

As I said in my last post, I have been putting a lot of time into reading the scholarship on the Apocalypse of Peter, an early-second-century text that describes the torments of the damned in some graphic detail, and that almost came to be accepted as part of the New Testament canon. I'm puzzling long and hard over why, in the end, it did not make it in. It's not an easy question to answer, given our scant discussions of it the matter antiquity, and given the fact that, well, there are no obvious disqualifying features. But I'll get to all that later. First it's important to summarize what the text is, so we're all on the same page.

Here is how I introduce it in my textbook on the New Testament.

The last Christian apocalypse for us to consider claims to be a firsthand account of the tortures of hell and the ecstasies of heaven written in the name of Jesus' disciple Peter. As we have seen, there are a large number of early Christian pseudepigrapha written in Peter's name, one or two of which came to be included in the New Testament. Indeed, among Christian apocalypses alone we know of three that claim his name. One is preserved only in an Arabic translation; another was discovered among the Coptic writings of the Nag Hammadi library; and the third has been known by historians for centuries, although they have had it in their possession only since 1887, when it was found in the tomb of a Christian monk along with the pseudonymous *Gospel of Peter*. It is this third apocalypse that will concern us here, for it is a book that was accepted as canonical Scripture in some churches of the second and third centuries. Even when it finally came to be excluded from the canon, it continued ...

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