

## *The Composition of I Peter in Recent Study\**

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As we approach this subject we are conscious that I Peter is not the only New Testament document which has been examined with a view to discovering a possible liturgical background. 'A notable trend in recent New Testament study is the increasing interest in the liturgical backgrounds and structures that possibly lie behind the several gospels and epistles.' So writes Professor Shepherd in his brochure, *The Paschal Liturgy and the Apocalypse*, (1960).<sup>1</sup> He goes on to give instances of this tendency. For example, G. D. Kilpatrick has presented a case for the view that the Gospel of Matthew was composed primarily for public worship; and P. Carrington has analysed the second Gospel finding some parallels between the evangelical sections (*pericopae*) and the Galilean calendar of Jewish festivals and Sabbaths. O. Cullmann and A. Guilding have approached the Fourth Gospel with the same concerns in mind; the former offering a full exposition of the sacramental interest of the Gospel, and the latter with the proposal that the structure of the Gospel conforms to the liturgical pattern of the Jewish triennial lectionary.

The epistles have been subjected to a similar treatment, with a view to placing them in the cultic life of either the writers or the readers. P. Carrington calls attention to sections of the Corinthian letters which seem to show signs of a putative Christian *midrash* on the books of Exodus-Numbers. These features may be explained in the light of the synagogue lectionary from Passover to Pentecost which has influenced Paul in his handling of the themes of the letters. Thus I Corinthians, he says, is a Paschal letter; and II Corinthians is a Pentecostal letter. The interpretation of certain passages in Romans i-iii (especially the notable *crux*, iii. 25) is to be sought, according to T. W. Manson, in the fact that Paul had 'very recently experienced a Day of Atonement' when he wrote these words; and 'traces of the Jewish festival calendar' can be found throughout the Corinthian and Roman epistles.<sup>2</sup> Likewise the epistle to the Hebrews is understood as a Christian *megillah* for the Day of Atonement.

As far as individual sections of the epistles are concerned, recent study has followed up the thesis of C. H. Dodd's epoch-making book, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (1936) in some unusual ways. As Professor Lampe has recently expressed it,<sup>3</sup> on Dodd's understanding, the reader of the New Testament today is permitted to overhear the living voice of the early missionaries and teachers in their *kérygma* by which the gospel made its initial impact and the *didachē* addressed to those who had responded to the preaching. More recent works have claimed that the reader is also able to enter into the public worship of the Primitive Church, and to hear echoes of the catechetical instruction given to its converts, in the forms in which liturgy and baptismal catechesis were becoming standardized in the

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<sup>1</sup> Massey, H. Shepherd, *The Paschal Liturgy and the Apocalypse*, 1960. 27 f. who gives the references to the literature mentioned. Add A. Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship*, 1960; P. Carrington, *According to Mark*, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> T. W. Manson, *JTS* xlvi, 1945, n.s. pp. 1 ff.; cf. W. L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles*, 1939, p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> G. W. H. Lampe, *ExpT* lxxi, 12 (1960), pp. 359 ff.

Hellenistic Christian communities. A pioneer work in this field is that of A. B. Macdonald who offered a full treatment

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of the New Testament evidence in his *Christian Worship in the Primitive Church* (1934). Mention should also here be made of A. M. Hunter's book, *Paul and his Predecessors* (1940: second edition 1961), which broke new ground as far as the pre-Pauline elements of the documents of the New Testament and their setting in the cultic life of the churches were concerned.

Since then, the application of the principles of *Formgeschichte* has produced a wealth of material in the way of exposing the underlying forms of Christian hymns, creeds, confessions of faith and catecheses which lie just below the surface of the New Testament records. No Christian rite has received more attention than that of baptism. Some of the theories which detect baptismal motifs are known more for their ingenuity than for their cogency. For instance, who would dream of suggesting that, on face value, Colossians i. 15-20 or Philippians ii. 5-11 reads like a baptismal hymn? Yet this is the serious proposition offered recently by J. Jervell<sup>4</sup> and E. Käsemann.<sup>5</sup> The evidence is more convincing when Ephesians v. 14 is proposed as an early baptismal hymn.<sup>6</sup> With this background summarily sketched, we are in a better position to examine the modern views which state the liturgical origin of the New Testament document known as I Peter. There are *three possible interpretations* of the literary origins of the document.

## I. THE FORM-ANALYTICAL APPROACH

The traditional position in regard to the literary form of I Peter accepts it as a genuine epistle, written by a single individual and addressed to various Christian communities in Asia. This view does not preclude the idea that, inserted into such a document, there are fragments of hymns, creeds and confessions, or even that snatches of sermonic material may have been embodied in the epistolary framework of the letter. The purpose of these insertions varies according to the immediate concern of the writer; and should there prove to be such material in I Peter it would not be a unique case, as it seems fairly clear that Paul has incorporated previously existing fragments into his letters. We have already mentioned Ephesians v. 14. Philippians ii. 5-11 may be added as an even more illustrious example of the same tendency to utilize hymnic or credal compositions in the course of the letter-writing processes of the New Testament writers; and it is generally conceded that the Apocalypse embodies the hymns

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<sup>4</sup> J. Jervell, *Imago Dei: Gen. i. 26 f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis and in den paulinischen Briefen* (1960), pp. 197 ff.

<sup>5</sup> E. Käsemann, art. 'Fine urchristliche Tauf liturgie' in *Festschrift für R. Bultmann* (1949), pp. 133-148. This article is now available in *Käsemann's Exegetische Versuche and Besinnungen, erster Band* (1960), pp. 34 ff.

<sup>6</sup> On Ephesians v. 14 cf. A. M. Hunter, *Paul and his Predecessors* (1940), pp. 44 ff. (1961 ed., pp. 38 ff.). There are later discussions in B. Noack, 'Das Zitat in Eph. 5, 14', *Studia Theologica*, v. (1951), pp. 52-64; and A. Strobel, *Untersuchungen zum eschatologischen Verzögerungsproblem* (1961) p. 246.

The suggestion that Ephesians v. 14 is a fragment of a very old Christian hymn goes back to Theodoret (*P.G.* ed. Migne 82: 545) cf. J. Dölger, *Sol Salutis* (1925), pp. 365 ff.

I Timothy iii. 16 has also been taken as a baptismal hymn: so J. Schmitt, *Jésus ressuscité dans la prédication apostolique* (1949) p. 86.

of the Church militant and projects them on to the canvas of the worship of the Church triumphant.<sup>6a</sup>

As an illustration of this sort of thing in I Peter we may look at ii. 4-8, which E. G. Selwyn has examined in detail in one of the celebrated Notes appended to his commentary.<sup>7</sup> The conclusion of this study is that underlying these verses is an early Christian hymn or rhythmical prayer which is common to both Peter and Paul (in Rom. ix. 33). The result which Selwyn's analysis produces is a hymn of seven lines, covering verses 6-8 of the chapter.<sup>8</sup> In this resultant analysis he differs from H. Windisch's arrangement which produces, from verses 1-10, 'a hymn of the holy destiny of Christianity, in four strophes, 1-3, 4 f., 6-8, and 9 f.'<sup>9</sup> Selwyn justly criticizes this on the ground that the term 'hymn' is being too widely used, for there is nothing hymnic or lyrical about verses 4 and 5.

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A strong reason for believing that a Christian adaptation of certain Old Testament passages has produced a cultic psalm is the presence of the phrase in verse 6: περιέχει ἐν γραφῇ which Selwyn takes to mean 'in writing', comparing Ecclesiasticus xlv. 5. This could very well be taken to mean 'as it is contained in the hymn'. Then the introductory formula would be equivalent to that in Ephesians v. 14, and possibly in Philippians ii. 5, if E. Lohmeyer's interpretation of ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ as 'a sort of formula of citation' has any plausibility about it.<sup>10</sup>

The detecting of hymnic portions like this is a noteworthy feature of Hans Windisch's commentary in the Lietzmann-Bornkamm series. He classifies the following in this way:

I. i. 3-12 is described as an 'Eingangshymnus', made up of 5 seven or five line strophes, and joined together by relative pronouns. The likelihood of the hypothesis that the letter opens with a lengthy prayer, introduced by the solemn blessing-after the manner of the Jewish *berākōt*<sup>11</sup>—of verse 3 is becoming increasingly acceptable in view of those researches which show that the letters of the apostles were intended to be read in public worship.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, we are told this explicitly in Colossians iv. 16, I Thessalonians v. 27; and quite possibly the ending of I Corinthians is cast in a liturgical mould as preparation for an ensuing Eucharistic

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<sup>6a</sup> This conclusion about the Apocalypse is widely shared. Cf. J. Leipoldt, *Der Gottesdienst* (1937) pp. 59-61; Dölger, *op. cit.*, p. 127; G. Delling, *Der Gottesdienst im Neuen Testament* (1952), pp. 52-54; and most recently, E. Lohse in his revision of the Commentary in *NTD* (1960), pp. 48 f.

<sup>7</sup> E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (1947), pp. 268 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. G. B. Caird, *The Apostolic Age* (1955), pp. 114 ff.

<sup>9</sup> H. Windisch, *Die katholischen Briefe* in *Handb. z. N.T.* 15 (3rd ed.), p. 58.

<sup>10</sup> E. Lohmeyer, *Kyrios Jesus: Eine Untersuchung zu Phil. 2, 5-11* (1928), p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Delling, *op. cit.*, p. 58: 'Der Kontext des 1 Ptr. beginnt mit einer gottesdienstgemässen Berakha'.

<sup>12</sup> We may refer to one extensive treatment of this theme available in English: L. G. Champion, *Benedictions and Doxologies in the Epistles of Paul*, (Heidelberg Diss. 1934, Published privately). Relevant material will be found in E. Lohmeyer, *Der Brief an die Kolosser* (1930) (section iii), and his commentary on Rev. xxii. 17-20, both in the Meyer series.

Delling, *op. cit.*, p. 55, writes on the connection between 'den Briefanfängen and den Einleitungsformeln des Gottesdienstes' with the worshipful forms leaving a deposit of content in the Letters. He quotes O. Roller, *Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe* (1933) p. 533, n. 399; O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (ET 1953) 24; and E. Lohmeyer, *ZNTW* xxvi (1927), p. 162.

service, as Lietzmann holds.<sup>13</sup> There are counterparts of the opening of our epistle in Ephesians i. 3 ff. and Colossians i. 3 ff. The reference to Ephesians i has been thoroughly investigated by J. Coutts in a recent contribution to *New Testament Studies* (1957), and a liturgical and baptismal origin traced for both epistolary forms.<sup>14</sup>

II. ii. 21-25 is designated by Windisch 'the second Christ-hymn'. In view of this we can only suppose that, with a cross reference to i. 18-21, Windisch wishes to include the earlier passage as a hymn addressed to Christ. There is little to support this suggestion if we are to interpret the term 'hymn' strictly. The language admittedly is cultic and exalted; and the setting of verse 20 as a 'two-member Christ-text' is just possible; but it would be precarious to say that it owed its origin to a separate hymn, of which it is a postulated fragment.

It is at this juncture that we turn to consider the discussion of 'Confessional and hymnic fragments in I Peter' by Rudolf Bultmann, in his essay in *Coniectanea Neotestamentica*.<sup>15</sup> He builds on the foundation laid by Windisch, accepting his proposal that three parts of the letter may be isolated as *Christuslieder*, namely, i. 18-21, ii. 21-25 and iii. 18-22, which Windisch regards as baptismal hymn which is a hymn to Christ in four strophes—the exhortation in iii. 13-17 being continued in iv. 1; although perhaps not all of iii. 18 ff. belongs to the hymn. No formal analysis is given by Windisch and it is not certain whether Windisch means that Peter was quoting from a hymn (in iii. 18-22) familiar in the Church or whether he was led by certain associations to break into verse-form himself *currente calamo*. Bultmann prefers to hold that the author had before him an actual quotation in the passages under consideration. At all events, in iii. 18-22, it is clear that the whole passage is not a quotation. The writer has commented on an existing text, whether a hymn or a creed. This feature which Bultmann detects is the novel contribution his essay makes. Not only does he wish to isolate certain parts of the letter and identify them as

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hymnic or confessional; he holds that the author of the document known as I Peter had before him a series of credal or hymnlike forms on which he has commented by means of certain glosses. The rôle of the author, as far as certain passages of the letter are concerned, is that of *glossator*. Furthermore, Bultmann believes that two facts emerge from a *Formanalyse* of the verses.

First, there is, he contends, objective evidence for the view that the author had before him a text which he modified to suit his purpose. An example of Bultmann's approach and treatment may be seen in the way he handles ii. 21-24. He states clearly that there are four reasons why this pericope is a citation from an already existing text:<sup>16</sup>

a. The use of the first and second persons of the verbs in alternating fashion. Mark the changes from 'ye' to 'we' and back to 'ye'.

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<sup>13</sup> H. Lietzmann, *Messe and Herrenmahl* (1926), p. 229; cf. J. A. T. Robinson, *JTS* iv (1953) n.s. pp. 38-41; and on the other side C. F. D. Moule, *NTS* vi, 4 (1960), pp. 307 ff. and the same author's *Worship in the New Testament* (1961), pp. 43 f.

<sup>14</sup> J. Coutts, *NTS* iii, 2 (1957), pp. 115-27.

<sup>15</sup> R. Bultmann, 'Bekenntnis- and Liedfragmente im ersten Petrusbrief' in *Coniectanea Neotestamentica in honorem A. Fridrichsen*, xi (1947), pp. 1-14.

<sup>16</sup> *Loc. cit.*, pp. 12 f.

b. The application of verse 25 is a very general one and does not take up the thought of verse 21. The suggestion that Bultmann offers is that the writer had his thoughts led on to a new tack by the quotation he had before him. But this, we may say, is an unnecessary complication. We may more easily explain the sequence of thought as naturally developing from one stage to another. There is no necessity to charge the author with a hypothetical digression if he has in mind a logical development from one point to another in his treatment of his theme.

c. The phrase ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν and the meaning given to the sufferings of Christ would have no significance for the slaves who are being exhorted.

d. Bultmann is persuaded by the general liturgical style which is the relative style. The use of the relative pronouns ('who', found three times; 'of whom' found once in these verses) is a characteristic sign of liturgy. Secondly, Bultmann is sure that the fragments under review contain a perfectly symmetrical form. His treatment of iii. 18 ff. is an instance of this endeavour to locate a balanced, metrically perfect piece which has been worked over by the author of I Peter and its fair shape rudely spoiled by the addition and alteration of extraneous words. His treatment of verse 18 will indicate his form-critical method. This was originally a rhythmical four-line composition made up of the scheme, A-B: A-B. To achieve this perfect symmetry he makes the following emendations of the text:

a. The ὅτι may be introductory; and probably the relative ὃς stood in the *Urschrift*, as in Philippians ii. 6 and I Timothy iii. 16 which both begin with a relative pronoun as confessional pieces. This is a trait of liturgical forms as Norden has shown.<sup>17</sup>

b. This is held to be confirmed by the use of participles—another tell-tale mark of liturgical—in the following verses: thus θανατωθεῖς, ζωοποιηθεῖς, πορευθεῖς, ὑποταγέντων.

c. The word ἄπαξ does belong to the original. It has no meaning in the parenthetic context; therefore it must have belonged to the original hymn. But δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων is probably an addition by the writer designed to give a closer connection between the sentence and its context. Christians are suffering on account of their righteousness, and they are reminded of the fact. If, however, we omit the phrase, then we have verse 18a as a two-part half-verse and this matches the perfect balance of the whole in the form, A-B: A-B. Thus—

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A (ὃς) ἔπαθεν ἄπαξ περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν,  
B ἵνα ἡμᾶς προσαγάγη τῷ θεῷ.  
A θανατωθεῖς μὲν σαρκί,  
B ζωοποιηθεῖς δὲ πνεύματι.

Furthermore, this arrangement is antithetical after the pattern which we can trace in other early Christian formulas and best represented by the symbols σάρξ: πνεῦμα.<sup>18</sup> On verses 20 ff. Bultmann says that this section has no connection with the foregoing.<sup>19</sup> The sentences are

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<sup>17</sup> E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (1913), pp. 168 ff., 201-207, 383 ff. He sets down I Pet. iii. 18 ff. on p. 387.

<sup>18</sup> On this confessional antithesis, cf. E. Schweizer, *Spirit of God* (1961), p. 57; and his *Erniedrigung and Erhöhung* (1955), p. 104.

<sup>19</sup> This is held in spite of the clear arguments of B. Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits and Christian Baptism* (1946), pp. 126 ff. espec. pp. 135, 136 and pp. 245 ff.

pure prose. The piece is too didactic to fit in with the liturgical form of the original. Therefore, verse 20 must be treated as an explanatory gloss added to explain τοῖς... πνεύμασιν of the preceding verse. Verse 21 is a further learned note describing the water of the Flood as a type of Christian baptism. The participle πορευθείς in verse 19 must be deleted. It has slipped in and been duplicated in verse 19 on the mistaken idea that two journeys of Christ were required; one to Hades and the second to Heaven in verse 22. The author of I Peter, Bultmann alleges, has misunderstood this *ascensus*—preaching to souls held captive by cosmocrats in the firmament, and turned it into a reference to Christ's descent into Hades.<sup>20</sup> In verse 22 the liturgical style does not permit the phrase ὅς ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ θεοῦ to come before the participle. So the order should be reversed. This will give -or be made to give !-a regular sequence: Death—Resurrection—Ascension. The last named is in two stages. First, a journey through the firmament and an encounter with the hostile spirits, according to the pattern of the Gnostic myth which lies in the background here; and then an exaltation to the right hand of God. This requires, presumably on metrical grounds, a second verb which Bultmann is not loth to supply, and he boldly adds ἐκάθισεν ('He sat'). This analysis and critical surgery leaves Bultmann with what he seeks: a perfectly formed basic document which may have had an introductory formula. Cullmann describes these verses as a baptismal creed, composed of vv. 18, 19, 21C and 22, i.e. dealing with Christ's death, descent into Hades, resurrection, ascent, *sessio ad dextram*, in the middle of which the author of I Peter has inserted a brief instruction on baptism (vv. 20, 21b).<sup>21</sup> Bultmann takes exception to this designation because he is persuaded that verse 20 which refers to baptism is an interpolation. It may still, however, be a creed and therefore will need some such phrase πιστεύω εἰς / πιστεύομεν or ὁμολογοῦμαι ἐν, an innovation to the text which Bultmann takes in his stride, having practised himself with verse 22. If the section is a hymn, then it is certainly a fragment and is incomplete. In either case i. 20 would go well with iii. 18 ff. but ii. 21-24 which is another Christ-hymn could scarcely fit into the same pattern and go together with the other sections. (*Pace* the argument of Reicke, that the sections are alike.)<sup>22</sup> They are diverse in style. 'The broad strokes with colours reminiscent of Isaiah liii do not go with the brief, lapidary expressions of the second passage (in iii. 18 ff.), and how could these verses fit in with the order of the other?'<sup>23</sup>

The reconstructed whole looks like this, therefore:

(? I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,  
Foreknown before the world's foundation,  
But manifested at the end of the times:

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Who suffered once for sins,  
To bring us to God:

Put to death in the flesh,  
But made alive in the spirit,  
in which He also preached to the imprisoned spirits;  
(But) having gone into heaven He sat at the right hand of God,

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<sup>20</sup> Schweizer, *op. cit.*, p. 102 and *Erniedrigung*, p. 105; but rejected by Reicke, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>21</sup> O. Cullmann, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (ET 1959), p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> Reicke, *op. cit.*, pp. 220 ff.

<sup>23</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 14.

Angels and authorities and powers under His control.

What are we to make of this form-critical experiment? As far as one can discover, there has been little serious attempt to pronounce upon Bultmann's reconstruction. Preisker, as we shall see later, accepts his conclusions, but without any discussion: similarly R. Leivestad, who regards Bultmann's resultant analysis as 'quite plausible'; and E. Schweizer.<sup>24</sup> The main writers to have spoken against Bultmann here are J. Jeremias<sup>25</sup> and E. Lohse,<sup>26</sup> and both accuse him of the same thing. The price he pays for his attempt to secure a completely balanced and nicely arranged text is too high. The alterations he makes are too unrestrained and unwarranted, especially when he tears asunder verses 19 and 20 ff. Even this recasting of the material fails to produce the desiderated result of a completely symmetrical arrangement as we may see by noting the inordinate length of verse 22. His use of the Gnostic redemption myth to explain verses 20 ff. is unrequired; and so the summary judgment is 'nicht überzeugend' (Lohse) and his joining together of i. 20 and iii. 18 ff. is pronounced by Jeremias 'äusserst unwahrscheinlich'; C. E. B. Cranfield says exactly the same.<sup>27</sup>

Little other assessment of this essay in Form analysis has been forthcoming. Somewhat more convincing is the recent proposal of S. E. Johnson<sup>28</sup> to regard ii. 18-22 as organically connected with the opening verses of chapter iv. On this, the text is a good example of chiasmus on a big scale as the argument proceeds from the example of Christ's passion and resurrection in iii. 18, 19 to a statement of what happened in the early days of human history as a type of present salvation. Then the author returns, at iii. 20b, point by point, through the antitype of Christian baptism and concludes with a statement of what Christ has accomplished by His death and resurrection in iv. 6. In the pattern which Johnson sets out all this appears very neat and tidy—perhaps too much so—but at least it has the merit which Bultmann's *schema* lacked, viz., that it leaves the text unmanipulated in the interests of the theory. The interrelation of *kērygma* and ethical appeal (in iii. 18 ff. and iv. 1 f.) is certainly an interesting point and the parallel with Philippians ii. 5 ff. and ii. 14-16 should be noticed.

## II. I PETER AS A BAPTISMAL DOCUMENT

A second theory of the composition of I Peter is that which sees it as a baptismal document. A clear statement of this view is that given by Windisch: 'Der Hauptteil des Briefs I. 3-4. 12 stellt eine Taufansprache dar.'<sup>29</sup> The connection of the letter with the rite of baptism is a universally attested fact, especially in the light of the section in iii. 18 ff. which has just been examined.

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J. N. D. Kelly speaks for many New Testament and liturgical scholars when he comments on this text: it 'reads like a part-paraphrase and part-quotation of an instruction preparatory to baptism. The insertion in verses 20 ff. of a short account of the meaning of the sacrament bears this out.'<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> R. Leivestad, *Christ the Conqueror*, 1954, p. 177 note: E. Schweizer, *Erniedrigung*, p. 105.

<sup>25</sup> J. Jeremias, *ZNTW* xlii (1949) pp. 195 ff.

<sup>26</sup> E. Lohse, *ZNTW* xlv (1954), pp. 86-89.

<sup>27</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *ExpT* lxix (1958), p. 369.

<sup>28</sup> S. E. Johnson, *JBL* lxxix (March 1960), pp. 48-51.

<sup>29</sup> Windisch, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>30</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (1950), p. 18.

But two different attitudes to this general fact may be taken. With such writers as E. G. Selwyn, E. Lohse, C. F. D. Moule and W. Bieder,<sup>31</sup> the references to the rite are regarded as incidental, as in many other places in the New Testament especially in the Pauline Corpus. The letter is essentially a message of encouragement, written to harassed or persecuted believers, as v. 12 makes plain. The allusions to baptism are more or less extraneous to the main drift of the epistle, which is the right name for the treatise.

In the last forty years a novel hypothesis has appeared on the scene. Its first proponents were R. Perdelwitz in 1911<sup>32</sup> and W. Bornemann in 1919.<sup>33</sup> The latter revived Harnack's theory that the document is not an epistle at all. The main body of the writing, i. 3-v. 11 is an address based on Psalm xxxiv delivered by the aged Silvanus. It was revised for publication, copied out and circulated in the churches of the Asian region with the appended note διὰ Σιλουανοῦ. This proposition is fanciful, and well deserves the stricture passed on it by F. W. Beare who is usually not averse to anything novel in matters of New Testament criticism.<sup>34</sup> The argument of Perdelwitz needs closer inspection, especially as it was accepted *con amore* by B. H. Streeter who added some more speculation on his own account.<sup>35</sup>

The linch-pin of this theory is the supposition that the letter has a clear break at iv. 11. No one has marshalled the arguments for this idea more clearly than Perdelwitz. He notes the following:<sup>36</sup>

*a.* In the descriptions which are given about the sufferings of Christians, in iv. 12 they are described as 'gegenwärtig'; whereas in such places in the earlier part of the letter (i. 6, iii. 13, 14, 17) they are 'hypothetisch'. Verses iii. 17 and iv. 19 show the contrast.

*b.* Similarly with the concept of joy. In i. 6, 8 the joy is offered as a present reality; but in iv. 12 ff. it lies in the future.

*c.* The place of the 'Amen' in iv. i 1 is not unexpected when we note that the connection between iv. 11 and iv. 12 is 'matt and nachschleppend'; and there is a complete change of situation between what is future and present.

*d.* On the assumption of I Peter containing two separate parts we can explain v. 12 δι' ὀλίγων ἔγραψα. The phrase could hardly be used of the complete whole, some 1675 words!

So Perdelwitz reaches his conclusion: I Peter was originally in two parts. A further confirmation of this hypothesis, which later scholars have drawn attention to, is the fact that i. 3-iv. 11 has no genuinely epistolary characteristics. It lacks reference to places and people. The style is polished and balanced, with long measured sentences; the impressive opening in i. 3 ff. is matched by an equally impressive conclusion with doxology and Amen. On the other hand, the section iv. 12—end 'breathes an entirely different atmosphere. The style is direct and simple. There are no carefully constructed periods or nicely balanced rhythms and

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<sup>31</sup> E. G. Selwyn, *op. cit.*; E. Lohse, *loc. cit.*; C. F. D. Moule, *Worship in the New Testament*, (1961), p. 58; W. Bieder, *Grund und Kraft der Mission nach dem ersten Petrusbrief* (1950) (not available to me).

<sup>32</sup> R. Perdelwitz, *Die Mysterienreligion und das Problem des I Petrusbriefes* (1911).

<sup>33</sup> W. Bornemann, *ZNTW* xix (1919), pp. 143 ff.

<sup>34</sup> F. W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter* (2nd ed. 1958), p. 188.

<sup>35</sup> B. H. Streeter, *The Primitive Church* (1929), pp. 122 ff.

<sup>36</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 12 ff.

antitheses... it has the quick and nervous language of a letter written in haste and under tension.<sup>37</sup>

When we come to enquire as to the *Sitz im Leben* of the earlier homiletical

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document the most plausible answer would be to place it in a baptismal setting. There are many signs, as Perdelwitz observed, which point to the address as having been given to a group of recently baptized neophytes. The converts who are in mind are those who are living in the first flush of their Christian experience. Thus their joy is still undaunted and exuberant (i. 8); and ii. 1 ff. is a clear description of the first stages of their faith and incorporation into Christ and His people. 'As a scarlet thread the particle "now" runs through all the statements of the author', says Perdelwitz.<sup>38</sup> And this is an important factor in the interpreting of iii. 21: 'Baptism *now* saves you.' One of the most impressive arguments for the origin of I Peter as a baptismal sermon is the evidence of the use of catechetical forms which are discernible in the earlier part of the epistle. This feature was detected as long ago as 1903 by A. Seeberg who, in his *Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit*, sought to demonstrate that the author of I Peter knew a *Glaubensformel* which contained all the common elements of the story of Christ which we find in the rest of the New Testament.<sup>39</sup> Later writers like P. Carrington and E. G. Selwyn have applied the same principles of comparative study to the ethical sections of the epistles, and have gone a long way to showing that the New Testament letters contain catechesis, i.e. moral instruction for catechumens used by the Christian missionaries when they were instructing converts for baptism. If we add in here the fact that in the later Church the creed was solemnly recited and 'handed over' at baptism, there is much compelling evidence to endorse the conviction that, if i. 3-iv. 11 is sermonic in literary form, it finds its place most naturally as an address delivered at a baptismal service. On this assumption many of the puzzling allusions are explained and some of the key-terms, like those in iii. 18 ff., are elucidated.<sup>40</sup>

Is this as far as we can go in our placing of the document in the worshipping life of the early communities of believers? I think it is. But we are now to examine two closely allied views which take the discussion of the *Sitz im Leben* considerably farther.

### III. I PETER AS A BAPTISMAL LITURGY

These are the views of H. Preisker and F. L. Cross. We bracket them together because of the way in which the second has sprung out of the first; but in the final issue we may ask whether they are mutually exclusive.

H. Preisker's revision of the commentary by Windisch is notable in this way. On his understanding, I Peter is not simply the report of a baptismal service or the incorporating of baptismal material into a genuinely epistolary form, but the transcript of an actual baptismal service which is in progress at the time of the author's writing. It is an eye-witness' account of the rite in all its several stages; and embodies the various contributions made by those who are

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<sup>37</sup> Beare, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> A. Seeberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-96.

<sup>40</sup> Details of the so-called 'baptismal setting' of I Peter will be found in F. L. Cross, *I Peter—Paschal Liturgy* (1954) pp. 28 ff.

taking part. Thus he gives it the name of 'the oldest document of a primitive Christian divine service'.<sup>41</sup> The first question which comes to mind in reading this startling description: 'However did such a service-report come to get mixed up, without an explanation, with a document which purports to be a letter sent to churches in Asia and written in the name of a single individual?' is still unanswered when we have read all that Preisker and his confreres have told us in

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defence of their theory. This surely is the gaping hole in the side of the hypothesis under review.

The contents of Preisker's analysis are fairly well-known; and have been summarized in such places as the writings of F. W. Beare, F. L. Cross, C. E. B. Cranfield, and A. F. Walls.<sup>42</sup> Let us therefore mention only those points on which criticism has fastened. One of the main planks on the platform which he erects is the discrimination he notices in verb tenses. In i. 3-21 the thought of sanctification is future, but at i. 22 f. it is taken as something fully achieved. Therefore, he boldly concludes, 'Zwischen i. 21 and i. 22 ist der Taufakt erfolgt':<sup>43</sup> but not reported openly because it belongs to the *disciplina arcana* of the Church. This looks suspiciously like a 'get-out' to avoid an obvious criticism of the theory! Even so, the text hardly supports the theory. The present participles must be taken as anticipating the future privileges of the baptizands who are being addressed; but as Beare says, 'it seems quite arbitrary to neglect the aorist ἀναγεννσήας (i. 3) and to treat the present participle (in i. 5) as a future'.<sup>44</sup> The rigid division of chapter i into the two tenses of future (looking forward to baptismal act) and past (in recognition of what it has accomplished) will not hold. The tense of i. 3 is past; and there are ethical exhortations in i. 22.

Another supporting beam in Preisker's reconstruction is his detection of 'stylistic peculiarities'. He writes: The document contains 'separate, self-contained sections, laid side by side, without transitions, each with its own stylistic peculiarities'.<sup>45</sup> In this way he is able to report, as though he himself had been present at the baptism, who it is who says what. Characters flit across the stage in a bewildering array. When the neophytes have been baptized they take a brief vow (ἐπευχή) in i. 22-25; but the three strophe hymn of ii. 1-10 is sung by a Spirit-possessed individual; whereas a 'new Preacher stands up in the community' at ii. 11 and delivers a piece of exhortation which culminates in a hymn to Christ (ii. 21-24.). It is here that Preisker accepts without demur the conclusion of Bultmann that the author of this hymn has taken over a previously existing hymn. But this raises a difficulty, namely, are we to think of the hymn as coming spontaneously to the lips of the congregation (as is presumably the case in the record of I Cor. xiv) or as their reciting with adaptation something which was traditionally known in the Church?<sup>46</sup> At iii. 13 the style changes and another figure—an *Apokalyptiker*—comes forward to give an eschatological word as his contribution

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<sup>41</sup> Preisker, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>42</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *Torch Commentary on I Peter* (1960), p. 11; A. F. Walls in *the Tyndale Commentary on I Peter* (1959), pp. 59 f. We may add C. F. D. Moule, *NTS* iii. (1956), pp. 2 ff., who outlines Preisker's case with a view to criticizing it; and mention should be made of the informative essay by S. I. Buse in *Christian Baptism*, ed. A. Gilmore (1959), pp. 17, ff.

<sup>43</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>44</sup> Beare, *op. cit.*, p. 198. Scriptural reff. added.

<sup>45</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>46</sup> See Beare, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

to the proceedings. This extends to iv. 7a. The remaining verses to iv. 11 are the final prayer for the baptism-service. To account for the rest of the document Preisker holds that, at that point, the whole congregation is brought in for a concluding service which includes an eschatological address (iv. 12-19), and an exhortation to the elders and young people, and finally the church is treated to a piece of Mahnrede from the Presbyter, rounded off by a concluding blessing from another Presbyter who, says Beare rather drily, has evidently been sitting in the corner all the time. But, perhaps, if we may advance a speculation in this field where it is free for all, he is the transcriber of the proceedings and the ghost-writer of i. 3-iv. 11. The argument from linguistic style is notoriously uncertain, as C. F. D. Moule has reminded us in another connection;<sup>47</sup> and the one place in his discussion where Preisker brings forward some objective criteria (in his attempt, on

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stylistic grounds, to posit a 'common authorship' of ii. 11-iii. 12 and the *paraklēsis* of v. 1-9) is far from persuasive. That there are differences of style in the entire letter is one thing and this we may freely grant; but it is quite another thing to say that we may assign the various strands of the document to putative speakers (with Preisker) or allocate them to different provenances (so Lohse proposes).<sup>48</sup> With Beare it is better to say that in the author of I Peter we have a writer who evinces 'the variations of a good prose stylist'; and at the same time we would give due weight to the possibility that he has incorporated into his treatise fragments of hymns and confessions which may have been part of the common property of the cultus of the early Churches. But anything resembling a patchwork, as Preisker and Lohse suggest, seems to be imposing a theory on the evidence. This conclusion, which is that offered by F. W. Beare, best explains the literary phenomena of I Peter. He writes: 'Rather than the direct use of fragments of a liturgy, the evidence seems to me to indicate a sermon developed along lines suggested by the structure of the liturgy, perhaps with an occasional outright quotation of familiar credal formulas, but as a rule freely expressed in the writer's own words and style.'<sup>49</sup>

In this conclusion we have rather prejudged the issue as far as Cross's modification of Preisker's arrangement is concerned. It is time now to consider the booklet, *I Peter—A Paschal Liturgy*, written in 1954 by Professor Cross. He depends much on the hypothesis of his predecessor and seeks ostensibly to improve on Preisker in one important respect. Accepting that the document, i. 3-iv. 11 is a baptismal liturgy reporting an actual baptism in progress, he believes that we can more precisely 'date' the baptism as the celebrant's part in the Easter baptismal service. The new features which he discovers are suppositions on the basis laid by the German commentator. He finds his chief support in the notion that the key to much of the imagery of the document is the Easter celebration of the primitive Church. He traces many Easter (or Paschal) motifs in the language of the letter. The juxtaposition of joy and suffering is traced to the association of Good Friday and Easter Day: an assumption that has been challenged by W. Nauck in an article on 'Joy in Suffering' in *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (1955). Nauck shows that the co-existence of joy and tribulation is grounded in traditional Judaic material.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (1957), pp. 61 f.

<sup>48</sup> E. Lohse, *loc. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>49</sup> Beare, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

<sup>50</sup> W. Nauck, *ZNTW* xlvi (1955), pp. 68-80.

The typology of the Exodus pervades much of the text: for example, in 1.18 f., as indeed in many of the allusions in the section, i. 3-21, the background is clearly that of the Passover. Similarly, in ii. 9 f. the language is borrowed directly from Exodus xix. 4 f. which describes the giving of the Torah by which the Exodus deliverance was completed. The 'Paschal theology', as Cross calls it,<sup>51</sup> is summarized in the exordium of verses 3-12 which embodies the whole meaning of the Easter message. This assumption is obviously fundamental to the Cross hypothesis; and it ought to be noted that this basic supposition of the Paschal background of the letter has been assailed by T. C. G. Thornton in a recent issue of *Journal of Theological Studies*.<sup>52</sup>

By a skilful blending of the conclusions which he has either reached or adopted Cross goes on to state his final verdict on I Peter. It is a liturgical document, as far as i. 3-iv. 11 is concerned. He confesses to an embarrassment when he is faced with the remainder of the letter from iv. 12 to the end.<sup>53</sup> He

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feels that Preisker's suggestion that it contains an address to the whole company then assembled is lacking in conviction, but he has nothing to offer to fill this lacuna. Here we may state a methodological principle: *any literary theory which is left with iv. 12 to v. 14 on its hands as a kind of inconvenient surd is ipso facto under a cloud of suspicion.*

To return to Cross's analysis. Where he goes beyond Preisker is in his regarding this liturgical text as embodying the part played by the officiating minister (Cross calls him the Bishop, looking forward to Hippolytus's *Apostolic Tradition*, worked over by Dom Gregory Dix) in the Easter baptismal service, 'the most solemn act of the liturgical worship in the year'. This is then no ordinary baptism, like that of an Ethiopian eunuch, a Saul of Tarsus who was baptized by the 'layman' Ananias, or a Godfearer Cornelius: it is an annual event, with the rubrics and formularies of the later centuries retrojected into the Apostolic age.

As far as the structure of the formula is concerned the following alterations are to be made to Preisker's analysis if we adopt Cross's revision and new setting. It will be noted that, in the main, these modifications are in the form of attributing an author to the principal sections of the document; and it is the role of the Celebrant which dominates the scene in Cross's reconstruction. First, the 'Eingangshymnus' is the Bishop's solemn opening prayer as the rite begins. This description he shares in common with Preisker, except of course that the German did not attribute the prayer to an episcopal source. A modern bishop however, whose authority in this matter is more than usual, J. W. C. Wand, comments that it 'is not a very normal sort of prayer'.<sup>54</sup> At this point Cross leaves the earlier analysis and goes on an independent way by describing what follows as the formal charge given to the candidates for baptism by the ministrant. He joins Preisker in placing the baptismal act between i. 21 and 22 and proceeds to place in the Bishop's mouth a homily in which are set forth the fundamental aspects of the sacramental life of the Church in baptism, the Eucharist (at ii. 3, 5,

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<sup>51</sup> Cross, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>52</sup> T. C. G. Thornton, *JTS* xii, 1 (1961), pp. 14 ff.

<sup>53</sup> Cross, *op. cit.*, p. 40. S. I. Buse points out this difficulty as 'a serious flaw in the argument' of Preisker-Cross. *Loc. cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>54</sup> J. W. C. Wand, 'The Lessons of First Peter', *Interpretation*, ix (1955) p. 389.

following Lohmeyer), sanctification and the priestly ministry;<sup>55</sup> and ii. 11-iv. 11 deal with the various parts of the moralia of the Christian life, especially with the matters of domestic and social responsibility and the believers' vocation to share the suffering of Christ in mystical union with Him. The doxology at iv. 11 lines up with the earlier structural arrangement; but otherwise the two analyses have gone their own ways. Thus it is apparent that Cross has virtually fathered a new hypothesis altogether. He places all the addresses in one mouth and ignores many of the hymns which earlier scholars had confidently classified. The result is that the 'baptismal liturgy' theory has gone—if by that we mean the record of a service in progress; and instead we have, as Wand puts it, 'not so much the liturgy itself as the Bishop's running commentary on the liturgy'.<sup>56</sup> It is a serious weakness in the baptismal liturgy theory that its advocates are thus divided in the way in which the text is apportioned to the different participants in the cultic rite. This divergence does not inspire confidence in the theory as a whole; and both Preisker's and Cross's arrangement have to meet the objection voiced by Moule. It is difficult to imagine, he comments, 'how a liturgy-homily, shorn of its rubrics... but with its changing tenses and broken sequences all retained, could have been hastily dressed up as a letter and sent off (without a word of explanation)

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to Christians who had not witnessed its original setting'.<sup>57</sup> This point is made in the course of Moule's thorough examination of the Preisker-Cross hypothesis. The upshot of this examination is that alternative explanations can be provided for all the evidence which they bring forward in support. And this lends extra weight to the observation made above. The final judgment, therefore, on this stimulating proposal must be made in terms of 'not proven'.<sup>58</sup>

Now to a summing up by way of some conclusions.

(i) The epistolary form of I Peter must be our fixed starting point; and only the strongest reasons will compel us to regard it as other than what it purports to be: an apostolic letter.

(ii) There is ample precedent in the *Corpus Paulinum* for the belief that a genuine letter may embody sections of catechetical and cultic material. After the researches of Seeberg, Carrington and Selwyn in regard to the former, and Hunter, Cullmann and Lohmeyer in respect of the latter, this fact that the New Testament writers took over and incorporated into their literature pieces of paraenesis, psalms and hymns of Christian worship, and rudimentary confessions of faith may be taken as demonstrated. We have noted that the rite of initiation in baptism was exactly the occasion when much of this material was used and transmitted to the

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<sup>55</sup> But see Wand's comment: 'It must be admitted that the sacraments are rather hard to find... If they are to offer "spiritual sacrifices", it is not, so far as I can see in this context, anything sacramental.' *Loc. cit.*, pp. 397, 398.

<sup>56</sup> Wand, *loc. cit.*, p. 388.

<sup>57</sup> Moule, *NTS* art. cit., p. 4; cf. his later book *Worship in the New Testament* (1961), p. 58.

<sup>58</sup> Further criticisms and rejections of Preisker's view are: F. Hauck, in a review in *ThL* (1952), Col. 35. He criticizes Preisker's arrangement of I Peter into a series of small *Redestücke* as being made hardly on objective grounds. This is the outstanding complaint made against him. Added to this is the fact that we have no criterion of a first century baptismal service by which to test the theory.

E. Käsemann, *Verkündigung and Forschung* (1952), p. 192. (not available to me).

G. Dellling, *op. cit.*, p. 59, who, while recognizing that the letter contains matters of practical paraenesis, denies that there is evidence for the construction of early Christian worship.

W. C. van Unnik, *ExpT* lxxviii, 3 (1956), pp. 79 f.

convert.<sup>59</sup> In this way the presence of liturgical terms, the exalted, hieratic language and the lyrical turns of expression in I Peter may be accounted for,<sup>60</sup> although we should not go as far as M.-E. Boismard<sup>61</sup> in his complicated analysis of what he regards as (a) pre-baptismal homily (i. 6-9, 13-21); (b) a baptismal hymn (i. 3-5; iii. 8-12; and V. 5b-9); and post-baptismal instruction (i. 22-ii. 20). The need to call in a redactor to iron out some of the uneven parts is not surprising; but quite arbitrary.

Rather, let us be content to say that the connection with the baptismal rite is evident; and to explain much of the liturgical data as the borrowing of material from such a service, although the borrowing may be unconscious and indirect and has passed through the alembic of the author's mind who has made it thereby his very own.

(iii) On this basis it may be possible to avoid giving too prominent a place to those verses which seem to require the letter's partitioning. If liturgical forms are incorporated, some of the cogency of the view that there is a break at iv. 11 is destroyed, especially if Nauck has proved his point that there is no need to think of a change in the type of distress which had come upon the church in the two parts of the epistle.<sup>62</sup> The case for the letter's unity is still arguable.<sup>63</sup>

(iv) In fine, the issue of the literary origins of I Peter is stated in G. W. H. Lampe's words: 'that I Peter makes much use of baptismal material and is concerned with baptism is generally agreed. It remains an open question whether it is a genuine epistle, or whether it is indeed a liturgy embodied in a kind of letter.'<sup>64</sup> The evidence offered is such that the second alternative is not imperatively required; and the peculiarities of the letter may be explained by the utilizing of a special source. I Peter stands as a genuine letter but as including two baptismal homilies, one delivered before and the other after the rite.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. Reicke, *op. cit.*, pp. 190 ff.; E. Stauffer, *New Testament Theology* (ET 1955) pp. 236 f.

<sup>60</sup> Objecting to Jülicher's definition of I Peter as 'ein Abklatsch paulinischer Arbeiten', Reicke concludes: 'We are led instead to a common, parenetic, and catechistic oral basis by fixed writing, probably rooted in the practical traditions of the public Christian worship'. *Op. cit.*, p. 229.

<sup>61</sup> M.-E. Boismard, *RB* Ixiii-lxiv (1956-1957) with conclusions in the 1957 article, cols. 180-183; now available under the title, *Quatre Hymnes baptismales dans la première épître de Pierre* (1961), which includes additional material.

<sup>62</sup> Nauck, *loc. cit.* p. 80.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. van Unnik, *loc. cit.*, p. 80; A. M. Hunter, *Introducing New Testament Theology* (1957), p. 112 note, and F. V. Filson, *Interpretation*, ix (1955), p. 403.

<sup>64</sup> Lampe, *loc. cit.*, p. 361.

<sup>65</sup> So Buse, *loc. cit.*, p. 175; and similarly Cranfield, *op. cit.*, p. 13; G. B. Caird, *op. cit.*, p. 177; and Leivestad, *op. cit.*, p. 177 note.

One of the most recent discussions by A. Hamman, *La Pierre, I; Le Nouveau Testament* (1959), after surveying the Epistle's 'cadre liturgique' concludes: 'Tous ces indices convergents permettent de conclure que l'épître pétrinienne a, du moins en partie, l'allure d'une homélie baptismale' (p. 234).