

"Peter as Initiated Interpreter of the Oracles of God: A New Interpretation of 2 Peter 1:16-21"

ABSTRACT: 2 Peter 1:16-21 is difficult. It is not clear how the transfiguration (1:16-18) is meant to be related to the reliability of the prophetic word (vv. 19-21), and it is unclear what either has to do with demonstrating the reality of Christ's *parousia* (1:16). Furthermore, there are puzzles in details. Most translations would suggest that "Peter" calls himself an "eye-witness" of the transfiguration, but in fact he calls them "initiates" (*epoptae*) of Christ's majesty. Indeed the entire transfiguration is presented as a mystery initiation.

This has long been noted by scholars familiar with mystery terminology, but the purpose of this choice of terms has remained unclear.

Similar difficulties are to be found in the discussion of the divine inspiration of the prophetic word. In particular, a long tradition of understanding 2 Pet 1:20 as directed against "private interpretation"—a problematic translation—has misled interpreters. The most straightforward rendering of the (admittedly awkward) Greek is "no prophecy of scripture is a matter of its own interpretation"; this suggests an altogether different hermeneutical claim, namely that because it is spoken directly by God (1:21), it cannot be read in light of itself in the way other texts can. 3

The coherence of the entire paragraph emerges when one sees that Peter's experience of the Transfiguration is presented in the terms of a religious *initiation*, an initiation that demonstrates Peter's *capacity for spiritual perception* and thereby qualifies him to interpret the fully inspired oracles of God.

aune prophecy 63 initiation prior to see god

Use of μυστήριον in rabbinic texts (e.g. of the "mystery" of circumcision), see Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 119n19.

Seneca Epist. 90.29: "Such are wisdom's rites of initiation, by means of which is unlocked, not a village shrine, but the vast temple of all the gods—the universe itself, those true apparitions and true aspects she offers to the gaze of our mind. For the vision of our eyes is too dull for sights so great."

Hipp. Com.Dan. 2.2.4: " Thus scripture signifies that nobody will be capable of expounding the heavenly mysteries unless he does his interpreting as a partaker of the holy spirit."

Outline:

I. Introduction to the Challenges of Interpreting 2 Peter 1:16-21

II. Making Sense of 1:16-18: It's clear that Peter is being put forth as an initiate into the highest grade of the mysteries

terminology of epopteia (of Eleusis and also Samothrace)¹

transferred senses: employed of philosophy [first with Plato²], sexuality, etc.

What benefits would be expected to accrue?

1. better afterlife (Plutarch, *Cons.* 10 (611D).; Nock, *Essays* 1.296-305 (surveying ancient views of afterlife, in particular for mysteries); 2.616, 795 (burial privileges for bacchic initiates), 2.797

Isocrates, *Pan.* 28-29;

Good hope (Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States* 3.126; Nilsson, *Die Eleusinische Religion, Die Antike*, 18, 1942 pp. 218-221)

a. Eleusinian blessings: *Hymn to Demeter* 480-83. Riedweg 53n118, 27n111

b. *Diog. Laert.* 6:4³

1.a: generally improved

Cicero,⁴

Aelius Aristides, Panathenaicus 238-239*, Isocrates, *Pan.* 28-31

So of the rites of Samothrace: "The claim is also made that men who have taken part in the mysteries become more pious and more just and better in every respect than they were before." Diodorus Siculus 5.49.6 (LCL) (Nock, *Essays* 1.54 cites this)

Aristides [See Clinton]

This is germane since Peter has just spoken of his death

¹ Samothrace was treated as similar to Eleusis (mentioned together by Galen; said to be second in honor only to Eleusis: Aristides *Or* 13 * (Nock *Essays* 1.54).

In any event, mixing terminology from disparate mysteries when using this language in a transferred sense has precedent in Plato, *Phaed.*, who uses Bacchic-Dionysiac and then Eleusinian elements (see Riedweg, 44-45).

Furthermore, other mysteries were perceived through the lens of Eleusis—or even took on Eleusinian forms. Cf. Nock 2.797: "The Eleusinian pattern was so deeply rooted in literature and tradition that those who 'saw' the annual Finding of Osiris may often have treated it as being something of this sort; ..." Julian the Apostate describes Cybele and Attis as mysteria and "treats them as parallel to the Eleusinian mysteries (Nock *Essays* 2.797).

Alexander of Abonutichus has a mystery with "Eleusinian attributes" 2.798).

² Riedweg, 69: sees plato as roughly the time of the spread of this metaphor) et passim.

Plato: playfully in Euthydemus, serious in Symposium, and the Seventh Letter (341C), with Nock 1.466). This well enough known that Aristophanes could spoof it in the Clouds.

³ DL 6:4: "Once when someone was being initiated into the Orphic mysteries, the priest said that those who receive these initiations will partake of many good things in Hades. 'Why then,' said Diogenes, 'don't you die?'" (Μυούμενος ποτε τὰ Ὀρφικά, τοῦ ἱερέως εἰπόντος ὅτι οἱ ταῦτα μυούμενοι πολλῶν ἐν ᾗδου ἀγαθῶν μετίσχουσι, "τί οὐν," ἔφη, "οὐκ ἀποθνήσκεις;")

⁴ Cicero, *Legibus* 2.14.36: By means of the mystery rites, "we have been brought out of our barbarous and savage mode of life and educated and refined to a state of civilization; and as the rites are called 'initiations,' so in very truth we have learned from them the beginnings of life, and have gained the power not only to live happily, but also to die with a better hope." [*neque solum cum laetitia vivendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi*]

2. unification with the deity (nock "closeness" 2.797)

- a. I don't see this in the sources the way some folks do
- b. but relevant to 2 Pet 1:4

"take on the character and qualities of the divine, so far as man may participate in God" (*Phaedr.* 253A)

On seeing and becoming divine: 1 John 3:2;

Apuleius perhaps deified preceding his vision, "it is *qua* divine that he sees the gods of the upper and of the lower world" (Essays 1.93n187);

Hermetic saying (Nock 1.93): "Thou has made us, while still in the body, divine by the sight of thyself."; cf. 2 cor 3.18

3. how much *learning* takes place? did he become smarter when

enlightened?

- a. not to learn, but to experience (Aristotle, *Frag.* 15 Rose)⁵

a.1. Burkert, *Myst.* 46: there is 'not the slightest evidence to support Reitzenstein's assertion that mystery communities were held together by fixed forms of a Credo."

- b. but it was adduced as showing religious adeptness

- c. there was at least *ieroi logoi* (but these *weren't* cryptic)⁶ ; cf.

Guthrie, syas they're like bible

synthemata included something (Plutarch, *Consol. ad ux.* 10)

- d. there are random other indication of the insight that results⁷

⁵ καθάπερ Ἀριστοτέλης ἀξιοῖ τοὺς τελουμένους οὐ μαθεῖν τι δεῖν ἀλλὰ παθεῖν καὶ διατεθῆναι, δηλονότι γενομένους ἐπιτηδεύουσ (Fr. 15 Rose). "Those who are being initiated into the mysteries are not to be expected to learn anything but to undergo something, to be treated in a certain way, that is to say to become adapted." (trans. Betegh *Derveni*, 362-63).

From his lost "On Prayer."

Clement of Alexandria suggests that learning takes place in the lesser mysteries: "After that [purification] there are the lesser mysteries which have the function of teaching, and preparation for what is to come; and then the greater mysteries which concern everything, where there is no longer learning, but contemplation [ἐποπτεύειν] and consideration of nature and of realities."

οὐκ ἀπεικότως ἄρα καὶ τῶν μυστηρίων τῶν παρ' Ἑλλήσιν ἄρχει (1.) μὲν τὰ καθάρσια, καθάπερ καὶ τοῖς βαρβάροις τὸ λουτρόν. μετὰ ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶ τὰ μικρὰ μυστήρια διδασκαλίας τινὰ ὑπόθεσιν ἔχοντα καὶ προπαρασκευῆς τῶν μελλόντων, τὰ δὲ μεγάλα περὶ τῶν συμπάντων, οὐ μανθάνειν <οὐκ>έτι ὑπολείπεται, ἐποπτεύειν δὲ καὶ περινοεῖν τὴν τε φύσιν καὶ τὰ πράγματα

(*Strom.* 5.70.7-71.1, ANF) This suggests that the "learning" takes places before the final initiation. Cf. Bowden, *Mystery Cults*, 44.

⁶ Plato, 201e8-209e4: "teaching with myth"

Ptolemy IV wanted to gather the *ieroi logoi* of hierophants (222-204 BCE); Nock *Essays* 1.60.

⁷ Goodenough 1935: 292-93: Clement of Alexandria speaks of "initiates" (οἱ μύστα) who claimed to know that Moses was given the name "Melchi" in heaven after his assumption" (*Strom.* 1.153.1) [could "my beloved" be the 'name' given to Jesus which Peter, as initiate, knows?] Ethiopian story: the initiates get past the myth and into something deeper and truer. Interesting that myth shows up!

e. Aristophanes, *Ran.* 153-61 (initiates [μεμνημένοι] in underworld will tell Dionysus where he needs to go.

f. Nock 2.796n23: "There was of course something to learn: cf. Pindar, Fr. 137⁸ S., Apul. *Apol.* 55 (*studio veri*) and Origen's metaphorical use"

g. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.23 [*] οἱ μύσται say that Moses was named "Melchi" after his ascension. [Nock 1.466n35: several examples of their having unique knowledge—sort of related to interpretation!]

g.1. The author of the Derveni Papyrus seems dismayed at the failure of initiates to have truly learned from their experience of "seeing the holy things" and "hearing τὰ λεγόμενα" (Betegh, pg. 42; his column 20).

h. L. R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907) 3.130-31

i. Perhaps Apuleius, *Met.* 11.23: *Ecce tibi rettuli, quae, quamvis audita, ignores tamen necesse est*, "Behold, I have told you things which perforce you may not know, although you have heard them" (LCL) But it seems like it could mean, "I have told you things about which you must remain ignorant even though you have heard them"—that is, although you hear the words, as an uninitiated you cannot comprehend them.

4. What is shown about the initiate? what capacities has he for future learning/instruction?

For initiation/mysteries and textual interpretation:

Philo, *Leg.* 3.219, "initiates" can hear Philo's interpretation of the Law.

Philo, *Cher.* 48-49: does just what I propose 2 Pet 1.16-21 is doing, only more explicitly: Philo urges men, should they encounter an initiated man (τινι τῶν τετελεσμένων), to "cling" to him, so that he would impart the mystery he knows (*Cher.* 48). As it so happens, Philo has himself been initiated by Moses into the "great mysteries" (μυηθεὶς τὰ μεγάλα μυστήρια). Will this pertain to interpretation? Indeed. Philo proceeds to say that as initiate, he recognized Jeremiah as another initiate—and indeed as a worthy hierophant (μύστης ἐστὶν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἱεροφάντης ἰκανός). He goes on to say that Jeremiah 3:4 is the result of Jeremiah being inspired and speaking an oracle from the presence of God (ὁ δ' ἄτε τὰ πολλὰ ἐνθουσιῶν χρησμόν τινα ἐξεῖπεν ἐκ προσώπου τοῦ θεοῦ), namely, Jer 3:4, which Philo, as fellow initiate, is capable of interpreting along philosophical lines. (So Moses: *Gig* 54: Moses is initiated in the most sacred rites in God's presence, rendering him not merely initiate but hierophant and teacher [τελούμενος

Hippolytus, In Eccl. (H. Achelis, *Hippolyt's kleinere exegetische und homiletische Schriften [Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 1.2. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897]: 179): οἷον οἱ μοχθοῦντες „εὐφραίνονται τῇ καρδίᾳ“ οὐ μόνον δι' ὀράσεων καὶ ἀποκαλύψεων, ἀλλὰ καὶ δι' ἀγγέλων θεοῦ μνούμενοι τὰ τε ἑαυτοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ συμβήσεσθαι μέλλοντα.*

⁸ Pindar, *Frag.* 137 Snell=Clem. *Strom.* 3.3.17.2.3): ὄλβιος ὅστις ἰδὼν κεῖν' εἶσ' ὑπὸ χθόν'· οἶδε μὲν βίου τελευτάν, οἶδεν δὲ διόσδοτον ἀρχάν.

"Happy is he who has seen them before departing under the earth. He knows the end of life; he knows its god-given beginning." (my trans.)

τὰς ἱερωτάτας τελετάς. γίνεται δὲ οὐ μόνον μύστης, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἱεροφάντης ὀργίων καὶ διδάσκαλος θείων]

Somn. 2.78; ἀλλ' ὃ γε τῶν ἐνυπνίων μύστης ὁμοῦ καὶ μυσταγωγὸς θαρρεῖ λέγειν, "The man who is initiate and mystagogue of dreams is bold" to explain them, though they be cryptic to others.

[for a rhetorical deprecation of μύσται, cf. Philo, *Legat.* 56: Gaius, mocking the ability of mere mortals to comprehend his genius: they dare to play hierophant and to conduct the mysteries of the affairs of state when they are scarcely enrolled among the initiates" (my trans.): τολμῶσι δὲ ὑπ' ἀναισχύντου θράσους ἱεροφαντεῖν καὶ τελεῖν τὰ ἡγεμονικὰ μόλις ἂν ἐν μύσταις ἀναγραφέντες:

In short: Philo applies the mystery language not to rituals but to "intimations of divine truth, of precious nuances in the interpreting of revelation" (Nock 2.802). Via the use of this metaphor in philosophy, Philo "found the metaphor ready-made, in a context free from any serious taint of idolatry" (ibid.).

[Philo and mystery terminology: Riedweg, and Naomi G. Cohen, "Mystery Terminology in Philo" 173-87.

Also Herzer,
N]

For Jewish scripture as something sacred and not to be disclosed to the "profane," cf. *Letter of Aristeas* 313-15: the only reason Theopompus was driven mad when he had been about to use a bad version of the scripture, he is later told in a dream that it was because he "had inquisitively [cf. *curiositas* in Apuleius] sought to give the sacred to the profane" (τὰ θεῖα βούλεται περιεργασάμενος εἰς κοινοῦς ἀνθρώπους ἐκφέρειν).

III. Interpreting 1:19-21

IV. Second-Century reflections on the obscurity of prophetic passages about Christ's parousia

V. Concluding observations

I. Introduction to the Challenges of Interpreting 2 Peter 1:16-21

In 1:16-21, we find Peter insisting that his message of Christ's "power and coming" was not merely a clever myth (1:16). He defends his proclamation with two arguments. First he claims that that the apostles were themselves with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (1:16-18), and second he states that biblical prophecy is valid or sure, and that it comes entirely from God (1:19-21). Before delving into the various details of this difficult pericope, I would like to draw our attention to some of the curiosities that this talk will try to resolve. Even from my most rudimentary summary, I suspect a few problems will have presented themselves—problems that I hope in this talk to address.

The fundamental puzzle lies in trying to follow the author's train of thought. Why, to support the reality of Christ's "power and coming," would he appeal to the Transfiguration? Wouldn't it have been more obvious to appeal to the Resurrection or Ascension as ground for believing that Christ would return? Or better still, simply to state that "we ourselves heard Jesus Christ declare that he would 'come again'"? The problem of the choice of the Transfiguration becomes all the more acute when we note that the author wants to show that his message is not *mythical*. To critical ears, few events from Jesus' life sounded more mythical than the transfiguration. Indeed, Origen knows that Celsus thinks that the event will sound like pure "fiction, differing not at all from myths" (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.77).

Secondly: Why does the author bother to introduce to topic of the "prophetic word"? How does the inspiration of scriptural prophecy relate to the veracity of Peter's proclamation? And what is meant by the grammatically obscure *πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται*? Does this pertain to the generation of prophetic utterances or their interpretation? In either case, the author's objective remains somewhat mysterious, for little else is said in 2 Peter about either scripture *or* interpretation, and no prophetic passage about Christ's *parousia* is ever adduced!

Finally, it is unclear how the experience of the Transfiguration is meant to relate to the "prophetic word." Much depends on how we translate *ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον*. Is the comparative *βεβαιότερον* supposed to have some relationship to the transfiguration? Has the revelation of Christ's glory on the mountain made the *prophetic word* "more secure" than it was before? Or is the prophetic word something "even more secure" than Peter's eyewitness testimony to Christ's glorious identity? Perhaps the unstated premise is that the prophetic word points to Christ's "power and coming," and thus, to claim that the prophetic word is truly from God is to add a second plank in the defense: Christ's coming is no myth, but is based (1) on personally witnessed glory and (2) on *truly* divine prophecies (not human concoctions). If the author intended this, it is odd that he did not cite any such prophecies (in striking contrast to second-century apologists, and to 1 Peter) or even discuss the prophetic word further.

II. Making Sense of 1:16-18; or, Why appeal to the Transfiguration, and why describe it this way?

There have been three main ways of understanding the logic of 1:16-18, which will be briefly addressed.

1. It has been argued that with *τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν*, the author refers not to Christ's *second* coming but to the incarnation, that is, to his "powerful coming" among humankind. This has the obvious advantage of explaining the relevance of introducing the Transfiguration, an event that the author would feel demonstrated that Christ was more than a mere human being—an event that showed that his life was truly a "powerful arrival" of the divine.

This is entirely defensible from a linguistic point of view, for the word *parousia* was used often in the second century for Christ's incarnation⁹; and, in fact, authors such as Justin and Irenaeus are careful to disambiguate when they wish to speak of his "second coming" (e.g. Ignatius, *Phil.* 9.2; Justin *I Apol.* 52.3; *Kerygma Petri*¹⁰; Irenaeus, *Adv.* 3.21.1-3; 4.22.2, etc.; Muratorian Frag. 19 (*geminus adventus*); *Acta Thaddaei* 1.

The chief obstacle to this proposal is that the opponents' doubts, so far as they can be gleaned from 2 Peter 3, seem directed at eschatology (cf. especially 3:4: scoffers come saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?"; cf. 3:12),¹¹ not the incarnation.

2. A second line of interpretation argues that the author is actually claiming to have been an eye-witness not to the transfiguration but to the *resurrection*. If the episode on the "holy mountain" was originally a resurrection account that was later inserted into the earthly life of Jesus in the synoptic Gospels, it is possible that this account still circulated independently as a *resurrection* account, and was understood and used this way by 2 Peter. An appeal to the resurrection would seem germane to the argument in 2 Pet 1:16-18: Christ's (second) "coming" is no myth, for we saw him gloriously alive after his death. And if he has risen, he can come again."

There are certainly features of the transfiguration that have appeared to suggest it was originally an account of the resurrection: the language of Jesus "receiving honor and glory," of "appearing" (ὄφθη) and being "transformed" (μεταμορφόω, cf. Mark 16:12), indeed, of receiving sonship (Rom 1:4; Acts 13:33), the mountain (Matt 28:16-20; Acts 1:12); Jesus as luminous (Acts 26:13; Rev 1:13-16; Epistle of Peter to Philip 134.9-13). And the *Apocalypse of Peter* applies the events of the transfiguration to a resurrected Jesus.

There isn't time to address all of these points now, but there are pretty strong arguments against reading the transfiguration as a misplaced resurrection account. Moreover, there is little interest in 2 Peter in Christ's resurrection.¹² And since 2 Peter seems to be dependent on the synoptic accounts of the transfiguration (debated, but likely), it must know these events as something from Christ's life.

3. A third line of interpretation has argued that Peter appeals to the transfiguration not because it confirms the *parousia* but because it confirms the apostles,¹³ who (happen to)

⁹ Ignatius, *Phil.* 9.2: τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ σωτῆρος, κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τὸ πάθος αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν; Irenaeus, *Demonstratio* 99: "And others again reject the *coming* of the Son of God and the dispensation of His *incarnation*, which the *apostles delivered* and the *prophets declared beforehand* [cf. 2 Pet 1:16-21]."

¹⁰ Cambe Frag 9= Clement, *Strom.* 6.15.128.1 (see further discussion below, pg. XXX).

¹¹ If not the coming of the "Day of God," the notion of a conflagration was also accused of being "old wives' tales" (aniles fabulas), Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 11.2.

¹² Grundmann 84 (on Christology in general): "Jeder Hinweis auf Kreuz und Auferstehung fehlt in der Christologie des 2. Petrusbriefes."

¹³ it may be doubted whether 2 Peter intended to portray a limited number of apostles. The tend be treated as a college. The superiority of the apostles to the addressees is so great that the author

preach the *parousia*.¹⁴ Some have even suspected that the author chose this particular event—rather than appealing to Peter's general intimacy with Jesus—because it was linked not to Christ in the flesh, but to the glorified Christ, and thus satisfied the demands of a Pauline Christology.¹⁵ In other words, the author has chosen an authenticating event that allows Paul's sole claim to authority—a vision of the resurrected Christ—to retain its value (2 Pet 3:15-16). We might contrast the way some Anti-Pauline literature—such as the Pseudo-Clementines—defend Peter's *superiority* to Paul by referring to the time Jesus spent with Peter (*Homilies* 19.2).

I believe that this third option—that the Transfiguration is cited because of what it says about Peter—can be refined and augmented in a way that will ultimately help us make sense not only of why the author appeals to this event, but also explain why he describes it as he does, and make sense of the subsequent passage about the divine origin of scripture. **Namely, I want to argue that the author intends to depict Peter's experience of the Transfiguration as a religious *initiation* into the mysteries, an initiation that demonstrates Peter's *capacity for spiritual perception* and thereby qualifies him to interpret the otherwise cryptic oracles¹⁶ of God.**

Now, the most basic evidence for the claim that the experience of the Transfiguration is being presented as an initiation is the use of the *ἐπόπται*. Almost every translation of 1:16—ancient and modern—renders the expression *ἐπόπται* as though it were simply *αὐτόπται*, "eye-witnesses." Such a rendering is understandable, both because *ἐπόπται* *does* mean "seeing" something, but also because such a common way to defend against the charge of reporting something mythical was to appeal to first-hand experience. The superiority of autopsy over information gained at second hand had become commonplace

must make a note insisting on the equality of the faith of all (1:2)—thereby subtly reinscribing the difference he claims to deny!

¹⁴ Smith 1985:82-83; Bigg, 266; Williams, "Transfiguration," 641-42; Pseudo-Hilary [McNally 108B:101]: *Magnos duos ad se convocat testes, Iacobum et Iohannem, ad confirmationem sermonis epistolae*, "He summons to himself two great witnesses, James and John, to confirm the message of the epistle."

¹⁵ Farkasfalvy, Dennis. "The Ecclesial Setting of Pseudepigraphy in Second Peter and its Role in the Formation of the Canon." *Second Century* 5 (1985-86): 3-29.

Farmer, William R. "Some Critical Reflections on Second Peter. A Response to a Paper on Second Peter by Denis Farkasfalvy." *Second Century* 5 (1985): 30-46.

Central mystery of 2 Peter: why the focus on the transfiguration. Answer is in Farkasfalvy's n. 19: "Peter's superiority to Paul as a witness of the earthly Jesus is not linked to 'Christ in the flesh' but the glorified Christ, a statement that can satisfy the demands of a Paulinist Christology." (31). This fits with the Matthean emphasis in 16:17: "flesh and blood" did not reveal it (note the Pauline ring, Gal 1:16; 1 Cor 15:50)—in other words, Matthew is already addressing this issue.

¹⁶ An author such as Minucius Felix, who seems almost chary of mentioning the Bible (cf. Clarke, *Octavius*, 24-26, 347), couches his few references to scripture in such terms (*Octavius* 34:5 *de divinis praedicationibus prophetarum*; 35.1: *de oraculis prophetarum*; cf. Arnobius 3.12). For such expressions applied to Jewish scripture, cf. Rom 3:2; Acts 7:38; Heb 5:12; 1 Pet 4:11; *1 Clem.* 13.4; 19.1; 53.1; Justin, *Apol.* 32.1; Iren. Adv. 1.8.1 (*Test. Benj.* 9.1 of the "oracles" of Enoch).

to historiography as well to several other fields of knowledge.¹⁷ Indeed, we almost *expect* Peter to appeal to his first-hand experience, and translations confirm us in this hunch.

But the word ἐπόπται is completely unexampled in claims to have seen something first hand. When claiming eye-witness status, the more common word is αὐτόπτης.¹⁸

What, then, is the significance of choosing ἐπόπτης instead?¹⁹ The word ἐπόπτης was used chiefly in two ways. It was often used as to describe deities as "all-seeing." It is used this way in pagan, Jewish, and Christian literature and inscriptions.

But when not applied to a deity, the word was the *technical term* for "those who have been initiated into the highest grade of the mysteries."²⁰ The Suida gives us a definition ἐπόπται: οἱ τὰ μυστήρια παραλαμβάνοντες λέγονται ἐν ἀρχῇ μὲν μύσται, μετὰ δὲ ἐνιαυτὸν ἐπόπται καὶ ἔφοροι, "Those who partake of the mysteries are first called *mystae*, and then after a year are called *epoptae* ["observers"] and *ephoroi* ["guardians"]."

It is possible that at Samothrace, a μυστής could become an εποπτής on the same day (see discussin in Clinton, Stages, 65-

Although the details of what happened in mystery initiation are of course well-kept secrets, nonetheless many ancient references make it clear that the rites of several

¹⁷ Defending the superiority of first-hand investigation: Herodotus 1.8.2; 2.29.1*; Thucydides 1.22.2-3 (allowing the fallibility of eyewitnesses); Polybius, 3.4.13; 4.2.2-3; 20.12.8; Lucian, *De Dea Syria* 1; *Hist. conscri.* 47; Cf. *True History* 1.3, where Lucian mocks Ctesias, "who wrote a great deal about India ... that he had never seen himself nor heard from anyone else with a reputation for truthfulness" (LCL). On the variety of ancient views of autopsy in validating history, see John Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 63-86; Hartog, *Mirror of Herodotus*, 261-73. As Loveday Alexander has shown, the language of autopsy was not *limited* to history ("The Preface to Acts and the Historians," in B. Witherington III, ed. *History, Literature and Society in the Book of Acts* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 1996], 122-25),* but its place in history writing cannot be denied.

¹⁸ Luke 1:2; Josephus, *Ant* 18.342; 19.125; *Apion* 1.55; Polyb. 3.4.13; Lucian, *De Dea Syria* 1; Eusebius, *HE* 3.39.2 (denying that Papias was a "hearer or eye-witness" of the apostles). This is the normal Greek expression for being an eyewitness. Cf. Eusebius *HE* 7.25: Eusebius notes that the author of Revelation "did not say that he was, as is frequently said in the Gospel, the disciple loved by the lord, nor he which leaned back on His breast, nor the brother of James, nor the eye-witness and hearer of the Lord [οὐδὲ τὸν αὐτόπτην καὶ αὐτήκοον τοῦ κυρίου γενόμενον]" (Oulton, LCL). For more on αὐτόπτης, see *TDNT* 5.373.

¹⁹ It should be noted that this word does constitute one of the relatively few points of contact with the vocabulary of 1 Peter (1 Pet 2:12: ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἐποπτεύοντες; 1 Pet 3:2: ἐποπτεύσαντες τὴν ἐν φόβῳ ἀγνήν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν), although the sense of these participles in 1 Peter is obviously different from the use of the noun here in 2 Peter (so Fascher, *RAC* 5.975; Clemen, *Einfluss*, 74).

²⁰ BGAD s.v. 2.

mysteries took place in stages.²¹ Terminology is not perfectly consistent.²² But it is clear that in the mysteries of Eleusis and Samothrace, initiation took place in two stages, rendering people first *μυσται* and then *εποπται*.

, the first stage of initiation was called *μύησις*, and rendered one a *μύστης*. Derived from *μύω*, "to close [the eyes or mouth]," this word points to the mode of initiation, for "evidence from ... mystery cults shows that it was the practice for an initiate to be blinded; the term [*μύστης*] expresses the opposite of *epoptes* (*ἐπόπτης*, "viewer"): the first stage is characterized mainly by ritual blindness (when the initiate is led by a mystagogue), the second stage by sight."²³ (Please keep this meaning of *μύω* in mind, because I will propose later that this just might account for a very puzzling term elsewhere in 2 Peter 1.) [suffice it to say here, when used not in tandem with *epoptes*—that is, when used of cults other than Eleusis and Samothrace—*muein* could stand for "initiation" *in toto*. [Clinton, *Stages*, 57-58, 60 argues that in fact it is *τελέω* that is the more comprehensive term.] Hence in metaphorical uses, very often we find *μύειν* and cognates (sometimes for nothing more than "to learn" (Phil 4:12)).

After a period of a year or more, initiates were permitted to see something "marvelous";²⁴ and this vision rendered one an *ἐπόπτης*, "viewer."²⁵ Evidence for this terminology of the two stages of initiation is quite widespread^{26,27}. In fact, the word *ἐπόπτης* was so specific

²¹ Plutarch says that Demetrius did not want to wait a year between rites of initiation: "He wanted to be immediately initiated, receiving the entire initiation from the minor unto the *epoptikae*" (ὅτι βούλεται παραγενόμενος εὐθὺς μνηθῆναι καὶ τὴν τελετὴν ἅπασαν ἀπὸ τῶν μικρῶν ἄχρι τῶν ἐποπτικῶν παραλαβεῖν) (*Demetr.* 26).

²² Nock, *Essays*, 2.792, speaking of the stages of initiation, notes that "the fluidity of the Greek language and the vagueness of many statements and allusions in the evidence leave us in doubt on essential points....").

²³ Clinton, "Stages of Initiation," 50; cf. w 1980:414 (both note that the term might also refer to closing "the lips," i.e. keeping the mysteries secret).

Nock (*Essays* 792 and n5) sees *muesis* as "initiation préalable" (P. Roussel's term), and primarily concerned with purification; hence it could be administered at Athens as well as Eleusis.

²⁴ Hippolytus, *Omn.* 5.8.39: μυσθύντες Ἐλευσίνια καὶ ἐπιδεικνύντες τοῖς ἐποπτεύουσι τὸ μέγα καὶ θαυμαστὸν καὶ τελεώτατον ἐποπτικὸν ἐκεῖ μυστήριον ἐν σιωπῇ, τεθερισμένον στάχυν, "The Athenians, while initiating people into the Eleusinian rites, likewise display to those who are being admitted to the highest grade at these mysteries, the mighty, and marvelous, and most perfect secret suitable for one initiated into the highest mystic truth: (I allude to) an ear of corn in silence reaped" (*ANF* 5.55).

²⁵ Plutarch (*Mor.* 718D) reports that Plato praised geometry drawing people from the world of sense and toward the intelligible and eternal level of being, "the contemplation of which is the goal of philosophy, as being a 'viewer' is the goal of a mystery-rite" (ἧς θεὰ τέλος ἐστὶ φιλοσοφίας οἷον ἐποπτεῖα τελετῆς) (Sandbach, LCL).

²⁶ Clinton, Kevin. "Stages of Initiation in the Eleusinian and Samothracian Mysteries." In *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults* (Ed. Michael B. Cosmopoulos. London: Routledge, 2003), 50-78.

The charge that Alcibiades profaned the mysteries includes the statement that, in addition to mimicking them and showing the mysteries to his companions, he called his companions "*mystae* and *epoptae*" (Plutarch, *Alcib.* 22.4: τοὺς δ' ἄλλους ἐταίρους μύστας προσαγορεύοντα καὶ

for the second stage of initiation that it served as a loanword in Latin.²⁸ The term could be used absolutely, or, as here in 2 Pet 1:16, with a genitive of what was "observed" (cf. μυστηρίων ἐπόπται, Rec. IG, 1141, 1 [TDNT 5.374n3]).

Indeed, if we consider what little can be said about the experience of full initiation, or *epopteia*, we can see how the Transfiguration could be described in these terms. *Epopteia* consisted above all viewing the bright light of the god's presence, but also in some ritual drama and sacred utterances, elements summed up by the tripartite formula *dromena*, *legomena*, and *deiknumena*.

Plutarch, *On the Soul*, fragment 178:

Then [at the point of death] the soul suffers something like what those who participate in the great initiations suffer. Hence even the word "dying" is like the word "to be initiated," and the act (of dying) is like the act (of being initiated) [τελευτᾶν καὶ τελεῖσθαι]. First of all there are wanderings and wearisome rushings about and certain journeys fearful and unending through the darkness, and then before the very end all the terrors—fright and trembling and sweating and amazement. But then one encounters *an extraordinary light*, and pure regions and meadows offer welcome, with *voices* and dances and majesties of *sacred sounds and holy sights*; in which now the completely initiated one becoming free and set loose enjoys the rite, crowned, and consorts with holy and pure men. ...looking down upon the impure multitude of the profane or uninitiated, sinking in the *mire* and mist [**βορβόρω πολλῷ καὶ ὁμίγῃ**] beneath him—through fear of death and through disbelief in the life to come, abiding in its miseries."

[Plato, *Phaedo* 69c: those who have not participated in the rites () will lie in the mire [ἐν **βορβόρω**] in Hades.]

Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.23: "I came to the boundary of death and, having trodden the threshold of Proserpina, I travelled through all the elements and returned. In the middle of the night *I saw the sun flashing with bright light*. I came fact to face with the gods below and the gods above and paid reverence to them from close at hand."

Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 12.33: "So it is very much the same as if anyone were to place a man, a Greek or a barbarian, in some mystic shrine of extraordinary beauty and size to be initiated, where he would *see many mystic sights and hear*

ἐπόπτας).

²⁷ *SEG* XXX 61.A.47, ca. 360 BCE, distinguishes μεμνημένους καὶ ἐπωπτευκότας. Both grades of initiates are often mentioned together: Ditt. Syll. 42.48: τοῖσι μύστεσιν καὶ τοῖς ἐπόπταισιν; Dit. Syll. 1052, 3ff; 1053, 3ff.

²⁸ Faschel *RAC* 5.978 notes *Corp.* 1², 2, 665: *mustae pieis epoptae*; 3, 717: *mystes pius ... et symmystae pii epoptes*; cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Valent.* 1.1: *epoptas*.

many mystic voices, where light and darkness would appear to him alternately, and a thousand other things would occur."

We should note that in these examples of initiation there is, in addition to the initiatory vision, also *audition*; and in fact, this coheres nicely with 2 Peter 1:16-18, where more is actually said about the divine utterance—"This is my beloved Son" (1.17-18)—than about the glory that they beheld.²⁹³⁰

Using the technical language of the mysteries in a transferred sense would not be anything new. From at least the time of Plato, mystery language was used metaphorically of philosophical progress and of the vision of higher realities (e.g. *Phaedo* 69c [initiates are those who have practiced philosophy rightly]; *Phaedrus* 249C-D, 250B-C). It was also applied to a wide variety of other remarkable experiences: sex (Aristophanes), a dream (Aristides *Orat.* 49.48), the whole Jewish commonwealth (Josephus *Apion.* 2.188)³¹, [Nock, *Essays* 2.799-800 and notes 39 and 40,]

More specifically, it could be applied to being granted esoteric knowledge. So for instance Plutarch says that Alexander the Great got from Aristotle not only his ethical and political doctrines, "but also participated in those secret and more profound teachings which philosophers designate by the special terms 'acroamatic' and 'eroptic' [ἐποπτικὰς], and do not impart to many" (Perrin, LCL).³²

²⁹ Cautley 1983:115; Schelkle, 199. This emphasis on what is heard—on the verbal transaction between the Father and Son—foreshadows the importance that will be placed on the creative power of the *word* in 2 Peter 3. Cf. Grundmann 84; he sees in this Hellenistic dualistic thought.

³⁰ The *dromena*, *legomena*, and *deiknumena*. The *dromena* were the "liturgical dramas, the mythological scenarios of which were probably evocative of the soul's posthumous destiny" (Jean Borella, *Guénonian Esoterism and Christian Mystery*, 209). Bowden, *Mystery Cults*, 38; Martin, "Those Elusive Eleusinian Mystery Shows," calls into question whether there is ancient evidence for this three-fold formula so common in modern scholarship on mysteries; but cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Alcibiadem* i 62.12: ὥσπερ οὖν ἐν ταῖς ἀγιωτάταις τῶν τελετῶν προηγούνται τῶν δρωμένων καταπλήξεις τινές, αἱ μὲν διὰ τῶν λεγομένων, αἱ δὲ διὰ τῶν δεικνυμένων ὑποκατακλίνουσai τῷ θείῳ τὴν ψυχὴν, οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἐν τοῖς τῆς φιλοσοφίας προθύροις ἀνεγείρει θαῦμα τῷ νεανίσκῳ.

It is a matter of debate the degree to which the *legomena* included any substantive doctrinal teaching; opinion is typically that it did not. Nock notes that truth was not so much revealed as something was experienced that could be the subject of philosophical reflection. See the opinions cited by Borella, *Esoterism*, 210-11.

³¹ This passage forms the point of departure for W. C. Van Unnik, "Flavius Josephus and the Mysteries," in Vermaseren, ed. *Studies in Hellenistic Religions*, 244-79

³² *Alexander*, 7.5.4: ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἀπορρήτων καὶ βαθυτέρων διδασκαλιῶν, ἃς οἱ ἄνδρες ἰδίως ἀκροατικὰς καὶ ἐποπτικὰς προσαγορεύοντες οὐκ ἐξέφερον εἰς πολλοὺς, μετασχεῖν.

Early Christian authors make both of these moves. Among Christians, this metaphorical usage of *epopteia* of God was exploited most fully by Clement of Alexandria.^{33 34} And, akin to Plutarch's description of Alexander, Christians also used "initiation" language to celebrate the esoteric transfer of knowledge. For instance, in the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, the apostle is addressed as: "Twin of Christ, apostle of the Most High and *initiate* [συμμύστης]³⁵ into the hidden message of Christ, you who have received his hidden

³³ Fascher, RAC 5.979-83; Nock (*Essays* 2.7, especially 2.810) notes that Christians first appropriated mystery language via philosophy rather than cult; similarly Christine Mohrmann, "Linguistic Problems in the Early Christian Church," *VG* 11 (1957) 32-33.

³⁴ Clement of Alexandria claims, for instance, that the books of Moses developed stages of religion which culminated in "the nature of the understanding of the divine, *revelation* [ἡ ἐποπτεία], which Plato places among the really great mysteries" [trans. Ferguson] (τὸ θεολογικὸν εἶδος, ἡ ἐποπτεία, ἣν φησιν ὁ Πλάτων τῶν μεγάλων ὄντως εἶναι μυστηρίων) (*Strom.* 1.176.2). Cf. especially *Strom.* 5.138.3, where Clement gives a long and approving citation of Plato, *Phaedrus* 250B-C; *Strom.* 5.67.3-4: "vision" is highest grade to which gnostic soul can ascend; *Strom.* 6.108.1 [ANF]: "Such, according to David, 'rest in the holy hill of God,' [Psa 15:1] in the Church far on high, in which are gathered the philosophers of God, 'who are Israelites indeed, who are pure in heart, in whom there is no guile;' who do not remain in the seventh seat, the place of rest, but are promoted through the active beneficence of the divine likeness, to the heritage of beneficence which is the eighth grade; devoting themselves to the pure *vision* [ἐποπτεία] of insatiable contemplation."

οἱ τοιοῦτοι κατὰ τὸν Δαβὶδ «καταπαύσουσιν ἐν ὄρει ἁγίῳ θεοῦ», τῇ ἀνωτάτῳ ἐκκλησίᾳ, καθ' ἣν οἱ φιλόσοφοι συνάγονται τοῦ θεοῦ, οἱ τῷ ὄντι Ἰσραηλίται οἱ καθαροὶ τὴν καρδίαν, ἐν οἷς δόλος οὐδεὶς, οἱ μὴ καταμείναντες ἐν ἑβδομάδι ἀναπαύσεως, ἀγαθοεργία δὲ θείας ἐξομοιώσεως εἰς ὀγδοαδικῆς εὐεργεσίας κληρονομίαν ὑπερκύψαντες, ἀκορέστου θεωρίας εἰλικρινεῖ ἐποπτεία προσανέχοντες.

Psa 15:1: "O LORD, who may abide in your tent [ἐν τῷ σκηνώματι]? Who may dwell on your holy mountain [ἐν τῷ ὄρει τῷ ἁγίῳ]?" combines the "tabernacle" (2 Pet 1:13) and the "holy hill" (1:18), and was a passage that for Clement of Alexandria was a symbol of the *visio dei*.

In the conclusion of the *Protrepticus*, Clement turns from his unrelenting scorn of the Greek mysteries to describing Christianity thus:

O truly sacred mysteries! O pure light! In the blaze of the torches I have a vision [ἐποπτεῦσαι] of heaven and of God. I become holy by initiation. The Lord is the hierophant and seals the initiate, lighting his way.

Ὡ τῶν ἁγίων ὡς ἀληθῶς μυστηρίων, ὧ φωτὸς ἀκηράτου. Δαδουχοῦμαι τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τὸν θεὸν ἐποπτεῦσαι, ἅγιος γίνομαι μουόμενος, ἱεροφαντεῖ δὲ ὁ κύριος καὶ τὸν μύστην σφραγίζεται φωταγωγῶν, καὶ παρατίθεται τῷ πατρὶ τὸν πεπιστευκότα αἰῶσι τηρούμενον. (*Protr.* 12.120.1).

³⁵ When Ignatius uses this term (*Eph* 12:2: Παύλου συμμύστα), he means those who like Paul already had, were undergoing initiation into death. For *that* metaphor, cf. . On Ignatius' broader use of mystery language, cf. Gillis P:son Wetter, *Altchristliche Liturgien: Das Christliche Mysterium: Studie Zur Geschichte Des Abendmahles* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921) 116-42.*

sayings" (*Acts of Thomas* 39.2-3a, trans. Attridge).³⁶ Cf. *Epistula Petri* 2.1 instructing Clement to pass along his *Preachings* "in the same mysterious way [NTA 2.494]" (μετὰ τοῦ ὁμοίου τῆς ἀγωγῆς μυστηρίου).

Mystery language was used to describe a wide range of religions and philosophical (and sexual, etc.) experiences [search Nock and death/sleep,]] But in the case of the transfiguration, this metaphor strongly suggested itself, the resemblances to what took place in initiation being rather strong.

[Most commentators have acknowledged that with the word *epoptai* 2 Peter is employing mystery terminology,^{37,38} but it is virtually impossible in an English translation to capture the sense of literal seeing and of initiation; Moffatt alone seems to have tried: "we were admitted to the spectacle of his sovereignty." More importantly, few commentators have made much of the word's significance for the pericope as a whole; generally they simply note it as evidence of the author's familiarity with Hellenistic terminology and his pretensions of *paideia*.]

If 2 Peter was written in the first half the second century, the prestige of Eleusis was at its height. Hadrian, in particular, did much to glorify the sanctuary, and was himself visited multiple times (Cliton, "Roman Initiates," 1516-24).

A δαδοῦχος who initiated Augustus was mentioned in a decree, for his serior service had

³⁶ For esoteric teaching as "mysteries" to be kept secret by Jesus' disciples, cf. *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* 19.20.1-2.

³⁷ Kraus, *Sprache*, 362: as among the "mit bestimmten Vorstellungen verbundenen Wörtern." Caulley 1983:113-14 emphatically; Pearson, "Reminiscence of Classical Myth." Somewhat reserved is Clemen, *Einfluss*, 74 (although given his overall aim to deny mystery influence on early Christianity, his acknowledgement that 2 Pet 1:16 might hearken to the mysteries is noteworthy).

³⁸ Grundmann 81 fully emphasizes the "mystery" implications of this choice of terms. Peter is an eyewitness, true; but he is also an initiate (*Eingeweihter*). Similarly J. C. Beker, "Peter, Second Letter of," 3.770 (*Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*), who observes rightly: "The scene is described as a Hellenistic initiation rite. The mysteries are disclosed: the holy mountain (vs. 18), the initiates (ἐπόπται), the divine majesty (μεγαλειότης; vs. 16), and the metamorphosis of the cult hero (τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν; vs. 17)." Beker sees this as first of confirming Christ's parousia (albeit by the cumbrous chain of logic: it hints at the heavenly glory, and this confirms the parousia), and also as authorizing Peter, but he fails to draw any connection between the mystery depiction and the way it authorizes Peter; for Beker, it is simply a matter of Peter's voice having a second hand authority because he was on hand when the authoritative voice from heaven spoke. E. Fascher (*RAC* 5.973-83) also believes that in 2 Peter's retelling of the transfiguration Jesus is revealing that "divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4) of which the believers can partake; it is a vision of a higher world, and hence the ἐπόπτης is not simply an observer: "If it were a matter of a confrontation with the already heavenly Lord, concepts such as 'revelation' or 'vision' would have been to hand. But the author has avoided these, and in light of his constant linguistic connection to the world of Hellenism, the use of ἐπόπτης is understandable and it tends in the direction of mystery language." "Ginge es um eine Begegnung mit dem schon himmlischen Herrn, wären Begriffe wie ἀποκάλυψις oder ὄπτασια zugänglich gewesen. Der Verfasser hat sie vermieden; bei seiner sonstigen sprachlichen Beziehung zur Welt des Hellenismus ist die Verwendung von ἐπόπτης verständlich und tendiert in die Richtung auf die Mysteriensprache."

contributed to the "*magnificence* of the mysteries" (τὸ περὶ τὰ μυστήρια μεγαλοπρεπές; cf. **ὑπὸ τῆς μεγαλοπρεποῦς** δόξης, 2 Pet 1:17 (cited from Clinton, "Roman Initiates," 1512). torch-bearer who initiated But as early as Augustus

If we accept that there is here a deliberate reference to initiation, we must ask what describing Peter in this way accomplishes. I want to argue that it emphasizes Peter's *spiritual preparation and aptitude*.

1. Preparation and *privilege*. The mysteries were held in considerable prestige, as was language about them (Nock 2.799, citing Nilsson) (on the number of emperors initiated, see Clinton ANRW); to give but one example, Hadrian was initiated into the mysteries of both Eleusis and Samothrace (Nock 1.305).

initiation was allowed only to those who were καθαροὶ τὰς χεῖρας (Isocrates, *Pan*, 157) (Clinton, "Roman Initiates," 1514 notes that this led to gossip about those who did not attend: were they guilty of murder? cf. Suet., *Nero* 34.4; Philostratus, *Vita Apollonius*, 4.18 (*)).

Never an emphasis on purity, but demands were made—and perhaps increased over time. Cumont, Franz Valery Marie. *Lux Perpetua*. Paris: P. Geuthner, 1949, p. 240-41: There was moral conditions were introduced later, and never predominated.

we cannot see Asclepius except by special grace (Nock 1.43n84, citing Lucian, *Alex* 43)

The Transfiguration was often understood to be something that only the *religiously prepared could perceive*. So for instance, Origen states that Jesus only took Peter, James, and John, "For they alone had *the capacity* to see his glory at that time [μόνους τὸν Πέτρον καὶ τὸν Ἰάκωβον καὶ τὸν Ἰωάννην, ὡς μόνους χωροῦντας τὴν τότε δόξαν αὐτοῦ θεωρῆσαι] ... and to hear the voice from heaven out of the cloud."³⁹

This same theme—the inability of normal sight to perceive Jesus' true identity--shows up in the apocryphal acts of the apostles as one of the motifs of Christ's polymorphy. Consider *Acts of Thomas* 37:4 "how will you be able to see him who lives on high and now is found in the depth, if you don't first *raise yourselves up* from your previous behavior and unprofitable activities...." ⁴⁰

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Origen again: "to those who by following him have received *power* to go after him even as he is ascending the high mountain, he has a more divine form. Anyone who is a Peter sees this; for Peter was capable of having the Church built upon him by the Logos and attained such ability that no gate of hell could prevail against him....". Here Origen de-particularizes Peter: Peter is not only one of the three who *happened to be* a witness of the transfiguration on the mountain; he is also the *sort* of person other spiritual people can emulate, whose experiences and insights others may receive.
cf. *Cels.* 2. 65.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Acts of Thomas* 32:11; 53:6; 65:6: Christ is not seen with bodily eyes. *Acts of Peter* 20 [Lipsius *Acta* 1.67]: "For each of us saw him as his capacity permitted" [*sicut capiebat videre*,

Note that in *Symposium* 210A, Diotima wonders if Socrates will *able* to move from preliminary initiation (μύειν) in matters of love unto to things "perfect and epoptic" (Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐρωτικά ἴσως, ὃ Σώκρατες, κὰν σὺ μνηθείης· τὰ δὲ τέλεα καὶ ἐποπτικά, ὧν ἕνεκα καὶ ταῦτα ἔστιν, ἐάν τις ὀρθῶς μετή, οὐκ οἶδ' εἰ οἷός τ' ἂν εἴης).

The ability to see (god) requires purity is broadly attested.

Particularly colorful illustrations would include Euripides *Bacchae*, on which, see XXX; cf. P.Oxy 840, in which the issue of "viewing" the "holy vessels" when not properly purified is central to the story.⁴¹

Philo, *Quest. Exod.* 2.51 promise of initiation leading to vision of God, provided soul is worthy tabernacle: "His appearance, if only there be a suitable place, purified with holiness and every (kind of) purity." The mind must excise "desires, pleasures, griefs, fears, follies, injustices and related evils," and "change and adapt" itself for the holy vision, or else it will end life in blindness "unable to see the intelligible sun." "If, however, thou art worthily initiated and cast be consecrated" then instead of having eyes closed (Marcus notes: καταμύειν *vel sim*), you will see the first cause. But this cannot happen for someone who has not made his soul "a sanctuary and altogether a shrine of God."

Vit. Cont. he says that the Therapeutae are initiated in the mysteries of holy life, having nothing with them except "the laws and the oracles spoken through the prophets." They are initiated by God.

Philo, *Quest. Exod.* Frag. 2.13-14 (F. Petit, *Quaestiones in Genesim et in Exodum: Fragmenta Graeca* [Les oeuvres de Philon d'Alexandrie 33. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978), the true mysteries lead to piety and holiness (τὰς δὲ ἀληθεῖς τελετάς, αἱ πρὸς εὐσέβειαν ἀνάγουσι καὶ ὁσιότητα).

Theophilus, *Ad Autolycus* 1.2: only the pure can see God: "When there is rust on a mirror, a man's face cannot be seen in it; so also when there is sin in a man, such a man cannot see [θεωρεῖν] God."

"His disciples said, 'When will you be shown forth to us and when shall we behold you?' Jesus said, 'When you strip naked without being ashamed, and take your garments and put them under your feet like little children and tread upon them, then [you] will see the child of the living. And you will not be afraid.'" [Layton]

prout poterat videbat](subsequently narrates the Transfiguration).]For an analysis of this motif in the Acts of John, see Schneider 1991; D. Cartlidge, "Transfigurations of the Metamorphosis Traditions in the Acts of John, Thomas, and Peter," *Semeia* 38 (1986) 53-66.

⁴¹ See Daniel R. **Schwartz**, "Viewing the Holy Utensils (P. Ox. V, 840)" *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 153-159, and François Bovon, "*Fragment Oxyrhynchus 840*, Fragment of a Lost Gospel, Witness of an Early Christian Controversy over Purity," *JBL* 119 (2000), 705-728 [especially 716-21].

Thus our author has chosen an event that could demonstrate that Peter, James and John were uniquely privileged disciples, let into Christ's most intimate secrets (cf. Alexander and Aristotle), and that—more than simply being privileged—their ability to perceive Christ's "majesty" and to hear the divine voice demonstrated their spiritual acuity. Unlike the Resurrection, which was the sole and sovereign act of God, "...witnessing the Transfiguration...required special preparation just like the consecration into the ancient Mysteries, so that only a few could see it" (Klinger 167). [Origen: being better at seeing and being better and hearing interpretations go together.] If they could perceive the majesty of Christ which was hidden from others, *then they could find Christ in scripture where others found only riddles*. This may help us make sense of 1:19-21, to which we now turn.

III. We turn now the comments on prophetic scripture.

The first point that should follow from my reading of 1:16-18 is that the word βεβαιότερον is a true comparative—it does not simply mean "very secure"—and it means "more secure, more valid" in two senses. Most importantly, the prophetic word is more firm than it was before the experience of the transfiguration, where God spoke the words of the Psalm 2 to Jesus and thereby initiated their fulfillment and partially removed their mystery. Secondly, we should not miss an emphasis on the way the author contrasts "us" and "you": *we* initiates have the word "more firmly" than do others.

But the most difficult phrase in this section occurs in 1:20: *πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται*. Although various explanations (and emendations!) have been given for the word ἐπίλυσις, I think we can safely say that it means an "interpretation" or "explanation," especially of something puzzling or mysterious—dreams, oracles, riddles, prophecies, etc. But even when we insert such a meaning into the phrase in question, we can see that the obscurity of the passage is not thereby resolved: *πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται*: "No prophecy of scripture is/arises/comes from *ιδίας ἐπιλύσεως*: It is still unclear *whose* own interpretation is in view. Most interpreters prefer one of the following two views:

1. The interpretation of scripture is not a matter of one's own, individual, private interpretation. This is the sense proposed by most contemporary translations⁴² and commentators,⁴³ and has evidence at least as old as Bede.⁴⁴ On such an understanding,

⁴² KJV; NJB: "the interpretation of scriptural prophecy is never a matter for the individual"; NEB: "no one can interpret any prophecy of Scripture by himself."

⁴³ Käsemann 189ff; Marxsen, 1958:16; Kümel, Introduction, 432-33 "Since not every Christian has the Spirit, the explanation of Scripture is reserved for the ecclesiastical teaching office. Accordingly we find ourselves without doubt far beyond the time of Peter and into the epoch of 'early Catholicism.'" Käsemann 1982: ; Holtzmann 861; Charue 489; Schelkle 201ff; Spicq

"no individual is entitled to interpret prophecy, or scripture generally, according to his personal whim"—precisely what our author will claim that other people do when they twist the letters of "Paul and the other scriptures (2 Pet 3:16; citing Kelly 324). For a generation of scholars, this rejection of private interpretation was one of the clearest marks of the "early Catholic" character of this letter, an indication that the church was becoming custodian of biblical interpretation. Some go so far as to cite Trent by way of explication: "I acknowledge the sacred Scripture according to that sense which Holy Mother Church has held and holds, to whom it belongs to decide upon the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures,...."

The problem with this view is that the word *idios* simply won't bear the meaning "private" or "personal" or "idiosyncratic."⁴⁵ It is helpful to recall that ἰδιος has already been encountered in this epistle (1:3) and will be again (2:16, 22; 3:3, 16, 17), and in every case it functions simply as an equivalent of ἐαυτοῦ, "his own." In each of these instances, there is a grammatical subject or a conjugated verb that makes it unambiguous who is implied by "his own."

Furthermore, it is far from clear how 1:21, which affirms the full inspiration of the prophets, could in any sense buttress the claim that people were not to interpret scripture "privately." 1:21 is presented as though it grounds the claim of 1:20; if Peter were refusing private interpretation, we would expect something like, "For you must interpret 'according to that sense which Holy Mother Church has held and holds'."

2. More promising is the argument that the author claims that "No prophecy of scripture comes from the *prophets'* own interpretation." In this case ἰδιος could refer back to the word "prophecy," which would stand by synecdoche for "prophets." On such a reading, the logical flow of v. 20 to v. 21 smooth—although it comes perilously close to tautology: "no prophecy arises from the prophets' own interpretation, *for* prophecy comes from God."

224ff; Elliott 144; Marxsen, W. "Der 'Frühkatholizismus' im Neuen Testament." B St. 21 (1958) 16ff.; Caulley, Idea 143, 224; Mounce 121;

⁴⁴ "Therefore, just as the prophets wrote not their own but God's words, *so also the reader of them cannot use his own private interpretation*, lest he deviate from the true meaning, but he ought to pay careful attention to how the writer wished his words to be understood." (Hurst 133); *Sicut ergo prophetae non sua propria, sed Dei verba scribebant, ita et lector eorum non sua propria interpretatione potest uti, ne a sensu veritatis exorbitet, sed hoc omnimodis debet attendere, quomodo sua verba voluerit intelligi ipse qui scripsit.*

⁴⁵ This is acknowledged by Callan, who nonetheless searches for instances where it could bear such a meaning. It is true that *idios* can be contrasted with *koinos* (a lovely example—in content as well as terminology, is supplied by Heraclitus frag. 24 Marcovich=89DK: "The waking share one common world [*koinon kosmon*], whereas the sleeping turn aside each man into a world of his own [*idion*]."

cf. Heraclitus, frag. 2 D-K=23 Marcovich: although the Logos is *common* the many live as if they had a religious wisdom of their own [*idian echontes phronesin*]." But both a word for "common" is needed, and still *idios* is syntactically related to the grammatical subject, in this case *hoi polloi*.

Such an expression would then presumably allude to the fact that the prophets often needed help "interpreting" what God showed them or said to them. Cf. Dan 12:8 (LXX), where, following a vision, Daniel asks: τίς ἡ λύσις τοῦ λόγου τούτου, "what is the *interpretation* of this word" (NETS). Similar notions are found in other biblical passages.⁴⁶ This was also a Greek theory for the relationship between the god's inspiration and the prophetess's words.⁴⁷ Thus 2 Peter would be insisting that the prophets did not offer their own (merely human) interpretations of what they saw or heard: both their visions *and* their explanations of them—all of scriptural prophecy--resulted from divine prompting.

This seems to be roughly the interpretation of Oecumenius and Theophylact. The latter cites 2 Pet 1:20-21 and proceeds:

Now Peter is here explaining why the prophets *refrained from interpreting their sayings*; 'No prophecy of scripture,' he says, '....' That is to say, the prophets receive their prophecy from God, not however as they would wish, but according as the divine Spirit works in them. And while they knew and understood the prophetic message sent down to them, they did not work out its explanation [οὐ ... τὴν ἐπίλυσιν αὐτοῦ ἐποιοῦντο]. [PG 125.1264Dff.; cf. Oecumenius in PG 119.592B; trans. from Callan 356-57]

In favor of this understanding of v. 20 is the fact that the degree to which the prophets contributed their own views to their prophecies was a live issue at the time 2 Peter was written.⁴⁸ Methodius of Olympus (ca. 300), for instance, says that that Ebionites contended that prophets spoke "from their own prompting" (ὡς Ἐβιωναῖοι, ἐξ ἰδίας κινήσεως τοὺς προφήτας φιλονεικοῦντες λελαληκέναι) (*Conviv.* 8.10). According to Irenaeus, Simon declared that the prophets were inspired only by angels.⁴⁹ The compilers of the Pseudo-Clementines insist that much of prophetic scripture came not from God but from the false prophets.⁵⁰ Even in Pseudo-Philo *LAB* 25:13, the tribe of Benjamin

⁴⁶ Zech 4:4-7; 1 Pet 1:10-12. Cf. Philo, *Quis rerum divin. haeres* 52.258ff (LCL 4.412; *Vita Mosis* 1.280ff (LCL 6.420))

⁴⁷ Plutarch, *Pyth. or. Mor* 397C: "The voice is not that of a god, nor the utterance of it, nor the diction, or the metre, but all these are the woman's; *he puts into the mind only the visions*, and creates a light in her soul in regard to the future; for inspiration is precisely this."
οὐ γὰρ ἔστι θεοῦ <γ> ἢ γήρως οὐδ' ὁ φθόγγος οὐδ' ἢ λέξις οὐδὲ τὸ μέτρον ἀλλὰ τῆς γυναικός· ἐκεῖνος δὲ μόνος τὰς φαντασίας παρίστησι καὶ φῶς ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ποιεῖ πρὸς τὸ μέλλον· ὁ γὰρ ἐνθουσιασμὸς τοιοῦτόν ἐστι.

Cf. *Mor.* 404F-406B, although this has more to do with the particular words—and meter (or lack thereof), than with explanations of the visions.

⁴⁸ Cf. Plutarch, *Mor.* 397C: "The voice is not that of a god, nor the utterance of it, nor the diction, or the metre, but all these are the woman's; he puts into he mind only the visions, an creates a light in her soul in regard to the future; for inspiration is precisely this." The issue here is not interpretation, but rather the particular language employed by the prophetess, which Theon allows belongs not to the god but to her.

⁴⁹ "the prophets uttered their predictions under the inspiration of those angels who formed the world" (*Adv.* 1.23.3).

⁵⁰ Pseudo-Clementines, *Hom.* 3.11-15; 3.17; 3.38.1; 3.42.3; etc.

demanded to know "whether God had really written what was in [the Law] or Moses had taught these things *by himself*" (OTP 2.336 [emphasis added]).

Indeed, Philo was repeatedly at pains to insist that prophets contributed nothing of "their own," and he uses language reminiscent of 2 Pet 1:19 in denying such a claim. For instance, in Philo's account of Balaam, the seer states: "for I say nothing that is my own, but only what is prompted by God [λέγω γὰρ ἴδιον οὐδέν, ἀλλ' ἅττ' ἄν ὑπηγήσῃ τὸ θεῖον]" (*Vita Moses* 1.281). Similarly in the *Vita Moses* 1.286, Philo claims "that nothing which he [Balaam] said was his own but the divinely inspired version of the promptings of another... [ὡς οὐδέν ἴδιον λέγοι, κατεχόμενος δὲ καὶ ἐνθουσιῶν διερμηνεῦοι τὰ ἐτέρου]." (LCL).⁵¹

Although this is an appealing interpretation, there are several problems. First, we would really expect a mention of the "prophets" themselves in this verse, so that *idios* clearly referred to "their own" interpretation. Second, the genitive *ιδίας ἐπιλύσεως* without any preposition is more difficult to explain than is often acknowledged by more recent commentators.⁵² We would really expect the phrase to say that prophecy does not proceed *from* (ἐκ) the prophets.⁵³ Finally, since on this reading ἐπίλυσις is an "interpretation" of what is seen or heard by the prophets, we should expect some reference to their actual vision or auditory event: since "prophecy" itself might very naturally be taken as the object of ἐπίλυσις (explanation/interpretation of prophecy), the author was really obligated to append "some dependent genitive such as ὁραμάτων" (Curran 356): "No prophecy of scripture came about from/is a matter of the prophet's own interpretation *of his visions*."

3. The simplest interpretation from a grammatical point of view would be to let ἴδιος refer back to προφητεία itself (rather than having προφητεία stand for "prophets"): "no prophecy of scripture is a matter of *its own* interpretation." This may indeed be the only

⁵¹ On Philo's theory of "inspiration," cf. Burkhardt, Helmut. *Die Inspiration Heiliger Schriften Bei Philo Von Alexandrien*. Monographien und Studienbücher 340. Giessen: Brunnen, 1988; Siegert, Inspiration, 215ff; and the analysis of Herzer, 229-33,

⁵² It has been argued that γίνεται with the genitive "properly and normally means 'arises from'" (Robson 1915: 16), that is, it is a genitive of origin. So emphatically Alford (1872: 4.400ff): "prophecy *springs not out of* human interpretation" (he understands "interpretation" then to refer to that of the prophets themselves). So A. T. Robertson, *Grammar*, 514: "In **2 Pet. 1:20** we have a clear case of the ablative in the predicate after the copula γίνεται. Here ἐπιλύσεως ('disclosure') is in the ablative." Later 518 he calls this an instance of "The predicate ablative of source." Cooper 1940:192 agrees with Robertson, "divine origin."

⁵³ Some have objected that the author could have expressed this much more clearly with the addition of ἐκ (Gal 4:4; 1 Tim 6:4; Heb 11:12) (no less a grammarian than Mayor insists that ἐκ is actually *necessary* for this meaning; Bénétreau 2005:185; Bauckham 1983:231 admits this is a weakness).

Note that Hippolytus, *Antichrist* 1.1, who seems to be paraphrasing 2 Pet 1:19, twice includes the preposition ἐκ in similar expressions: "for the prophets did not utter anything *from* their own power" (οὐ γὰρ ἐξ ιδίας δυνάμεως οἱ προφήται ἐφθέγγοντο); "we, having learned well, speak not *from* our own conception" (καλῶς μαθητευθέντες, λέγομεν οὐκ ἐξ ιδίας ἡμῶν ἐπινοίας).

plausible rendering of the Greek. The meaning would then be that "scriptural prophecy is not self-explanatory" (quoting Curran 358, who dismisses this alternative).⁵⁴ (This proposal also has the virtue of making the simple genitive—without any preposition—less awkward.) Stated positively, 2 Peter is claiming that prophetic scripture needs interpretation because it does not interpret itself. This is precisely the understanding that we find in the Old Latin, which is more a paraphrase than a translation: *omnis profetiae scriptura interpretatione indiget*, "every scripture [or "text"] of prophecy needs interpretation".⁵⁵ [Curran 349; von Soden 1909: 571).

If the Latin is indeed a free rendering of the Greek (so Lagrange), then it "would indicate clearly the way in which our Greek text was understood throughout the Latin Church in the first centuries." Many patristic citations seem to indicate precisely such an understanding. So for instance Ambrosiaster, when dealing with a biblical prediction that seems not to have come true, says: "But in every expression, sense and condition lie hid, which is why the Apostle Peter says 'Every scripture requires interpretation.'" (CSEL 81.260). Victorinus (*Gen.* 1.1), although attributing our passage to Paul, makes the same point: *Omnis enim scriptura spiritu Dei inspirata, dicit Apostolus Paulus quia indiget interpretatione*. "For all scripture is inspired by the spirit of God, says the Apostle Paul, since it needs interpretation." or "For indeed every scripture, since it is inspired by the spirit of God, the Apostle Paul says that it needs interpretation."

On such an understanding of v. 20, v. 21 can have its full logical force without being tautological. Scriptural prophecy does not interpret itself because it is from God, and is not susceptible to the hermeneutics that might unravel merely human locutions. Here we see the widespread ancient assumption that divine utterances—most notoriously oracles—were characteristically vague or ambiguous, and hence stood in special need of interpretation.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ So Bénétreau 1994:126-29, 2005:185n25.

⁵⁵ The critical reading *interpretatione indiget* is found also in Ambrosiaster (In I Tim. 2:1-4), PL 17.466C; Bachiarius (Libellus de fide 6 (PL 20, 1034A); and the Liber Apologeticus of Priscillian (1.9; 6.92; 8.119 [where the expression *omnis profetia vel scribura interpraetationem indiget* is connected to "most blessed Peter"]).

⁵⁶ Plutarch, Oracles at Delphi, *Mor.* 407A-B: 407A: a concomitant change in πίστις: in old days circumlocution was redolent of the divine power. But now "they blamed the poetic language with which the oracles were clothed, not only for obstructing the understanding of these in their true meaning and for combining vagueness and obscurity with the communication, but already they were coming to look with suspicion upon metaphors, riddles, and ambiguous statements, feeling that these were secluded nooks of refuge devised for furtive withdrawal and retreat for him that should err in his prophecy." (cf. Lucian, Alexander).

[The assumption here is that older oracular language was florid and multivalent; indirect, and susceptible of multiple applications]

Cf. Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 4.71: But whenever they [gods] speak in riddles and do not speak plainly, you must attempt to solve the riddles. For it is quite understandable that the gods veil much of what they say in mystery, since they are wiser than we and do not wish us to accept anything without a thorough examination" (ὅταν δὲ αἰνίσσωνται καὶ μὴ ἀπλῶς λέγωσιν, ἐρμηνευτέον σοι τὰ αἰνίγματα. καὶ γὰρ εἰκὸς τοὺς θεοὺς τὰ πολλὰ δι' αἰνιγμάτων λέγειν, ἐπειδὴ καὶ σοφώτεροι ὄντες ἡμῶν αὐτῶν οὐδὲν ἡμᾶς ἀβασανίστως βούλονται λαμβάνειν).

The more divine the words, the more need for someone enlightened to explain their true sense. So Siegert notes of Philo: "There never was a more exaggerated theory of inspiration; and *there could not be a stronger justification for the interpreter's license*" ["Early Jewish Interpretation," 171, my emphasis].⁵⁷

This "solving" of riddles is the mark of the sage (Sir 47:15; cf. Dan 8:23 Theod./LXX) and of Wisdom (Wisdom of Solomon 8:8—note the context is of foretelling the future) What resolved an oracle was either its fulfillment, which then allowed a retrospective understanding of how its language referred.

Texts from god need interpretation.

Heraclitus (22 B 93 DK=Plutarch, *Mor.* 404E) "The lord whose oracular shrine is in Delphi neither speaks nor conceals; he signifies" (ἄναξ, οὗ τὸ μαντεῖόν ἐστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς, οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει).

Dreams: Artemidorus;

Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*: Dreams that merely arise from bodily disturbances present their meaning clearly; but:

"one that conceals with strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true meaning of the information being offered, *and requires an interpretation for its understanding*" (*[id] quod tegit figures et velat ambagibus non nisi interpretatione intellegendam significationem rei quae demonstratur*) (1.3.10, trans. from Stuck, *birth of symbol*, 186)

Precisely what is said of oracles—that they demand interpretation—is said of dearms (Artemidorus 4.71 and Macrobius.

Oracle:

On the ambiguity of oracles: Pythia was proverbially cryptic (Aesch. *Ag.* 1255;

Michael Wood, "The Road to Delphi: The Life and Afterlife of Oracles" chapter 3.

aune, prophecy, 51-52.

god signifies. i.e. they need interpretation.

by

⁵⁷ Origen's doctrine of the inspiration of scripture underwrote his allegorical interpretation: "For only on the assumption that Scripture is directly divine in character is there any justification for looking for a higher meaning behind the literal sense of the words; and conversely, the profounder sense thus disclosed is proof of the divinity of the text." (von Campenhausen, *Formation* 315.

So much so that the plainer speech of the oracle in Plutarch's day constituted a theological problem (Oracles at Delphi No Longer Given in Verse (*Mor*, 394DE-409D)

Viewed as deliberate on the part of the oracle, to force the consultants to reconsider the question: (Bowden 2005:51n15 list of scholars subscribing to this view)

Ambiguity reconsidered by Bowden 2005: 6, 49-51, who denies that they could have functioned if they were truly cryptic. But even he acknowledges that the ancient oracles had a *reputation* for being cryptic (so if Aristophanes or Lucian wanted to spoof them, or if Spartans wanted to make compelling fake oracle, they employed cryptic language (Thuc. 5.16.2).

Scholars debate now—as they did in antiquity—whether the Pythia herself could generate spontaneous *metrical* responses (Flower and Maurizio 38-39 defend the possibility; Bowden 2005:36-38 doubts; w/ literature).

Imitation: Aristophanes ((Aristophanes assumes people will recognize the style; see Park, Sib. 16 103-4); Lycophron's *Alexandra*, known as "the obscure poem" (Suda), imitates the ambiguity of the Sibyl (see Parke, Sib. 16-17).

Indeed, ambiguity or openness is among the most characteristic features of traditions about Delphi. The ambiguity actually comes in for criticism for various reasons.

It made oracles useless, because they were virtually undecipherable (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 10.24-27; Lucian, *Zeus Catechized* 14; *Jup. Trag.* 20, 43 [their lack of clarity is adduced, by Damis, the Epicurean, as reason to doubt gods attend to humanity])

and lampoon Lucian, *Jup. Trag.*, 6 [so unclear that people can't even attend to the bad meter], 27 (where Apollo complains about the Stoic Timocles' "half-foreign, unclear, riddling language that fails to give clear answers to the questions asked—clearly a send-up of Apollo's own language through his oracles not at all intelligible, as Momus points out (28):).

It meant that "fulfillment" was inevitable—and perhaps why they were made so vague in the first place.

Lucian, *Alexander*

Plutarch, *Mor.* 407A states that in old days circumlocution was redolent of the divine power. But now people "blamed the poetic language with which the oracles were clothed, not only for obstructing the understanding of these in their true meaning and for combining vagueness and obscurity with the communication, but already they were coming to look with suspicion upon metaphors, riddles, and ambiguous statements, feeling that these were secluded nooks of refuge devised for furtive withdrawal and retreat for him that should err in his prophecy."

Celsus (*Contra Celsum* 7.9): the prophets running around the Levant "add incomprehensible, incoherent, and utterly obscure utterances, the meaning of which no intelligent person could discover; for they are meaningless and nonsensical, and give a chance for any fool or sorcerer to take the words in whatever sense he likes."

One way to solve impossible oracles was to discuss (Herodotus 7.142-43).

For debating the right interpretation: Athenians told to put their trust in the "wooden wall" (Herodotus 7.141-43). But they must debate whether this means a hedge around the acropolis or to the Athenian fleet (Herodotus 7.139.5-143) [Discussion in Betegh, *Derveni*, 365-67, who likens the hermeneutics of the author of the Derveni Papyrus to the hermeneutics of oracles; much here is germane to my proposal: the author believes the Orphic poem he is interpreting is cryptic and divine (and important); it is difficult to find the hermeneutical key, and in fact many encounter it without any understanding; on the hermeneutics of the Derveni Papyrus, cf. also Struck 2005].

How does one crack such an impossible code? In the case of another oracle reported by Herodotus (1.67-68), that Orestes' bones lay "where two winds blow under strong compulsion, bow lie upon blow, woe upon woe" (LCL). All of these features found their referents in a blacksmith's shop: "the two bellows were the two winds, hammer and anvil were blow upon blow, and the forging of iron was woe upon woe." So how was this discovered? In this case, Lichas arrived at it by using both luck and wisdom (συντυχίη χρησάμενος καὶ σοφίη, 1.168.) But once they caught sight of the blacksmith's shop, all the elements fell into place.

But one needs a "heuristic moment" (Betegh 367) when the gist of the solution is obtained: the recognition that the text as a whole must refer to such and such a phenomenon,"

Examples of obscurity, which must be handled carefully: Herodotus, 1.47, 55; Demosthenes, 21.51-52. Obscure verses: Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1255; Euripides *Medea* 675

On the other hand, one feature of oracles is that they had a single solution: "the terms in the oracle correspond to specific things" (Bowden 2005:49, so 51).

FOR MAKING this like interpreting *oracles*, this would make Peter a *chresmologos*—. Given the portrait of them in Aristophanes or Plato (*Resp.* 2), it's not clear you'd want to look like this.

on the *chresmologos*—one who collects or speaks oracles—see: Parke and Wormell, *Delph. Or.* 2.xv; Fontenrose, *Delph.* 1978, 145; West, *Orphic Poems*, 41, Parke, *Sibyl*, 17-18, 174-89.

"sometimes given significant civic honours in Athens" (Bowden 2005:11).

Or like an exegetes, religious experts who could interpret sacred law or mythical narratives. Betegh, *Derveni*, 259

Dio Chrysostom, 10.2

For scripture as ambiguous and oblique (using terms which are used of oracles), and hence the need for a "canon" to clarify interpretation, cf. *Pseudo-Clementine Hom.* 3.24.4: Female prophecy has "ambiguities and obscurities" (ἀμφίβολα καὶ λοξά), and these qualities are proof of what parts of scripture are not from God!

On the oracle interpreters:

Musaeus (related to Prpheus and associated with the celebration of the Mysteries at Eleusis):

Eur. *Rhes.* 961-6; Plato? *Prt.* 316d. ; Herodotus 7.6 (Onomacritus edited his prophecies; got caught—and banished—interpolating spurious oracles.

Bacis *Hdt.* 8.20, 77, 96, 9.43

On oracle mongers in general: Aristophanes, *Av.* 959-91; *Pax* 1046-1119; cf. *Ran.* 1032-5; Thuc. 8.1.1.

Bowden 2005:35-36: Prophecies of inspired individuals like Bacis and Musaeus were taken to be partially fulfilled, which was the basis for expecting fulfillment of what remained; they were also held to be obscure and open to a variety of interpretations. Consider Herodotus' account of the misinterpretation of one of Bacis' oracles by the Persian Mardonius (9.42-43).

For a misunderstood prophecy in Judaea, cf. Josephus, *War* 6.312-313 [does Josephus credit his own prophetic ability to ferreting out the truth about this?]; Suetonius, *Vesp.* 4.5 (note Suetonius states that the fulfillment—"as afterwards appeared from the event" -- resolved its interpretation); Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.13).

IV. This understanding of 2 Pet 1:20 is consonant with the claim—made often in the second century—that prophecies of Christ's coming *were not easily understood* because scripture, as an inspired text, spoke polyvalently. Of particular importance is the fact that passages Christians wished to apply to Christ—such as Psalm 2 in our text—appear to speak of historical figures, such as kings of Israel. It is in dealing with precisely these interpretive obstacles that other second-century Christians appeal to the *inspiration of scripture*.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Irenaeus, *Demonst.* 49. "Forasmuch as David says: *The Lord said unto me*, it is necessary to say that it is not David who speaks, nor any one of the prophets, in his own person: for it is not a man who speaks the prophecies; but the Spirit of God, assimilating and likening Himself to the persons represented, speaks in the prophets, and utters the words sometimes from Christ and sometimes from the Father" (trans. Robinson).

[I believe 2 Peter dates from sometime well into the second century. Throughout this period the cult of Eleusis was at its best]

Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* 1.14:

καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἠπίστων τοῦτο ἔσεσθαι, ἀλλὰ νῦν κατανοήσας αὐτὰ πιστεύω· ἅμα καὶ ἐπιτυχῶν ἱεραῖς Γραφαῖς τῶν ἁγίων προφητῶν, οἳ καὶ προεῖπον διὰ πνεύματος Θεοῦ τὰ προγεγονότα ᾧ τρόπῳ γέγονε, καὶ τὰ ἐνεστῶτα τίνι τρόπῳ γίνεται, καὶ τὰ ἐπερχόμενα ποία τάξει ἀπαρτισθήσεται.

So, for example, when Justin insists on the inspiration of scripture, it is to demonstrate that passages that seem to be spoken by the prophets (such as David) are actually about Christ.⁵⁹ For instance, in the *Apology*, Justin claims: "But when you hear the phrases of the prophets spoken as though from a character, do not suppose that they were spoken as from the inspired ones themselves [ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῶν ἐμπεπνευσμένων], but rather from the divine Logos moving them" (*Apol.* 36.1). Justin acknowledges, for instance, that the Jews think this Psalm speaks of Hezekiah (*Dial.* 33), and that one speaks of Solomon: it is in such contexts that he appeals to inspiration: "As a further proof of your ignorance of the Scriptures, I am going to quote another Psalm, dictated to David by the Holy Spirit [τῷ Δαυεῖδ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος εἰρημένου], which you erroneously think refers to your king Solomon, but which in reality refers to our Christ" (*Dial.* 34). Again in *Dial.* 36 Justin insists that the "Holy Spirit" calls Jesus various titles in parables (καλεῖται ἐν παραβολῇ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος) in an effort to address the fact that Jewish interpreters "claim that these prophecies were not spoken of Christ, but of Solomon." Justin claims that for the Jews, the prophecies must remain ambiguous and undecipherable because "prophets ceased in your race"; for Christians, the advent of Christ has removed ambiguity (*Dial.* 51). In other words, one needs a prophet and a historical fulfillment⁶⁰ of scripture to make sense of scripture. [the latter is what usually resolves oracles' meaning: their fulfillment; as for the former, I there evidence of initiation giving *insight*?? it does give secret tradition; it does give immortality. I think im saying peter has a mélange –that he is a seer, with this innate gift shown by his viewing the transfig] A constant theme of Justin's exposition is that the prophets pointed to Christ's [coming—it could be either] *glorious second coming* (*Apol.* 52; *Dial.* 14, 64, 110, 114), and he insists that these prophecies cannot be understood apart from some "special grace from him who willed them" (119; cf. 68).

Which is why Peter also, in his *Preaching*, when speaking about the apostles says: "We opened the books of the prophets which we had, who partly in parables, partly in riddles, partly expressly [αὐθεντικῶς]⁶¹ and in so many words [αὐτολεξεῖ] name Christ Jesus, and

⁵⁹ On Justin's use of scripture, see Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*.

⁶⁰ Irenaeus 4.26.1 (check—this is from accordance): Πᾶσα γὰρ προφητεία πρὸ τῆς ἐκβάσεως, ἀνιγμὰ ἐστὶ καὶ ἀντιλογία τοῖς ἀνθρώποις· ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ καιρὸς, καὶ ἀποβῆ τὸ προφητευθέν, τότε τῆς ἀκριβεστάτης ἐπέτυχεν ἐξηγήσεως

⁶¹ A strange word: This may mark the first usage (Clement is the first in *TLG*).

Origen: αὐθεντικῶς, οὐ δουλικῶς, (again in another usage), in which the emphasis falls upon the freedom which a slave lacks. This would be consistent with the usage in Pseud. Justin, where

found his coming [παρουσία], his death, his crucifixion and all the rest of the tortures which the Jews inflicted on him, his resurrection, and his assumption to heaven before the foundation of Jerusalem, how all was written that he had to suffer and what would be after him. Recognising this, we believed God in consequence of what is written of him."

ὅθεν καὶ ὁ Πέτρος ἐν τῷ Κηρύγματι περὶ τῶν ἀποστόλων λέγων φησὶν· «ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀναπτύξαντες τὰς βίβλους ἃς εἶχομεν τῶν προφητῶν, ἃ μὲν διὰ παραβολῶν, ἃ δὲ δι' αἰνιγμάτων, ἃ δὲ ἀθηντικῶς καὶ αὐτολεξεῖ τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ὀνομαζόντων, εὕρομεν καὶ τὴν παρουσίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν θάνατον καὶ τὸν σταυρὸν καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς κολάσεις πάσας ὅσας ἐποίησαν αὐτῷ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, καὶ τὴν ἔγερσιν καὶ τὴν εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀνάληψιν πρὸ τοῦ Ἱεροσόλυμα κτισθῆναι, καθὼς ἐγγράπτο ταῦτα πάντα, ἃ ἔδει αὐτὸν παθεῖν καὶ μετ' αὐτὸν ἃ ἔσται. ταῦτα οὖν ἐπιγνόντες ἐπιστεῦσαμεν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τῶν γεγραμμένων εἰς αὐτόν.» [Cambe Frag 9=Clement, *Strom.* 6.15.128.1-2]

And a little later he adds again that the prophecies took place by divine providence, stating here: "For we know that God truly decreed them, and we say nothing apart from scripture."

καὶ μετ' ὀλίγα ἐπιφέρει πάλιν θεία προνοία τὰς προφητείας γεγενῆσθαι παριστὰς ὧδε· «ἔγνωμεν γὰρ ὅτι ὁ θεὸς αὐτὰ προσέταξεν ὄντως, καὶ οὐδὲν ἄτερ γραφῆς λέγομεν.» [Cambe Frag 10=Clement, *Strom.* 6.15.128.3]

Note how this is contrasted with the "clear and unambiguous" prediction of Christ's "endurance and coming" (presumably *second* coming) in the prophecies of *Hystaspes*: (Schürer 3.654-55).

Strom. 6.5.43.1: ὡς οἱοί τε ἦσαν δέχεσθαι τὴν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐεργεσίαν, τῶν χυδαίων ἀνθρώπων διέκρινεν, δηλώσει πρὸς τῷ Πέτρῳ Κηρύγματι ὁ ἀπόστολος λέγων Παῦλος· «λάβετε καὶ τὰς Ἑλληνικὰς βίβλους. ἐπίγνωτε Σίβυλλαν, ὡς δηλοῖ ἓνα θεὸν καὶ τὰ μέλλοντα ἔσεσθαι, καὶ τὸν Ὑστάσπην λαβόντες ἀνάγνωτε, καὶ εὐρήσετε πολλῷ τηλαυγέστερον καὶ σαφέστερον γεγραμμένον τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ καθὼς παράταξις

it clearly means "by free will," as contrasted with "of necessity" (ἀναγκαστικῶς): Ὁ θεός, εἰ τῷ εἶναι ποιεῖ, ἀναγκαστικῶς ποιεῖ ἢ ποιεῖ, εἰ δὲ τῷ βούλεσθαι ποιεῖ, αὐθεντικῶς ποιεῖ· αὐθεντικῶς δὲ ποιῶν ὅσα βούλεται καὶ οἷα βούλεται καὶ ὅτε βούλεται ποιεῖ.

The emphasis on divine sovereignty is encountered again in Did. Caec. *Trin.*, who, interestingly, uses this word in the context of communication with *prophets* and apostles: "But God's holy spirit issue commands to prophets and apostles authoritatively, as God and master, as was shown in the prior chapters (τὸ δὲ ἅγιον πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ αὐθεντικῶς προφήταις καὶ ἀποστόλοις προστάττει, ὡς θεὸς καὶ δεσπότης, καθὰ ἐν τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις κεφαλαίοις ἀποδειχθεῖ) (my trans.).

BDAG s.v. "with perfect clarity" (citing). Lampe: s.v. 4: "expressly" seems incorrect in light of this example from Didymus: the point here is rather that God communicated with authority that implies freedom.

See Cambe, *Kerygma Petri*, 351 and note 1: a. with authority;

ποιήσουσι τῷ Χριστῷ πολλοὶ βασιλεῖς, μισοῦντες αὐτὸν καὶ τοὺς φοροῦντας τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ καὶ τοὺς πιστοὺς αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὴν ὑπομονὴν καὶ τὴν παρουσίαν αὐτοῦ.»

What we see here is consciousness of the various modes in which prophets prophesy the career of Christ: the Sibyl obscurely, Hystaspes more clearly. [Cambe 64 has French trans. of this section of *KP*]

Cf. Reagan, 37, and

Luke 24:25-26; *Epist. Apost.* 19*: "If, therefore, all the words which were spoken by the prophets have been fulfilled in me (for I myself was in them), how much more shall that which I say unto you come to pass indeed, that he which sent me may be glorified by you and by them that believe on me"—Carl Schmidt, *Geschpräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern* (TU 43; Leipzig: Hunrich, 1919), 192 (Ethiopic chapt. 31), where Jesus explains how scripture applies to himself.

In short, since scripture is inspired—and therefore obscure/polyvalent—it demands a holy⁶² interpreter: Scripture cannot disclose its full mystery: "it can be made known only by special initiation and instruction" (Von Campenhausen, *Formation*, 304).

Clement of Alexandria makes similar points, noting that the obscurity of prophetic diction demands "initiated" interpreters—and he does so in language redolent of 2 Pet 1:18-21.⁶³

⁶² Does one need a holy or inspired or initiated interpreter?

⁶³ Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 6.15.128.1-3=*Preaching of Peter* 4a and 4b in NTA:

ὅθεν καὶ ὁ Πέτρος ἐν τῷ Κηρύγματι περὶ τῶν ἀποστόλων λέγων φησὶν·
 «ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀναπτύξαντες τὰς βίβλους ἃς εἶχομεν τῶν προφητῶν, ἃ μὲν διὰ παραβολῶν, ἃ δὲ δι' αἰνιγμάτων, ἃ δὲ ἀϋθεντικῶς καὶ αὐτολεξεῖ τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ὀνομαζόντων, εὔρομεν καὶ τὴν παρουσίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ (5) τὸν θάνατον καὶ τὸν σταυρὸν καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς κολάσεις πάσας ὅσας ἐποίησαν αὐτῷ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, καὶ τὴν ἔγερσιν καὶ τὴν εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀνάληψιν πρὸ τοῦ Ἱεροσόλυμα κτισθῆναι, καθὼς ἐγγράπτο ταῦτα (2.) πάντα, ἃ ἔδει αὐτὸν παθεῖν καὶ μετ' αὐτὸν ἃ ἔσται. ταῦτα οὖν ἐπιγνόντες ἐπιστεύσαμεν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τῶν γεγραμμένων εἰς αὐτόν.»
 (3.) καὶ μετ' ὀλίγα ἐπιφέρει πάλιν θεία προνοία τὰς προφητείας γεγενῆσθαι παριστὰς ὧδε·
 «ἔγνωμεν γὰρ ὅτι ὁ θεὸς αὐτὰ προσέταξεν ὄντως, καὶ οὐδὲν ἄτερο γραφῆς λέγομεν.»

But we opened the books of the prophets which we had, which partly in parables, partly in enigmas, partly with certainty and in clear words name Christ Jesus, and found his coming, his death, his crucifixion and all the rest of the tortures which the Jews inflicted on him, his resurrection and his assumption to heaven before the foundation of Jerusalem [i.e. heavenly Jerusalem], how all was written that he had to suffer and what would be after him. Recognising this, we believed God in consequence of what is written of (in reference to) him" (trans. from NTA).

Strom. 6.15.129.4: "But prophecy does not employ figurative forms in the expressions for the sake of beauty of diction. But from the fact that truth appertains not to all, it is veiled in manifold ways, causing the **light to arise** only on those who are **initiated** into knowledge, who seek the truth through love." ἡ προφητεία δὲ οὐδ' ὅλως τοὺς περὶ τὰς λέξεις σχηματισμοὺς ἐπιτηδεύει διὰ τὸ κάλλος τῆς φράσεως, τῷ δὲ μὴ πάντων εἶναι τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐπικρύπτεται πολυτρόπως, μόνοις τοῖς εἰς γνῶσιν **μεμυημένοις**, τοῖς δι' ἀγάπην ζητοῦσι τὴν ἀλήθειαν, τὸ φῶς ἀνατέλλουσα. [cf. 2 Pet 1:19: φωσφόρος ἀνατείλη]

We could multiply examples. So, for instance, Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7.30: "But those who have lived a life akin to that of the prophets and under divine inspiration [ἐνθέως], and who have devoted all their time to studying the sacred scriptures, will explain the prophecies, from which we conjecture Plato also borrowed, to people who are suitable because their life is pure and because they desire to learn about the things of God."

[One move is to require a divinely inspired interpreter—someone with the same spirit that inspired the initial text. Cf. Western text of Acts on Acts 8, where this is what resolves the question of who this text is about.]

Tatian, Or. 12.3 "divine interpretations (τασ θιοτατασ ερμηνειασ)

Thus I am contending that 2 Peter 1, in a manner consonant with these second-century authors, is striving to present Peter as one such initiate, as a man who could see Christ as he truly was, and who, therefore, can see Christ where he appears in Scripture. In a sense it poses the question, How can a passage such as Psalm 2:7 be read Christologically? Because God provided the hermeneutical key when he initiated Peter.

For the speech of Psalms 2:7 functioning as a key: cf. Luke 24 (Jesus explains where it speaks of him); *Kerygma Petri* Frag 5: when Jesus himself enunciates the words of Jeremiah, they are clearer for the Apostles (Cambe, *Kerygma*, 347); Frag. 9 Cambe: "naming" Jesus: along one line of thought, Christ was "named" in the prophets. If this meant uttering his title, could the author of 2 Peter think **ἀγαπητός was a title (Bauckham), now known to be applicable to Christ when found in scripture?**

"And somewhat later he adds the following, stating that the prophecies have taken place through the divine providence: 'For we recognize that God enjoined them, and we say nothing apart from Scripture.'"

This seems highly relevant to 2 Pet 1:16-21, where what Peter made known was Christ's "coming" (parousia), which is said to be concordant with the inspired word of God. Here in the *Preaching*, Peter expresses the divine origin of Scripture (θεία προνοία τὰς προφητείας γεγενῆσθαι) and preaches nothing apart from it (οὐδὲν ἄτερο γραφῆς λέγομεν)! Scripture was sometimes unclear in its "naming" of Jesus Christ.

V. Concluding Implications

There are several reasons why it would suit a second-century author to portray Peter and Scripture in this manner.

1. It avoids the anti-Pauline complications of some other moments from Peter's life. For example, Matt 16:16-19 would certainly defend the authority of Peter. But this very passage was adduced in the Pseudo-Clementines to champion Peter *over* Paul: Paul has no personal experience with Jesus; the very authority given uniquely to Peter was passed on to Clement.⁶⁴ The same could be said for making any appeal to Christ's having "explained" various matters "privately" to his disciples (Mark 4). It would seem that 2 Peter is reluctant to employ any defense of Peter's dignity that use criteria that exclude Paul?

2. Might this help account for other elements in 2 Peter? Consider the cryptic expression in 2 Pet 1:9: the person who fails to grow in virtue τυφλός ἐστιν μωπάζων. The word μωπάζων is extremely rare, and seems not to mean "myopic." Could the author be playing off of the two stages of initiation? Peter is an *epoptes*; the unvirtuous are still blindfolded, groping about in the dark (cf. the Vulgate: *caecus est et manu temptans*). The author could not have used μσστης, even if that were the stage of initiation to which he referred, since this term (and cognates: μύειν*) were used so often for initiation en masse (Aristophanes *Pax* 374, and Nock's comment (Essays, 2.793n6); Clinton.

In conclusion, a unified reading of the pericope might go like this.

When we put forth Jesus' "power and coming" (i.e. his mighty second coming) we were not following mere myths. Here are two reasons:

1. We are in fact full initiates, having witnessed the bright light of his majesty and heard the divine voice. Being initiates means that we—and more to the point, *I*, who am writing to you—are the sort of people who were spiritually capable of seeing beyond the surface of Jesus' flesh and blood so as to perceive his true, glorious nature.

2. We heard with our own ears God's confirmation that Psa 2:7 finds fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This has a variety of implications, not least, hermeneutical. This passage, which seems to speak of the king of Israel, speaks, in fact, of Jesus Christ. We heard this directly from God, and this alerts us to the fact that the Scripture refers in surprising and unexpected ways to Jesus.

3. Thus we have the prophetic word, which is to say Psalm 2 and its ilk, more certain. That is, it is more fully confirmed than it was before God fulfilled it by applying it audibly to Christ, and *we* have it more certain *than do other people*. Our spiritual capacity to perceive Jesus' divinity on the holy mountain, and our experience of initiation into the highest grade of his mysteries, means that we, better than any others, can also see Jesus in the Scriptures; and the divine confirmation that this one particular passage

⁶⁴ Epistula Clementis 1.2; 2.1, 6.3

applies to Christ provides us a hermeneutical key for scripture in general, and authorizes us to find in several other ambiguous, parabolic passages genuine prophecies about Christ's *second* coming.

4. *You* would do well to attend to the prophetic word until the day breaks and *your* own hearts receive similar illumination. You live now in the "gloom," but you *will* see the light. Not everyone has been to the mountaintop; for the rest, they may be grateful that they have the scriptures and the apostles to cling to (cf. 2 Pet 3:2). Scripture can be read many different ways, so it is critical to understand it in the way *we* propose.

5. Scripture is no simple matter: it is not "of its own interpretation." The reason that it is not self-interpreting is that it comes directly from God. Like other divine utterances—think especially of oracles—this means it can be cryptic; it means that it needs a reliable interpreter. The people who could see Jesus' divinity are the people who can see the right interpretation of prophecy—and what they see is that there are predictions of his *two* comings.

6. Peter does not say that one needs that because scripture is inspired one must be an inspired interpreter. There is a distinction. Here we might contrast him with Philo.

I think it behooves the author to make qualified interpretation a thing achieved in the past, not the province of every interpreter (cf. the reticence of Luther vis-à-vis the Schwarmen. On Philo and inspiration and the inspired interpretation, cf. Herzer 232-33.

Peter doesn't accuse his opponents of lack of Pneuma (Jude 19). I think he's eager to avoid the pneuma game.

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Jean Borella, *Guénonian Esoterism and Christian Mystery*.

balanced talk of how much was revealed. probably mythological commentary and genealogy (cf. Derveni Papyrus) myths, some claims about eschatology, but not too much. Plato, *Ep.* 7 (333E) complains that initiates are not joined by real philosophical learning. But the synthemata and symbola might have something. And note the way Plutarch refers to "teaching of our fathers as well as the mystical formulas (mystika symbola) of the cult of Dionysus, the knowledge of which we others share" (*Consol. ad uxorem*, 10 (611E)).

On the other hand,

François Bovon, "*Fragment Oxyrhynchus 840*, Fragment of a Lost Gospel, Witness of an Early Christian Controversy over Purity," *JBL* 119 (2000), 705-728 .

Bowden, Hugh. *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. 44-46 balanced view of how much learning happened, and how much was left to individual experience and contemplation.

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L. R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States* (5 vols, 1896-1909; Oxford: Clarendon Press, Vol. 3, 1907)

[130-31: also lays out a sequence: "katharmos, initial purification; teletes paradosis, mystic communication, epopteia, sacred vision, anadesis or stemmon epidesis, an honorary crowning with garlands; finally eudaimonia, happiness that arises from friendship and communion with the deity.

He suspects that the drama entailed "some kind of *hieros logos*... explaining the sacred things that might be shown to the eyes of the privileged."]

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APPENDIX

Photius, *Epist.* 255.35-52 (in B. Laourdas and L.G. Westerink, *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, vols. 1-6.2 [*Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana*. Leipzig: Teubner, 1983-88).

Ὁ δὲ τῷ κορυφαίῳ Πέτρῳ εἶρηται, ἂν ὀρθῶς ἐπισκοπήσης, οὐδὲν (35) ἀπορούμενον περιόψει. ἐκεῖνος γὰρ εἰπὼν ‘καὶ ταύτην τὴν φωνὴν ἡμεῖς ἠκούσαμεν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐνεχθεῖσαν’, εἶτα ἐπαγαγὼν ‘καὶ ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον· τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον’, οὐχ ἑαυτῷ φησιν βεβαιότερον, ἄπαγε,

μάλιστά γε προαναφωνῶν ὡς ‘ἐπόπται γενηθέντες τῆς τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μεγαλειότητος ἐγνωρίσαμεν ὑμῖν τὴν τούτου (40) δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν’—τί γὰρ ἂν εἶη τῆς αὐτοψίας καὶ τοῦ ἀκοῆς ἰδίας ἀναπετάσαι εἰς ὑποδοχὴν τῆς ἄνωθεν φωνῆς καὶ τὴν πατρικὴν ἐναυγασθῆναι μαρτυρίαν ἄλλο βεβαιότερον; —, <ἀλλὰ βεβαιότερον> @1 ἐκείνοις φησὶν οἷς ἔγραφεν, ὡσανεὶ λέγων ‘εἴ τις ἐπιδιστάζουσαν οἷς μαρτυροῦμεν ἔχοι τὴν γνώμην, εἰς τὸν προφητικὸν ἀποσκοπεῖτω λόγον, (45) βεβαιότερον ὄντα γε τῆς τῶν πολλῶν περὶ ἡμᾶς ἀμφισβητήσεως πάντως· οὐκέτι γὰρ καὶ οὗτος, ὡς ἂν τινες εὐχερέστερον περὶ ἄλλων ὑπολήψωνται, ἀνθρωπίνης προέρχεται δόξης’. ὅτι δὲ οὐχ ἑαυτῷ βεβαιότερον ἔφησεν, ἀλλ’ οἷς ἔγραφεν, σαφέστερον ὑποκατιῶν ἐκιδιδάσκει· ἐπιφέρει γὰρ ‘ὅ̄ καλῶς ποιεῖτε προσέχοντες’ (προσέχοντες ὑμεῖς, φησὶν, οὐκ ἐγώ) (50) ‘ὡς λύχνῳ φαίνοντι ἐν ἀρχμηρῷ τόπῳ, ἕως οὗ ἡμέρα διαυγάσῃ καὶ φωσφόρος ἀνατείλῃ ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν’.

Now what was said to X Peter,

For since he said, "And we heard this voice borne from heaven," then added, "and we have more firm the prophetic word," he does not say more firm for himself—far from it—especially having just said that "having become eoptae of the majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ we made known to you his power and coming"—for what else could [ἀναπετάσαι ?] more firm than first-person sight and audition of the voice from above and the the lighting up (enaugasthenai?) of the fathers testimony? But he means "more firm" for them to whom he was writing, as if to say, "if someone has a shaky opinion about what we testify, let him look at the prophetic word, which is more firm, indeed, than any doubt (ἀμφισβητήσεως ?) about us.

Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. 2 Pet.* (Fragmenta in Acta apostolorum et in epistulas catholicas)

Ἀλλ’ ἡμεῖς οὐχ οὕτω, φησὶν, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐθεασάμεθα, μετ’ αὐτοῦ ὄντες ἐν τῷ ὄρει· ἔχομεν οὖν καὶ τοὺς προφήτας ταύτην αὐτὴν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἡμῖν προμηνύσαντας, καὶ οὕτως διὰ τῆς ὄψεως βεβαιότερος τῶν προφητῶν ὁ λόγος ἡμῖν ἐγένετο· ἃ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι εἶπον, ταῦτα παρὼν ὁ Χριστὸς ἐπιστάσατο. Καὶ μάρτυρες ἡμεῖς, οἱ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἀκούσαντες τοῦ Πατρός. Εὐ δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς ποιήσετε τῷ προφητικῷ πειθόμενοι λόγῳ· οὗτος γὰρ (25) τοὺς ἐν ἀγνοίᾳ φωταγωγεῖ, ἕως καθαρὸν ὑμῖν τὸ φῶς τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου διαφανῆ, καὶ ὁ νοητὸς ἕωςφόρος, τουτέστι Χριστὸς, ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν ἀνατείλῃ, μαρτυρηθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ Πατρός. [PG 74.1017]

But we are not so [like heretics], he says, but we saw the truth with our eyes when we were with him on the mountain. Therefore we have also the prophets telling us this same

truth ahead of time, and thus through the vision/sight, the word of the prophets has become for us more firm. For what the prophets spoke, Christ confirmed [ἐπιστώσατο?] when he came. And we were witnesses, who heard the testimony from the father. For you do well to trust the prophetic word. For this illumines those in ignorance, until the light of the gospel shine pure upon you. And the Noetic light-bringer, that is, Christ, will rise in your hearts, having been attested by the father.