσέως σώματος, οὐκ ἐτόλμησεν κρίσιν ἐπενεγκεῖν βλασφημίας, ἀλλὰ εἶπεν,
of the of Moses body, not he dared a judgment to cast upon railing, but he said,
Ἐπιτιμῆσαι σοι κύριος.

Rebuke you Lord.

¹⁰ οὗτοι δὲ ὅσα μὲν οὐκ οἶδασιν βλασφημοῦσιν, ὅσα δὲ φυσικῶς
These but as much as indeed not they have known they speak evil of, as much as but by nature
ὡς τὰ ἄλογα ζῶα ἐπίστανται, ἐν τούτοις φθείρονται.
as the wild animals they understand, by these things they deprave themselves.

¹¹ οὐαὶ αὐτοῖς, ὅτι τῇ ὁδῷ τοῦ Κάϊν ἐπορεύθησαν, καὶ τῇ πλάνῃ τοῦ
Woe to them, because in the way of the Cain they have been led away, and to the deceit of the
Βαλαὰμ μισθοῦ ἐξεχύθησαν, καὶ τῇ ἀντιλογίᾳ τοῦ Κόρε ἀπώλοντο.
Balaam of reward abandoned themselves to, and in the rebellion of the Korah perished.

¹² Οὗτοι εἰσιν οἱ ἐν ταῖς ἀγάπαις ὑμῶν σπιλάδες συνευχόμενοι ἀφόβως, ἑαυτοὺς
These men are the in the love-feasts of you threats feasting together audaciously, themselves
ποιμαίνοντες, νεφέλαι ἄνυδροι ὑπὸ ἀνέμων παραφερόμεναι, δένδρα
feeding, clouds without water by winds being driven about, trees late autumn
ἄκαρπα δις ἀποθανόντα ἐκριζωθέντα,
without fruit twice having died having been rooted out,

¹³ κύματα ἄγρια θαλάσσης τὰς ἑαυτῶν αἰσχύνας, ἀστέρες πλανῆται οἷς
waves violent of sea the of themselves foaming up, stars wanderers to whom
ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκότους εἰς αἰῶνα τετήρηται.
the blackness of the darkness into age has been reserved.

¹⁴ Ἐπροφήτευσεν δὲ καὶ τούτοις ἑβδομος ἀπὸ Ἀδάμ Ἐνώχ λέγων, Ἴδου ἦλθεν
Prophesied and also to these men seventh from Adam Enoch saying, Behold came
κύριος ἐν ἀγίαις μυριάσιν αὐτοῦ
Lord with saints ten thousands of him

¹⁵ ποιῆσαι κρίσιν κατὰ πάντων καὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς περὶ πάντων τῶν
to make judgment against all people and convict the impious concerning all of the

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ἔργων ἀσεβείας αὐτῶν ὧν ἠσέβησαν καὶ περὶ πάντων τῶν σκληρῶν
works of impiety of them which they committed impiously and concerning all the offensive things
ὧν ἐλάλησαν κατ' αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἀσεβεῖς.
which spoke against him sinners impious.
16 Οὗτοί εἰσιν γογγυσταὶ μεμψίμοιροι κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν πορευόμενοι,
These men are murmurers discontented according to the cravings of them pursuing,
καὶ τὸ στόμα αὐτῶν λαλεῖ ὑπέρογκα, θαυμάζοντες πρόσωπα ὠφελείας χάριν.
and the mouth of them it speaks extravagant things, admiring faces profit for sake of.

However, one factor seems to unite Peter's speeches in Acts and the two epistles – despite having been written down by three distinct authors / amanuensis they all transmit the impression of Peter's mode of speech. St. Augustine said of Paul that when his epistles were read in church it was as though he were reading them himself. Similarly when one reads the Acts speeches and the epistles, in Greek, one 'hears' Peter speaking. Further Clement of Rome (2nd half of 1st century) in his Epistle to the Corinthians says:-

“Through hospitality and godliness, Lot was saved out of Sodom, when the whole region round him was punished with fire and brimstone; the Lord thus making it manifest that he does not forsake those who trust in him; but those who turn away from him he reserves punishment and torture.”

2. Peter 2:6-9

6And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; 7And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: 8(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) 9The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

Polycarp (69-155) in his Epistle to the Philippians in similar terms to Peter :

3: 15 καὶ τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν μακροθυμίαν σωτηρίαν ἡγεῖσθε, καθὼς καὶ ὁ ἀγαπητὸς
And the of the Lord of us long suffering salvation let you consider, as also the beloved
ἡμῶν ἀδελφὸς Παῦλος κατὰ τὴν δοθείσαν αὐτῷ σοφίαν ἔγραψεν ὑμῖν,
of us brother Paul according to the having been given to him wisdom wrote to you,

Irenaeus (120 – 200) uses the word ' ἔξοδος ' in relation to the death of Peter in similar fashion to 2 Peter 1:15

15 σπουδάσω δὲ καὶ ἐκάστοτε ἔχειν ὑμᾶς μετὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ἔξοδον τὴν
I will be diligent and also always to have you after the mine exit the
τούτων μνήμην ποιῆσθαι.
of these things remembrance to cause.

15Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

So it does appear that these early Church writers could have been aware of the Epistle, and it may be that it fell out of fashion for a time.

Place and Date of Writing.

Tradition has it that the epistle was written in Rome around 64, but there is no other evidence to support this.