of kinship, might have wanted Horrell to explore the significance of these differences more than he does. Others might wonder, too, particularly in relation to New Testament texts, what difference it would make to Horrell's assessment if we considered these texts as manifestations of Jewish literature, as many would, and which on occasion Horrell himself seems to concede. Following on from this, and in the context of a discussion of the so-called parting of the ways, it might be interesting to see whether amongst so-called separatist writers (those keen to present Jews and Christians as separate), language of a more 'ethnic' kind proliferates.

Much more could be said about a book, which, in spite of touching upon a welter of controversial issues, both historical and theoretical, does so in a sober and pellucid way and is bound to stimulate a good deal of debate moving forward.

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Studien zum Petrusevangelium. By Tobias Nicklas. (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 453.) Pp. viii + 299. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020. €134. 978 3 16 154061 5

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In 2004 Tobias Nicklas co-edited with Thomas Kraus a major critical edition of the Akhmim fragments of the Gospel and Apocalypse of Peter, followed in 2007 by an important multi-authored essay collection. Nicklas has maintained his interest especially in the Gospel fragment ever since, and a series of essays in German and English published over the past two decades is now helpfully collected into a single, monograph-like volume. There is inevitably a degree of overlap between the essays, and rather than summarising them one by one it seems preferable to identify some of the key themes in Nicklas's approach to this important non-canonical text.

According to Nicklas, the Gospel of Peter is – in one sense – dependent on all four canonical Gospels. This dependence is clear in the development of the Matthean story of the guard at Jesus' tomb and the Markan account of the women's visit to the tomb on Easter morning, but Nicklas is more interested in the (perhaps) less obvious links with Luke (for example, the role of Herod, Gospel of Peter 1–5; cf. Luke xxiii.6–12) and with John (for example, the decision not to break Jesus' legs, Gospel of Peter 14; cf. John xix.31–7). Yet Nicklas rejects a model of literary dependence that would have the Petrine evangelist working directly from copies of the four earlier Gospels. Again and again this evangelist treats inherited motifs with remarkable freedom. Here Pilate is subordinate to Herod; Joseph of Arimathea requests the privilege of burying Jesus' body before he has even been crucified; Jesus' legs are left unbroken not because he is already dead (and to fulfil Scripture) but, on the contrary, to prolong his agony; the (Matthean) cocktail of vinegar and bile here causes Jesus' death by poisoning him; and so on. Nicklas refers to the concepts of 'secondary orality' and 'social memory' to explain these transformations of traditional motifs, but he prefers his own terminology: these are *Inszenierungen* or 're-enactments' in which the

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author shows his familiarity with the broad outlines of the passion story yet asserts the creative freedom to re-tell it in his own way. As Nicklas rightly argues, this reflects a second-century context in which the four New Testament Gospels are known but not yet 'canonical' – in contrast to later 'apostolic memoirs' where the canonical accounts are embellished but not contradicted.

The study of the Gospel of Peter has been unduly influenced by the issue of 'docetism', arising from Eusebius' preservation of Serapion's statement that this text was used by a group he calls the *Doketai* and from the claim of the text that Jesus remained silent while being crucified, 'as having no pain' ('ὡς μηδέν<α> πόνον ἔχων': Gospel of Peter 10). Nicklas prefers to take ὡς here to mean 'as if', i.e. that Jesus did experience pain but acted as though he did not. More convincingly, in my view, he argues that the passage would not be 'docetic' even if it is understood causally, i.e. as claiming that Jesus was silent because he felt no pain. Evidence for this interpretation is found in early martyrological accounts where divine grace enables the martyrs to transcend physical pain and thus to show their superiority over their tormenters. Nicklas shows that, far from being in any way docetic, the Gospel of Peter strongly emphasises the bodily nature of Jesus's sufferings.

In this text Jesus is put to death by 'the Jews', more clearly than in any of the New Testament Gospels. Nicklas is of course well aware of the sensitivities around this theme, and he provides an excellent survey of the extensive recent discussion focusing especially on whether the text finally differentiates the perspective of the impenitent 'scribes, Pharisees and elders' from that of 'all the people', who are convinced of Jesus' righteousness by the signs accompanying his death (Gospel of Peter 28). Does this passage make this an ultimately 'pro-Jewish' text, perhaps even written from a Jewish Christian standpoint and holding out the hope of Jewish repentance and salvation? Nicklas leans towards a more 'optimistic' reading of this text, although his admirable attention to nuance and detail may underestimate the potential of all passion narratives to reinforce the early Christian projection of collective guilt onto 'the Jews' for the alleged crime of 'deicide'. Although Nicklas is doubtful that a figure such as Melito of Sardis promotes this fateful mythical construct specifically under the influence of the Gospel of Peter, the parallels with Melito's expressions of shock and horror at the 'murder' of the divine 'King of Israel' are hard to deny (*Peri Pascha* 94–6; cf. Gospel of Peter 11, 15).

In all these areas Nicklas remains within the bounds of existing scholarly debate, to which he provides excellent and up-to-date guidance as he stakes out his own positions. There is one point, however, that could transform the study of the Gospel of Peter. In the 2004 edition Nicklas and Kraus accept the consensus view that the second Petrine fragment in the Akhmim codex is derived from the Apocalypse of Peter, as the close relationship to the full text of this work, preserved in Ethiopic, might seem to suggest. In a landmark article from 2005, however, Nicklas seeks to revive the claim of M. R. James and others that the second Akhmim fragment may belong to the Gospel of Peter rather than the Apocalypse. If correct, this would almost double the extant material from the Gospel of Peter, which would then incorporate accounts of visionary experiences of the joys of the heavenly world and the torments of sinners in hell. Nicklas's case

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for this view is stated cautiously but convincingly, and it could be further substantiated by showing how the structure and content of the Akhmim Greek fragment is at multiple points incompatible with the version preserved in Ethiopic, in spite of the close parallels. This is a point on which further research is urgently required.

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Christian persecution in antiquity. By Wolfram Kinzig (trans. Markus Bockmuehl). Pp. viii + 177 incl. 2 maps. Waco, Tx: Baylor University Press, 2021. $29.99. 978 1 4813 1388 9

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In this succinct and thoughtful book, Wolfram Kinzig gives an account of a much-discussed, and possibly little understood, phenomenon, the persecution of Christians in antiquity. Kinzig, while aware of the difficulty of our primary material, almost exclusively Christian and by and large hortatory, whether martyr acts or martyr passions, believes that such material 'basically relate events that actually happened', and this against a growing swell of opinion which has preferred to talk about the myth of persecution, or to undermine the historical reliability of the primary material.

Kinzig, defining persecution of the Christians as the threatening or the carrying out of violence by official authorities that was indirectly or directly connected to the religion of the victims, then proceeds to tell what is roughly a chronological tale. He begins with the marginalisation of Christianity by Judaism, proceeding to persecution of Christians under Nero and Domitian. He then devotes chapters to two different periods, from 111 (the date of the so-called Trajanic rescript) to 249, and from Decius to Valerian (249–60), the break here being justified by the fact that the so-called Decian persecution (possibly misnamed as Decius' intention was not to persecute Christians *per se* but, through an edict, to compel members of the empire publicly to give veneration to the gods, an order with which many Christians were unable to conform) initiated blanket persecutions affecting Christians across the whole Roman Empire whereas the previous period had seen sporadic outbursts, which were geographically limited. He concludes with the so-called Diocletian persecution, which is possibly the first and only example of an emperor consciously initiating a persecutory policy. Persecution of Christians by the Goths and Sasanians is also discussed.

In the midst of this, Kinzig discusses the reasons for Christian persecution (a mixture of religious, social and economic), with helpful discussion of philosophical objections to Christianity, the form trials took, the controversies and ructions caused among Christian communities by those who complied with requests to sacrifice such as we find at the time of Decius and then Diocletian, numbers of deaths, modes of death and torture, and Christian responses to the violence (by and large passive or apologetic).

The book does not seek to make a contribution to scholarship in the form of a new thesis (its audience is clearly a general one) and the contours of its discussion are broadly conventional ones, which those who studied theology at university some time ago would recognise. Kinzig's broadly optimistic view of the source material will not be accepted by all professionals in the field; and some will

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