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FIRST PETER AND THE FEAST OF  
TABERNACLES

By NORMAN HILLYER

No commentator so much as hints at a possible link between First Peter and the Feast of Tabernacles. The title of this paper, therefore, perches on the height of presumption. But a word of explanation may be offered. A few years ago Jean Daniélou published a slender volume on *Primitive Christian Symbols*.<sup>1</sup> One chapter deals with the Feast of Tabernacles, and although First Peter is not explored in this connection, one reader was struck with the number of symbols and themes associated with Tabernacles which also occur in First Peter, and it seemed to him worth while to follow up the clues.

We shall first notice how the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated in Judaism before AD 70, and something of its significance; next glance at the place the festival occupied in the early Church; and then see what links between the two First Peter may have to suggest.

I. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES IN JUDAISM

The Feast of Tabernacles<sup>2</sup> was the most popular of all the festive occasions in Israel. It was celebrated at the time of year when it was no hardship to obey the injunction attached to

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<sup>1</sup> Burns and Oates, London (ET 1964).

<sup>2</sup> Sources: A. Edersheim, *The Temple: its Ministry and Services*, RTS, London (1874) 232-249; H. K. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum NT aus Talmud und Midrash*, München (1922-56) ii, 774-812 (Exkurs: Das Laubhüttenfest); H. Riesenfeld, *Jésus Transfiguré* (Acta Sem. Neot. Upsaliensis XVI) Copenhagen (1947) 146-205; P. Volz, *Das Neujahrsfest Jahwes (Laubhüttenfest)*, Tübingen (1912); H. St. J. Thackeray, *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship* (Schweich Lectures XIII, 1920), Oxford University Press, London (1921) 61-79; W. A. Heide, *The Day of Yahweh*, Macmillan, London (1929) 197-249; G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. (1927) 43-48; J. Pedersen, *Israel III-IV*, Oxford University Press, London (1940) 418-425.

this festival, 'You shall rejoice in your feast'.<sup>3</sup> All the crops had been safely stored, the fruits brought in, and the vintage completed.

But it was far more than merely the harvest thanksgiving, 'the Feast of Ingathering'.<sup>4</sup> The festival had other significant titles. As 'the Feast of Booths'<sup>5</sup> it looked back to Israel's dwelling in the wilderness in the forty years after the Exodus from Egypt. As emphatically 'the Feast' *par excellence*,<sup>6</sup> and 'the Feast of the Lord',<sup>7</sup> it looked forward to the final joyful harvest, when Israel's mission on earth should be completed by gathering all the nations of the world to the Lord, as prophesied by Zechariah (14:16). Josephus describes it as 'the holiest and greatest feast',<sup>8</sup> and in similar fashion Philo, and the Rabbis throughout the Mishnah, distinguish it from all the other religious celebrations.

As on the occasion of the other great annual festivals, Passover and Pentecost, all the men of Israel were to appear before the Lord for the Feast of Tabernacles at the place which He should choose.<sup>9</sup>

The Feast of Tabernacles (תּוֹבֵן) strictly speaking lasted seven days—from Tishri 15 to 21—but was followed by an Octave on Tishri 22. The extra day is ascribed by the Book of Jubilees (32:27f.) to Jacob, which means that the addition was a very ancient one lost in the mists of time. This eighth day, though closely linked with the Feast of Tabernacles, had its own sacrifices and ritual; but on it the people no longer had to live in the booths.<sup>10</sup> Both first and eighth days were reckoned as sabbaths of festive rest in the Lord, when servile work was forbidden.<sup>11</sup>

The month Tishri, during which the Feast of Tabernacles fell, was the seventh month. What the seventh day, or sabbath,

<sup>3</sup> Dt. 16:14. The importance and popularity of the Feast can be judged by the fact that in AD 66 virtually a whole city of the size and standing of Lydda, the capital of a toparchy (Josephus, *Wars* 3.55) went up to Jerusalem for the celebration. Only fifty persons were left in the entire place (*ibid.* 2.515).

<sup>4</sup> Ex. 23:16; 34:22.

<sup>5</sup> Lv. 23:34, 43; Dt. 16:13, 16; 31:10; 2 Ch. 8:13; Ezr. 3:4.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Ki. 8:2; 2 Ch. 5:3; 7:8, 9; Mishnah *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> Lv. 23:39.

<sup>8</sup> *Ant.* 8.100.

<sup>9</sup> Dt. 16:16.

<sup>10</sup> A. Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Longmans, London (1883) ii, 156, 176 note; Strack-Billerbeck, ii, 808-812.

<sup>11</sup> Lv. 23:25, 32; *Gen. R.* 48.10; *Num. R.* 14.2; *Eccles. R.* 11.1.1; Riesenfeld, *Jésus Transfiguré*, 188.

was in relation to the week, the seventh month seems to have been in relation to the year. It completed not only the liturgical cycle, but also the agricultural year. It marked the autumnal equinox, heralded the long-awaited 'former rains', and determined the timing of a sabbatical year.<sup>12</sup> Beginning on the fifteenth day of this seventh month—that is, at full moon, when the month had, so to speak, attained its full strength—it was fitting that the joyful Feast of Tabernacles fell just five days after the Day of Atonement (Tishri 10). That was the solemn day on which the sin of Israel had been removed, and the nation's covenant relation with God restored. Thus a sanctified people could keep a holy feast of harvest joy unto the Lord, just as in the truest sense it will do so 'in that day'<sup>13</sup> when the deeper meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles is perfectly fulfilled.

Three things specially marked the Feast of Tabernacles: its joyous festivities, the dwelling in booths, and the peculiar sacrifices and rites of the week.

The first characteristic, joy, was naturally appropriate to a 'feast of ingathering'. The year's toil had with the Lord's blessing reaped its reward, and the people could truly be 'altogether joyful'.<sup>14</sup> All were to join in—not only the family and the rest of the household, but 'the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow who are within your towns'.<sup>15</sup> Funeral eulogies and fasting were forbidden for the week.

Celebrations began after the regular afternoon sacrifice and went on throughout the following night. Flutes were played, and so were harps, lyres, and cymbals. Whoever could play a musical instrument did so, and whoever could sing sang. Others stamped their feet, slapped their thighs, clapped their hands, leaped or danced, each one to the best of his ability, while songs and hymns of praise were being recited.<sup>16</sup> No wonder the Mishnah declares: 'He who has not seen the rejoicing (at the Feast of Tabernacles) has never seen rejoicing in his life.'<sup>17</sup>

But days of rejoicing were yet to be days of sacrifice. More sacrifices were offered at the Feast of Tabernacles than at any

<sup>12</sup> Dt. 31:10.

<sup>14</sup> Dt. 16:15.

<sup>16</sup> Maimonides, *Book of Seasons* VI. viii, 12f.

<sup>13</sup> Zc. 14:20; Riesenfeld, *Jésus Transfiguré*, 188f.

<sup>15</sup> Dt. 16:14.

<sup>17</sup> *Sukkah* 51a.

other time in the year. No Israelite was to appear before the Lord empty-handed. Every man was bidden to give as he was able, according to the blessing of the Lord his God,<sup>18</sup> and to welcome as guests the poor, the stranger, the Levite, and the homeless, for the Lord's sake.<sup>19</sup>

The second characteristic of this feast would remind the people of Israel, if not of their dispersion, yet of their being strangers and pilgrims in the earth. For seven days all that were Israelites-born were to dwell in booths. They were commanded to do this so that 'your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt'.<sup>20</sup>

Harvest-time was a highly appropriate season at which to remind the Israelites of the wonderful providence which had fed and sheltered them in the wilderness, where they had no land to call their own, and where there was neither harvest nor vintage. The transition from nomadic to agricultural life had greatly enriched the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles. The festival booths recalled Israel's long and weary wanderings in contrast with the plenty and comfort of settled possession. Yet at the same time the booths reminded them that God's people were still to regard themselves as sojourners and pilgrims, for they were but passing through the present world on their way to their heavenly home with the Lord.

The Mishnah tractate *Sukkah* specifies the size and constitution of the festive booths with considerable care—evidently to safeguard the law. A booth of three walls and a roof was to be constructed from the intertwined<sup>21</sup> boughs of living trees, and solely for the purpose of the festival. No branch was valid which was withered, taken from an idolatrous grove, or, adds the Mishnah solemnly, 'got by robbery'.<sup>22</sup> These booths, and not their houses, were to be the regular dwellings of all Israel during the week. Except in very heavy rain, defined in the Mishnah as heavy enough to spoil the porridge,<sup>23</sup> they were to eat, sleep, pray, and study in the booths. Only those absent on some pious duty, the sick and their attendants, women, slaves, and infants who were still depending on their mothers were excused.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Dt. 16:16f.

<sup>19</sup> Ne. 8:9-12.

<sup>20</sup> Lv. 23:43.

<sup>21</sup> *Sukkah* is derived from סָכַךְ, to entwine.

<sup>22</sup> *Sukkah* 3.1.

<sup>23</sup> *Sukkah* 2.9.

<sup>24</sup> *Sukkah* 2.4, 8.

Every worshipper carried an *ethrog*, a citrus fruit, in his left hand, and in his right the *lulab*, or palm, tied together with myrtle and willow. This was to fulfil the command to 'take the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook'.<sup>25</sup> The *ethrog* was to exemplify the fruits of the good land which the Lord had given them. It may well be that the *lulab* bundle was intended to remind Israel of the stages of the wilderness journey. The palm branches would recall the valleys and plains, the 'boughs of leafy trees' (interpreted by the Rabbis as myrtle)<sup>26</sup> the bushes on the mountain heights, and the willow those water-courses from which God had given his people drink. The *lulab*, 'three hand-breadths in length and long enough to shake',<sup>27</sup> was used in the Temple on each of the seven festive days, even small boys, if old enough to shake it, being bound to carry one. There are many representations in the Jewish catacombs of pilgrims carrying the *lulab* and *ethrog*. Apparently the larger the sheaf and the heavier the citron, the greater the devotion. Some of the Pharisees appear to be almost bowed down by the branches they were carrying.

The *lulab* and *ethrog* part of the ceremony was not restricted to use in the Temple itself. It could take place wherever Jews were to be found. Outsiders sometimes may have viewed the proceedings with a jaundiced eye. The Targum to Esther (3:8) describes how Haman instructed King Ahasuerus about the wicked customs of the Jews: 'On the 15th Tishri they make booths on the roofs of their houses, and go out into our gardens and pull off our palm-branches, pick our oranges, tear away our greenery, and devastate our gardens. They pull up their own hedges and spare them not, and make for themselves *hosannas* (i.e. the green boughs waved as *Hosanna* was shouted in Psalm 118), and they rejoice and go round with their *hosannas* and jump about like kids, and we do not know whether they are blessing us or cursing us. And they call it the Feast of Tabernacles.'

The third characteristic of the Feast of Tabernacles concerned its unusual offerings, which were remarkable in a number of ways.

<sup>25</sup> Lv. 23:40.

<sup>26</sup> *Sukkah* 3.2, 4; *Lv. R.* 30.9; Strack-Billerbeck, ii, 780-793.

<sup>27</sup> *Sukkah* 3.1.

First, the sacrifices at this feast were far more numerous than at any other festival, amounting to twice the number of lambs and rams, and five times as many bullocks as enjoined even for the Passover. On each of the seven days at Tabernacles, 'one kid of the goats' was offered as a sin-offering, and two rams and fourteen lambs as a burnt-offering. In addition to these, no less than seventy bullocks were sacrificed over the seven days, beginning with thirteen on the first day and diminishing by one each day until on the seventh day seven were offered.<sup>28</sup> All twenty-four orders of the priesthood—over seven thousand priests, together with some ten thousand Levites<sup>29</sup>—were engaged during the seven days of Tabernacles.

The second unusual feature was that the number of the burnt-sacrifices, each kind by itself or all of them together, is always divisible by the sacred number *seven*. We have for the week 70 bullocks, 14 rams, and 98 ( $14 \times 7$ ) lambs, or altogether 182 animals ( $26 \times 7$ ). To these must be added 336 ( $48 \times 7$ ) tenths of ephahs of flour for the cereal-offering. The sacred number seven appeared at the Feast of Unleavened Bread only in the number of its days, and at Pentecost in the timing of its observance ( $7 \times 7$  days after Passover). But by contrast the Feast of Tabernacles lasted seven days, took place in the seventh month, and as we have seen had the number seven impressed in a remarkable manner on its characteristic sacrifices.

Seven as a number<sup>30</sup> signifying completion, fulfilment, perfection, appears so frequently in Scripture from the creation narrative onwards as to need no further comment. The Feast of Tabernacles marked the culmination both of the agricultural and of the liturgical year, and thus, as foreshadowed in Zechariah 14, symbolized the final harvest and the culmination of history. This interpretation was taken up by the early Church. Thus, Methodius of Olympus (d. c. 311) writes: 'When the times have reached their goal, and God ceases to work on this creation, in the seventh month, on the great day

<sup>28</sup> Nu. 29:12-34. The festival and daily sacrifices together totalled 215, 'the number of the years of Israel's being in Egypt': J. Lightfoot, *Works* (ed. J. R. Pitman) Vol. ix, 'The Temple Service', Dove, London (1823) 181.

<sup>29</sup> J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, SCM, London (ET 1969) 204.

<sup>30</sup> G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids (ET 1964) ii, 627-635.

of the Resurrection, the Feast of our Tabernacles shall be proclaimed by the Lord. . . . Then, in the seventh thousand of years, the fruits of the earth shall all come to an end, men shall no longer beget nor be begotten, and God shall rest from the creation of the world.'<sup>31</sup>

The third peculiarity of these sacrifices—that of the daily reduction in the number of bullocks offered—is not really explained in the Talmud. But the point is made that these sacrifices were to atone, not for Israel, but for all the nations of the world: 'There were seventy bullocks, to correspond to the number of the seventy nations in the world.'<sup>32</sup> The missionary obligation had been imposed upon Israel's religion from the beginning in the divine promise that in Abraham ('father of many nations') all the families of the earth would find blessing (Gn. 12:3). The dispersion of Israel was construed as an act of providence for the benefit of the world, a sowing of seed over all lands, from which the Word of God would everywhere spring up.<sup>33</sup> The Septuagint may have been so called for the same reason: the 'seventy' translation offered the Word of God to all the nations of the world.

At the same time, however, the Rabbis were careful to draw attention to the significance of the eighth day of the feast. God had said, 'On the eighth day there shall be an assembly for yourselves' (Nu. 29:35). The situation was like a king who made a feast for seven days and invited all the citizens. When the feast was over, he said to his friend, 'Now that we have both done our duty towards the citizens, let us revel in a feast for ourselves.'<sup>34</sup> In similar vein the Mishnah declared that though praises were offered to the Lord by others, Israel's praises were more pleasing to Him than all the rest.<sup>35</sup>

By the eve of the Feast of Tabernacles the thousands of pilgrims had erected their booths on roofs, and in courtyards, gardens, streets and squares,<sup>36</sup> giving Jerusalem an unusually picturesque appearance. As the early autumn evening set in,

<sup>31</sup> Methodius, *Banquet* ix. 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Sukkah* 55b; *Shabbath* 88b; other conjectures: Lightfoot, *Temple Service*, 180-181.

<sup>33</sup> L. Baeck, *The Essence of Judaism*, Macmillan, London (ET 1936) 73f.

<sup>34</sup> *Tanhuma B. Phinehas* 78b; *Sukkah* 47a; Strack-Billerbeck, 809. The single bullock offered on the eighth day was for 'the unique nation', i.e. for Israel (*Gemara on Sukkah* 5.6).

<sup>35</sup> *Sukkah* 55b, quoting 2 Sa. 23:1 and Ps. 22:4.

<sup>36</sup> Ne. 8:16.

the priests' trumpets on the Temple Mount announced the commencement of the feast.

During the night the priests were kept busy. The altar of burnt-offering had to be cleansed, and the following day's sacrifices and offerings examined. While the morning sacrifice was being prepared, one priest headed an enthusiastic procession to the Pool of Siloam. There he drew water into a golden flagon, capable of holding three *log* (just over two pints).<sup>36a</sup>

This ceremony of the water-drawing was highly popular with the crowds, though its precise origin and first significance are uncertain. 1 Samuel 7:6 refers to a libation of water as a religious rite. Isaiah 12:3, so far from suggesting the ceremony, may refer to it.<sup>36b</sup> At all events, by the later days of the Temple it had become a prominent part of the ceremony.

Tabernacles came at the beginning of what should be the rainy season. Prayers for rain—offered on behalf of Gentiles as well as Jews<sup>37</sup>—were therefore customary at the Feast,<sup>38</sup> and in course of time came to be associated with the eighth day in particular. Even today the prayer for rain is retained in the synagogue liturgy,<sup>39</sup> and although in western countries rain in winter is no great boon, in Palestine it has always been awaited with intense anxiety. Rain is the life-blood of the Holy Land. Good rains mean prosperity; want of rain spells thirst and ruin.

As the procession started from Siloam, another went to a place called Mozah (Arab Qaloniyyeh) on the Lydda-Jaffa road, west of Jerusalem,<sup>40</sup> where willows grew in great abundance. Long thin boughs were gathered, and brought back to the Temple. There, as the priests blew their trumpets, the willows were banked up and over the altar of burnt-offering, so as to form a kind of leafy canopy. Then the ordinary sacrifice proceeded, the priest who had gone to Siloam so timing his return that he arrived just as his brethren carried up the pieces of the sacrifice to lay them on the altar. As he entered by the Water-gate, so named after this ceremony, he was

<sup>36a</sup> Strack-Billerbeck, ii, 799-805.

<sup>36b</sup> Cf. also 2 Sa. 23:16; Riesenfeld, *Jésus Transfiguré*, 25.

<sup>37</sup> *Midrash Psalms* 109.4.

<sup>38</sup> 1 Ki. 8:36; 2 Ch. 6:26; Zc. 14:17; Thackeray, *Septuagint*, 62f.

<sup>39</sup> H. Adler, *Service of the Synagogue: Tabernacles*,<sup>9</sup> Routledge (n.d.) 249-251.

<sup>40</sup> *Sukkah* 4.5; Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 50.



received by a threefold trumpet blast. The priest then went up the rise of the altar and poured into two silver bowls the wine of the drink-offering and the water from Siloam. Meanwhile the people shouted 'Raise your hand!' to show that he really poured the water into the bowl. For, sharing the objections of the Sadducees, Alexander Jannaeus, the Maccabean priest-king (about 95 BC), had shown his contempt for the Pharisees by spilling the water upon the ground. The watching crowd promptly pelted him with their *ethrogs*. But his foreign bodyguard intervened, and six thousand Jews were said to have been massacred within the Temple precincts.<sup>41</sup>

As the wine and water were poured into the bowls,<sup>42</sup> the Temple music began, and the Hallel (Pss. 113-118) was sung to the accompaniment of flutes. When the choir chanted the opening and closing words of Psalm 118, 'O give thanks to the Lord', and again at verse 25, '*Hosanna*, save us, we beseech thee, O Lord!' all the worshippers shook their *lulabs* to the four points of the compass,<sup>43</sup> in acknowledgment that their God, whose gifts were being praised, was to be found everywhere.

The water-pouring ceremony was considered by the Rabbis to be connected with the dispensation of rain, the annual fall of which would be determined by God at that feast. 'Offer waters before me on the Feast of Sukkoth that the rains of the year may be blessed to you.'<sup>44</sup> The theme was also spiritualized. Prayers for rain were associated with the resurrection of the dead<sup>45</sup>—a thought not explained by the fact that rain revives nature, for that function would usually be assigned to the dew.<sup>46</sup>

But the main application of the water-pouring, according to the Midrash,<sup>47</sup> was in line with our Lord's own interpretation in John 7, and referred to the future outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as predicted—probably in allusion to this very rite—by Isaiah. Thus the Talmud<sup>48</sup> explains: 'Why is the name of it called, The drawing out of water? Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said (Is.

<sup>41</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 13.13.5; *Sukkah* 48b.

<sup>42</sup> Whence the mixture flowed by a pipe to Kedron and so theoretically to Jordan: *JTS* 13 (1912) 226.

<sup>43</sup> *Sukkah* 3.9.

<sup>44</sup> *b. Rosh Hashanah* 16a.

<sup>45</sup> *Derakhoth* 5.2; *Taanith* 1.1.

<sup>46</sup> Abrahams, *Studies*, 53; *cf.* Ho. 14:5; Zc. 8:12.

<sup>47</sup> *Genesis R.* 70.

<sup>48</sup> *j. Sukkah* 5.1; *cf.* Is. 44:3, 4.

12:3): "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." Hence both the feast and the peculiar joy are alike designated as those of 'the drawing out of water', for, according to the Midrash,<sup>49</sup> 'the Holy Spirit does not rest where there is idleness, or sadness, or ribaldry, or frivolity, or empty speech, but only where there is joy'.

The reason for using wine in the ceremony is not discussed by the Rabbis, and wine has never been a ritual part of the later celebration of the feast, though as a concomitant of 'rejoicing' it has always been freely used.<sup>50</sup>

Another ceremony took place at the close of the festive sacrifices. On each of the first six days of the feast the priests formed in procession and made a circuit of the altar, chanting '*Hosanna*, save us, we beseech thee, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech thee, give us success!'<sup>51</sup> But on the seventh day the priests circled the altar seven times, plainly recalling how the walls of Jericho had fallen in similar circumstances,<sup>52</sup> and anticipating that, by the direct intervention of God, the walls of heathenism would fall before the Lord, and the land lie open for his people to go in and possess it. The custom is at least as old as 2 Maccabees (10:8), and its great antiquity is shown by the book of Jubilees (16:20-31) ascribing its beginning to Abraham, which suggests that its true origin had long been forgotten. It was also on the seventh day that the *lulabs* were stripped of their leaves by being beaten on the ground. This action could be in imitation of a storm, *i.e.* a call for rain, or provide a symbol of resurrection—an admonition to the deity to produce new leaves (new life).<sup>53</sup>

Before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, Temple and Altar dedication was a prominent feature of the Feast of Tabernacles.<sup>54</sup> Josephus<sup>55</sup> considers that it was no accident that this festival was chosen by Solomon as the occasion for the dedication of the original Temple, when the glory of the Lord filled the House (1 Ki. 8). Just as the firstfruits of the land had been offered at the local sanctuaries, so now those offerings

<sup>49</sup> *Midrash Psalms* 24.3.3.

<sup>50</sup> E. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Graeco-Roman Period*, Bollingen, New York (1954) iv, 151.

<sup>51</sup> Ps. 118:25.

<sup>52</sup> *Sukkah* 54c; Strack-Billerbeck, ii, 798.

<sup>53</sup> H. Gressmann, *Expositor* 3, 9th series (1935) 416-432.

<sup>54</sup> Van Goudoever, *Calendars*, 31f.

<sup>55</sup> *Ant.* 8.100.

would be brought to the Temple. It would naturally follow that the dedication of the place of offering would be made when the whole harvest was finished. After the Exile the Feast of Tabernacles still had this characteristic feature. When the Temple was rebuilt, Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel the governor of Judaea together erected an altar to the Lord, and kept the Feast of Tabernacles (Ezr. 3:3, 4). The prophet Haggai spoke his words of encouragement to Joshua and Zerubbabel on the 21st day of the seventh month, *i.e.* on the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles, and passed on the divine promise, 'I will fill this house with splendour'.<sup>56</sup>

One item is not included in the Mishnah tractate *Sukkah*, which describes the Feast of Tabernacles, probably because by the time the Mishnah was at last put into writing anything uncomfortably close to pagan practice was censored. Several other Jewish and Gentile sources, however, reveal that the men of Israel celebrating the feast wore crowns of leaves upon their heads. The Book of Jubilees (dated 135–96 BC) says that worshippers set wreaths upon their heads.<sup>57</sup> Jewish priests wore crowns of ivy according to Tacitus,<sup>58</sup> and crowns of flowers according to a fresco at Dura-Europos.<sup>59</sup>

At the close of the first day of the feast the worshippers descended to the Court of the Women, where great preparations had been made. Four huge golden candelabra were there—according to the Talmud 75 feet high and reaching over the height of the walls. Four golden bowls topped the candelabra. Energetic young priests, in charge of pitchers of oil with a capacity of some eleven or twelve gallons, climbed up and down ladders to keep the bowls filled. Worn-out breeches and girdles from the priestly wardrobe had been torn up into strips and plaited into wicks for the lamps for the illumination of the festival. The wicks were placed in the bowls, over the brims of which their burning end hung down from spouts.<sup>60</sup> It was claimed that there was no courtyard in Jerusalem which was not lit up by the blazing light,<sup>61</sup> and we can well believe it.

'Men of piety and good deeds' danced before the people, juggling with four or even eight flaming torches in their

<sup>56</sup> Hg. 2:2f.; cf. Zc. 14:16.

<sup>57</sup> Jubilees 16:30.

<sup>58</sup> *Hist.* V. 5.

<sup>59</sup> Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, ii, 143f.

<sup>60</sup> J. Hochman, *Jerusalem Temple Festivities*, Routledge, London (1908) 75.

<sup>61</sup> *Sukkah* 5:3.

hands, throwing them up and catching them one after the other.

As an aside it may be mentioned here that some of the religious leaders were well aware that in any too boisterous merrymaking the true purpose of the festival might easily be blotted out. It was at the Feast of Tabernacles that Hillel<sup>62</sup> was wont to say, 'If I am there, all are there; and if I am not there, who is there?' The comment seems bizarre and egotistical. But it is esoteric. When Hillel said 'I', he meant 'God' (the 'I am'). His cryptic remark gains all the more force from the fact that his own name is numerically equivalent to *Adonai*. He therefore means, 'If God is not there, no one is there'. The crowds thronging the Temple were bent on pleasure. Some of the Rabbis performed tricks of juggling and acrobatics<sup>63</sup> to show their joy and to amuse the people. All the more was Hillel drawn to warn them that unless a religious spirit prevailed, the great ceremonial was useless.<sup>64</sup>

Perhaps too Hillel had in mind the rabbinic belief that the water used at the Feast of Tabernacles was in part a symbol of the judgment of the world,<sup>65</sup> as already illustrated in the past in the days of Noah—a thought in Peter's mind (3:20). Certainly if heavy rain fell during the festival, making it impossible to observe the command to dwell in booths, the Jews took this as a sign of God's anger.<sup>66</sup>

Towards morning the scenes of mirth and merrymaking gave place to the more solemn chanting of hymns and songs of praise. Crowds of Levites, playing harps, lutes, cymbals, trumpets, and many other musical instruments, stood upon the fifteen steps which led down from the Court of Israel to the Court of the Women, according to the number of the fifteen Songs of Degrees in the book of Psalms.<sup>67</sup> Something of the thrill to the vast congregation can be imagined at, for example, the chanting of Psalm 125. Under the open sky and surrounded by the moon-lit hills the words *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem* would roll into the night with great emotion. The Songs of Degrees over, two priests with trumpets in

<sup>62</sup> *Sukkah* 53a.

<sup>63</sup> Hochman, *Festivities*, 76.

<sup>64</sup> Montefiore, *Rabbinic Anthology*, 13.

<sup>65</sup> *Rosh Hashanah* 16a; *Sukkah* 2.9; Danby, *Mishnah*, 175 n. 7.

<sup>66</sup> *Taanith* 1.1; *Ezr.* 10:9.

<sup>67</sup> *Psalms* 120-134. *Sukkah* 5.4; cf. *Middoth* 2.5.

their hands then mounted the steps and stood at the upper gate of Nicanor.<sup>68</sup> While they waited for dawn to break, the assembled multitude recited Psalms 135 and 136: 'Give praise, O servants of the Lord, you that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God.'

At cock-crow the two priests sounded a threefold blast on their trumpets. They repeated the threefold blast on descending the steps and again on entering the court itself. Reaching the Beautiful Gate, they turned about towards the west (to face the Holy Place). There they proclaimed: 'Our fathers who were in this place (in the days of the first Temple) turned their back upon the Sanctuary of the Lord, and with their faces towards the east worshipped the sun (a reference to Ezk. 8:16). But as for us, our eyes are towards the Lord.' Then they repeated again and again: 'We are the Lord's and our eyes are turned towards the Lord.'<sup>69</sup>

On the afternoon of the seventh day the people began to remove from the booths, for these were not used on the Octave, neither did the worshippers then carry *lulab* or *ethrog*. But the day was observed as one of 'holy convocation'. The festive sacrifices prescribed in the book of Numbers (29:36-38) were offered and the Hallel sung for the last time. Thus the greatest feast in Judaism was brought to an end, and the pilgrims hurried away before their prayers for rain were answered too abundantly, thus making the journey home difficult.<sup>70</sup>

## II. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES IN THE EARLY CHURCH

What view did the early Church take of the Feast of Tabernacles? Christianity in its earliest stages was a sect or group within Judaism.<sup>71</sup> Prayers, hymns, sayings, catechism, forms of worship, organization of the community, and not least the religious literature—Torah, Prophets, other religious writings—all belong to the spiritual assets common to Christian and Jew.<sup>72</sup> Part of this general tradition was formed by the festivals and the calendars. Of all parts of the liturgy, the major feasts are perhaps the most enduring: it would be as difficult to change the date and form of old festivals, as to create new ones.

<sup>68</sup> H. Danby, *The Mishnah*, Oxford (1933) 166 n. 3.

<sup>69</sup> *Sukkah* 5.4.

<sup>70</sup> *Taanith* 1.3.

<sup>71</sup> Acts 24:14; 28:22.

<sup>72</sup> Van Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars*, 151.

It seems that ancient traditions were held more tenaciously in Asia Minor, the area to which Peter's First Epistle is addressed, than anywhere else in the Church.<sup>73</sup> It was the home of Papias, the lover of oral tradition; and of Polycarp who, as Irenaeus<sup>74</sup> tells us, always taught the things which he had learned at first hand from the apostles, who included John in Ephesus. Moreover, Polycarp (c. AD 70-156), who according to Ignatius was Bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor as early as AD 110, claimed that he had kept the *pascha* from his childhood. This would mean that there was a Christian *pascha* from at least the seventies of the first century.<sup>75</sup>

While the date on which Easter should be celebrated certainly gave rise to much discussion, there is little doubt that Passover-time was observed by Jewish Christians from the earliest days as the Feast of Christ's Passion and Resurrection,<sup>76</sup> the two events being viewed as a single act of the Christian redemption.<sup>77</sup> The dramatic descent of the Holy Spirit upon the first disciples on the fiftieth day after Passover<sup>78</sup> means almost certainly that there was from the beginning a Christian celebration of Pentecost as well, to correspond with the second major Jewish festival.<sup>79</sup>

What then was the position with regard to the third festival of Judaism, that of Tabernacles? It is often assumed that the Feast of Tabernacles was disregarded by Christians until the year 335, when the Emperor Constantine dedicated the new Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The service was held on September 14th, a date deliberately chosen to coincide with the anniversary of Solomon's dedication of the Temple at the Feast of Tabernacles (1 Ki. 8:2). Thereafter the date was observed as a dedication festival, and later as the Festival of the Cross. Constantine's action certainly indicates the restoration of a festival which for a long time had not been celebrated by Christians, at least not on the traditional date. The dedication of their central place of worship had become for the Jews one of the major emphases at the festival. But this

<sup>73</sup> J. C. Kirby, *Ephesians, Baptism, & Pentecost*, SPCK, London (1968) 75.

<sup>74</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* iii. 3.4. <sup>75</sup> Eusebius, *Ecl. Hist.* V. 24.

<sup>76</sup> J. Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words of Jesus*,<sup>2</sup> Blackwell, Oxford (ET 1955) 177-183; F. E. Brightman, *JTS* 25 (1924) 268.

<sup>77</sup> A. A. McArthur, *The Evolution of the Christian Year*, SCM, London (1953) 87.

<sup>78</sup> Acts 2:1. <sup>79</sup> Van Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars*, 182-194.

particular purpose vanished in the smoke of AD 70. Christians of course had no church buildings of their own to dedicate for many years<sup>79a</sup> but Temple-dedication was only one reason for the Jewish feast.

It is also said that no trace of a Christian celebration of Tabernacles is to be found in any early document, apart from allusions to practices associated with the festival which appear in *The Shepherd* of Hermas,<sup>80</sup> although these allusions are undoubtedly clear enough.

It would seem to be almost beyond belief that what was regarded as the greatest feast in the Jewish calendar, the Feast *par excellence*, should be completely ignored by the early Christian Church—particularly when we bear in mind that thousands of its first adherents were Jews, and moreover Jews who by all accounts kept up their attendance in Temple and synagogue as long as they were able to do so.

Study of the problem by E. C. Selwyn,<sup>81</sup> T. W. Manson,<sup>82</sup> and J. van Goudoever,<sup>83</sup> has shown that traces of the Feast of Tabernacles are indeed to be found in the Church's liturgical calendar, though associated with other times of the year. Here we can only briefly outline their main conclusions.

It appears that before being displaced, for which reasons can be suggested, the Feast of Tabernacles was certainly kept in the month of September by the first Christians. There may be a clue in the Gospel of Mark, if it is accepted that this book at one time constituted a series of lessons for a liturgical year,<sup>84</sup> beginning in September and ending with the Palm Sunday lesson of the entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the Temple, *i.e.* its symbolical rededication. This would synchronize the Feast of Tabernacles with the lection relating the Baptism of Christ. Cullmann and Daniélou among others claim that by the reference to the outpouring of the Spirit in John 7:37-39, the feast is expressly linked with baptism.<sup>85</sup> As the feast of New Year and the annual commemoration of the baptism of Jesus, it may well have included the celebration of Christian baptisms. The *Odes of Solomon*, which have a

<sup>79a</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>80</sup> *Sim.* 8.2.1-4.

<sup>81</sup> *JTS* 12 (1911) 225-236.

<sup>82</sup> *BjRL* 33 (1951) 271-282.

<sup>83</sup> *Biblical Calendars*, 261-271.

<sup>84</sup> P. Carrington, *The Primitive Christian Calendar*, CUP (1952) 22, 32-41.

<sup>85</sup> O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, SCM (1953) 82; J. Daniélou, *Early Christian Doctrine*, Darton (ET 1964) 345; Cyprian, *Ep.* 63.8.

marked baptismal character, are full of allusions to the Feast of Tabernacles.<sup>86</sup>

That there was some close association in the early Church between the Christian sacrament of baptism and the symbolism of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles would seem to be beyond dispute. The Feast of Tabernacles, therefore, was not completely disregarded in the Christian calendar. Nevertheless the links with the feast soon appear in the liturgical year at times other than what corresponds to the month of Tishri. Why were these changes made? There are several possible suggestions.

T. W. Manson<sup>86a</sup> has argued that it seems likely that the three Synoptic Gospels indicate a period between the triumphal entry and the crucifixion of six months rather than six days. If the entry is thus to be dated at Tabernacles' time in September, this would ease the difficulties posed, for example, by the unexpectedly barren fig tree,<sup>86b</sup> and the apparently sudden *volte face* of the crowd. By contrast, the Fourth Gospel sets the entry five days before Passover (Jn. 12:1, 12). Leaving aside the critical problem, it is evident that for the Fourth Gospel the triumphal entry with its Tabernacles' associations is placed in the spring. We may say, therefore, that the connection between Tabernacles and Palm Sunday seems to be typical of the Fourth Gospel, and thus has an Asiatic background.

For the Church in Asia Minor two things will have encouraged a transfer of the Feast of Tabernacles to Eastertide. One was that New Year's Day, which in the priestly calendar fell in the autumn on the first of Tishri, in the official calendar came in the spring on the first of Nisan. Since John followed the official calendar in the case of Easter, it is likely that he did so for the commencement of the year as well. If this is correct, we should expect to find the lessons on the baptism of Jesus which begin the year, and also those of Palm Sunday which end it, falling round about Easter. This in fact appears to have been the practice of the Church in Asia Minor. The Sunday after Easter was taken as the beginning of the liturgical year and the readings from the Gospel of John on the baptism of

<sup>86</sup> E. C. Selwyn, 'Feast of Tabernacles, Epiphany, and Baptism' in *JTS* 12 (1911) 225-236.

<sup>86a</sup> *BZRL* 33 (1951) 271-282.

<sup>86b</sup> C. W. F. Smith, 'No Time for Figs' in *JBL* 79 (1960) 315-327. Smith argues that Tabernacles underlies the whole complex Mk. 11:1-12:12.



Christ were then begun.<sup>87</sup> Moreover it is in the East that the Feast of Palms first makes its appearance on the Sunday before Easter.<sup>88</sup>

The churches in Asia Minor may have decided to sever the connection between Tabernacles and September because of the growing influence upon Christians of millenarianism. In contemporary Judaism the feast was being associated with Messianic hopes in their more materialistic form of a temporal reign of the Messiah. This was particularly so in Asia Minor, where Messianic fever was at its height between AD 50 and 70, *i.e.* in the period when the influences which shaped Cerinthus were active.<sup>89</sup>

What of the connection of Tabernacles with Epiphany? If the change just examined arose out of internal conflicts in Jewish Christianity, this one may well be due to Christianity's moving into a Greek milieu. In the Gentile world it would be well-nigh impossible to avoid sooner or later conforming with the official calendar. Since the Julian calendar began on the first of January, it would be natural to commence the liturgical year on that date with the account of the incarnation and baptism of Jesus. But in Jewish Christianity the account of the baptism had been so closely associated with the feast that some of the themes of Tabernacles were transferred with the other to the beginning of January. The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel already reflects the themes: *e.g.* 'the Word tabernacled (*ἐσκήνωσεν*) among us' (1:14), 'the light shines (*φαίνει*)<sup>90</sup> in the darkness' (1:5, 8, 9), and the apparently awkward introduction of the Baptist (1:6). The choice of the *sixth* day of January for Epiphany may be due to its being the date of a pagan festival of the birth of a god, an occasion which the Church would seek to take over for its Lord.<sup>91</sup>

In origin, therefore, Epiphany seems to be a festival developed by Christianity in a pagan setting, but drawing upon some elements from the Jewish-Christian Feast of Tabernacles.<sup>92</sup>

This brief excursion into early Church history has been undertaken simply to show that the Feast of Tabernacles did not sink without trace until Constantine's salvage operation in

<sup>87</sup> A. Baumstark, *Liturgie comparée*, Chevetogne (1939) 133f.

<sup>88</sup> Daniélou, *Doctrine*, 345.

<sup>89</sup> Daniélou (*ibid.*, 385) gives some evidence.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *ἐπιφάνεια*, 'a shining forth' ('Epiphany').

<sup>91</sup> McArthur, *Christian Year*, 65.

<sup>92</sup> Daniélou, *Doctrine*, 346.

AD 335. True the only specific mention of the feast in the New Testament is in John 7, but there are a number of other possibilities,<sup>93</sup> not least in First Peter.

### III. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES AND FIRST PETER

Already some links between the Feast of Tabernacles as celebrated both in Judaism and in the early Church on the one hand, and First Peter on the other, will have been evident. We shall see that there are a number of others just below the surface. Together they prompt the suggestion that First Peter was compiled at a time when Christian Jews were gaining fresh insights into the significance of the feast they knew so well, now that the Messiah had come. The Epistle itself could well be viewed as something of a catalyst, albeit unwitting, in this situation.

It has become fashionable to find in 1 Peter a baptismal homily or even an entire liturgy. There is no denying that many of the themes of 1 Peter are applicable to baptism. But this is not to say that here is to be found the actual order and wording of the baptismal Eucharist—let alone to pinpoint the very moment of baptising. A more likely suggestion is that First Peter is an exhortation to those facing persecution—an exhortation in the form of a recall to what their own baptism had meant.<sup>94</sup>

But have we been mesmerized into seeing too much of the sacrament of baptism in this Epistle? First, the New Testament as a whole closely associates Christian baptism with the Holy Spirit. In 1 Peter the doctrine of the Spirit receives little attention (1:2, 11, 12; 4:14), and none at all in the reference to baptism (3:21). This is surprising, since 'new life from the dead by divine action' is a theme wholly appropriate both to the New Testament view of baptism and to Peter's illustration of the salvation of Noah and his company from the Flood. This fact argues against the writer's preoccupation with the sacrament of baptism, which so many recent scholars have supposed.

<sup>93</sup> E.g. C. W. F. Smith, 'Tabernacles in the Fourth Gospel and Mark' in *NTS* 9 (1962-63) 130-146; T. W. Manson, *JTS* 46 (1945) 1-10 (on Jewish Calendar and Paul).

<sup>94</sup> C. F. D. Moule, *Worship in the New Testament*, Lutterworth (1961) 58.

Secondly, while Peter mentions water, its presence—if intended as a direct reference to the sacrament—is slightly embarrassing. Instead of keeping to the Exodus situation and making use of the Red Sea typology, as did Paul when speaking about baptism,<sup>95</sup> Peter switches to the Flood. It seems a clumsy choice. The water in the Flood destroyed. The water of the sacrament may be said, much more appropriately, to save. The passengers in the Ark were only too thankful to be untouched by the water. As the Epistle put it (3:20): ‘they were brought safely *through* the water’, taking *δι’ ὕδατος* in the local not the instrumental sense.<sup>95a</sup> One who is baptized may be sprinkled or immersed, but can hardly be baptized dry.

There is much to be said for R. E. Nixon’s argument<sup>96</sup> that Peter’s use of *βάπτισμα* is metaphorical, and refers to suffering<sup>97</sup> rather than to the sacrament. Water often appears in the Old Testament in a context of suffering and judgment,<sup>98</sup> while the Flood itself is used in the Gospels<sup>99</sup> as a picture of sudden judgment at the coming of the Son of man. C. F. D. Moule considers that the metaphor of cleansing which Peter adds (3:21) is akin to that of purgation, and so of a discriminatory, judging process.<sup>100</sup> This view of ‘the removal of dirt’ would relieve the commentators of wondering how baptism could be mistaken for a physical detergent. Nixon concludes: ‘Are we not “saved” in the “baptism” of suffering and persecution when we maintain the disposition of loyalty to God as the One who has the ultimate right to it rather than the state? Is there not a parallel in the apocalyptic discourse (Mk. 13:13), where in similar circumstances it is said that “he who endures to the end shall be saved”?’ In short, it is difficult to see how the sacrament of baptism could give as close a parallel to the Flood as would waves of persecution.

If Peter has in mind the association of water with judgment, as seems implicit in his turning to the Flood story, then as we

<sup>95</sup> 1 Cor. 10:1–13.

<sup>95a</sup> G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, Macmillan (1963) 259.

<sup>96</sup> *Studia Evangelica* iv (1968) 437–441.

<sup>97</sup> Especially in Psalms, e.g. 18:15; 42:7; 69:1f., 13f.

<sup>98</sup> Mt. 24:37f.; Lk. 17:26f.

<sup>99</sup> C. F. D. Moule, ‘The Judgment Theme in the Sacraments’ in *Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube, Cambridge (1956) 478.

saw earlier we have here an association already made in the Tabernacles' symbolism.<sup>101</sup>

The water at the feast was brought from the Pool of Siloam. Why Siloam? E. C. Selwyn<sup>102</sup> considers that Ezra and Nehemiah, as they seek to re-establish the festival after the return from exile, have in mind the warning of Isaiah 8:6—'Because this people has refused the waters of Siloam that flow gently . . . the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory . . . and he shall pass through Judah: he shall overflow and pass through.' Because of Israel's return from exile, Ezra and Nehemiah stressed the note of joy to be sounded at the festival.<sup>103</sup> But the general merriment made it all the more essential to include a safeguard. The magnitude of the sacrifices, the uproarious crowds waving their *hosannas*, the torch dances in the illuminated Temple courts—all these contrast sharply with the very simple performance of carrying to the altar just two pints of water. As Passover celebrated the ancient deliverance from Egypt, so Tabernacles would now be associated more closely with the equally memorable and more recent deliverance from Assyria. The one thing that must never again be refused by the people was 'the waters of Siloam that flow gently'. Those scanty waters, issuing from the rock above which the Temple stood, were an appropriate symbol of the Lord and the defence, little regarded yet unailing, which He ensured for His people so long as they trusted Him. But if the people failed to acknowledge the Lord, there was the danger of another mighty river, another mighty power, overwhelming them. That the Jews did forget the significance of the warning in the years before AD 70 is clear, and in due course the devastating power of Babylon fell upon them a second time, only on this occasion Babylon was Rome.

In Jewish teaching the whole religious complex formed by *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkoth*, at the beginning of the month of Tishri spoke of judgment, but also of resurrection and of witness,<sup>104</sup> subjects occurring frequently in First Peter. In the Jewish mind the notion of judgment was primary, but by a natural association of ideas it included the thought of the

<sup>101</sup> See note 65.

<sup>102</sup> *JTS* 13 (1912) 227f.

<sup>103</sup> Ne. 8:9f.

<sup>104</sup> A. Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship*, OUP (1960) 216.

resurrection of the dead (that they may be judged) and the motifs of penitence, mercy, forgiveness, and a change of fortune at the New Year. Since all judgment was 'at the mouth of witnesses', the themes of judgment and witness were inevitably linked. At this critical time it was desirable to find a favourable witness, an advocate to plead one's cause. Good deeds could act as advocates and evil deeds as accusers, as the Mishnah<sup>105</sup> declares: 'He that performs one precept gets for himself one advocate (פרקליט), but he that commits one transgression gets for himself one accuser.'

To be sure, Peter is at one with the rest of the New Testament in ascribing the Christian's standing before God to the blood of Christ and not to good deeds. Nevertheless he has much to say about 'doing good'<sup>106</sup> and indeed 'doing good' as a 'witness'. But the purpose is quite different: it is to give evidence before an unbelieving world that Christianity is not a set of good ideas but a new way of life, so that as 'children of obedience' (1:14) 'we having died to sins might live unto righteousness'<sup>107</sup> (2:24).

For a link with the early Church we may quote from the *Eighth Similitude*<sup>108</sup> of *The Shepherd* of Hermas: 'A glorious angel of the Lord, very tall, was standing by a great willow. With a large pruning knife he was cutting twigs about eighteen inches long from the willow and distributing them among the people that sheltered beneath the willow.' The angel next asks the people to return their twigs, which he takes and examines. Then, 'the angel of the Lord commanded crowns to be brought. And crowns were brought, made as it were of palm-branches. And he crowned the men who had returned twigs which had shoots and some fruit, and sent them off to the tower'<sup>109</sup> (the Church of the Saints). The imagery is parallel to that of the baptismal setting of the *Odes of Solomon*, with crown, white garment, and seal all mentioned in the context. The reference to willow and palm is almost certainly an allusion to the Feast of Tabernacles. In rabbinic tradition the *lulabs*, palm-branches, which must be brought for inspection on the first day of the feast, are indeed, as in Hermas, the symbol of

<sup>105</sup> *Pirke Aboth* 4.11.

<sup>107</sup> W. C. van Unnik, *ExpT* 68 (1956-57) 79-83.

<sup>108</sup> *Sim.* 8:1.1f.

<sup>106</sup> Some thirteen references *passim*.

<sup>109</sup> *Sim.* 8:2.

good works.<sup>110</sup> Similar imagery is found in the book of Revelation: the crown (2:10), the seal (7:3), the white robe (3:4; 7:9), and the palms (7:9); and also in the Scrolls: 'All who walk in the ways of the spirit of truth receive eternal blessings and joy in the life everlasting, and a crown of glory and a robe of honour amid light perpetual.'<sup>111</sup> Peter too refers to the award of a 'crown of glory' (5:4), and by a curious coincidence with Hermas in the very verse which speaks of the 'Shepherd'.

Another possibility concerning Peter's baptism passage is that it may reflect the readings in the triennial Jewish lectionary. Immediately after Tabernacles the *seder* for the first year of the lectionary cycle was Genesis 8:15f., the story of Noah and the Ark.<sup>112</sup> The prophetic *haphtarah* which went with it was Isaiah 42:7f., which speaks of the deliverance of those in darkness. It is tempting to compare 1 Peter 2:9—'who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light'. Those who were 'in time past no people', and therefore excluded from the privileges of Israel, had now through faith in Christ been made members of 'the people of God' (2:10). Metaphorically speaking, we may say that they had been called out of the darkness surrounding Jerusalem into the marvellous light of the blazing illuminations to share in the Feast of Tabernacles, the only feast, we may recollect, which was specifically associated with the calling of Gentiles to the worship of the God of the Jews.<sup>113</sup>

As we have seen, the month Tishri includes in succession New Year (Tishri 1), the Day of Atonement (Tishri 10), and the Feast of Tabernacles (Tishri 15–22), events which are viewed as a single complex. I have argued elsewhere<sup>114</sup> that the opening section of First Peter (1:3ff.) reflects in an extraordinary fashion the language and ideas of Genesis 22, the *Akedah*, or Binding of Isaac.<sup>115</sup> R. Le Déaut<sup>116</sup> too has linked Genesis 22 with 1 Peter in a discussion of the Palestinian Tar-

<sup>110</sup> *Lv. R.* 30.6.

<sup>111</sup> 1QS 4.7.

<sup>112</sup> Guilding, *Fourth Gospel*, 216. When lectionaries were introduced is unknown, but 'in view of the very precise nature for which the synagogue was established . . . it would be most surprising if the choice of passages to be read was left to chance. . . . The probability is extremely high that a lectionary existed before the Destruction' (J. W. Bowker, *NTS* 14 (1967/68) 98 n. 2, 99 n. 1).

<sup>113</sup> *Zc.* 14:16.

<sup>114</sup> *EQ* 61 (1969) 143–160.

<sup>115</sup> The Midrash links the *Akedah* with Tabernacles: 'Branches (תְּבֵנִים) of palm-trees symbolize Isaac who had been tied (תְּבֵנִים) and bound upon the

gum. Genesis 22 was included in the ritual for *Rosh Hashanah* on Tishri 1, at least as far back as the first century CE.<sup>117</sup> Peter's next verses (1:17ff.) speak of the need for a holy life, of judgment, and of atonement, the themes of *Yom Kippur*, Tishri 10. Peter then quotes Isaiah 40:6–8, verses which recall, in their contrast between the passing and the permanent, what may well have occurred to pilgrims at the Feast of Tabernacles, if they compared the transitory nature of the booths put together from tree branches with the abiding structure of the Lord's Temple before them—the only two very different shelters they would use during the festival week. Peter indeed continues (2:5) with a spiritualized reference to that Temple, together with its priests, and sacrifices, items in themselves all appropriate to a Tabernacles' setting, and goes on to a catena of 'stone/rock' quotations, including one from a Hallel Psalm (118:22) used at the feast. Then follow references to light, to sojourners and pilgrims, and to the day of visitation—all of which can have Tabernacles' connections.

Thus the great events commemorated in succession on Tishri 1, 10, and 15–22 are all echoed in the first part of 1 Peter, and *in the same order*. We may well wonder if the writer was penning his letter at that very season, and that unconsciously his mind is reflecting the succession of religious experiences of those stirring days. Any substance in this suggestion would mean that the Epistle was being written at a date when the writer was still able to attend Jewish services, and that the Temple was yet standing.

Peter's extended use of the 'stone/rock' figure implies that it meant much to him. We may well be able to trace its origin. Christ's words about the Rock, as recorded by Matthew (16:18), were spoken on the occasion when Peter made his profession of faith at Caesarea Philippi, an event which Mark (9:2) makes a point of dating six days before the Transfiguration. Apart from the passion narrative, it is quite out of charac-

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altar' (*Lv. R.* 30.10 on 23:40). Similarly in the famous synagogue unearthed at Dura the major niche (for the Torah Scrolls) is decorated by a painting of the *menorah* (seven branched candlestick), *ethrog*, *lulab*, and a representation of the Akedah—the ram caught in the bush, Isaac bound on the altar, Abraham with his raised knife (Goodenough, *Symbols*, iv, 189).

<sup>116</sup> *RSR* 49 (1961) 103–106.

<sup>117</sup> H. J. Schoeps, *JBL* 65 (1946) 389; though M. McNamara, *Analecta Biblica* 27 (1966) 165f., thinks it later.

ter for Mark to include dates, and there must be some special reason for his doing so here. The most satisfactory explanation<sup>118</sup> is that the two events were connected by tradition with two notable dates in the Jewish calendar that were six days apart. There was, of course, such a pair of days: the Day of Atonement, on Tishri 10, and the Feast of Tabernacles, on Tishri 15. For the very first announcement of Christ's coming death to have been made by Him to His disciples on the occasion of the Day of Atonement, and for the dazzling glory of His transfiguration to have been revealed on the opening day of the Feast of Tabernacles, with its lights and its eschatological overtones, would be both highly appropriate and memorable. On other grounds G. H. Turner<sup>119</sup> has supposed that the transfiguration took place at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. Peter is suggesting that it would be good to spend Tabernacles' week with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah on the mountain: far better there than going elsewhere into peril of death, as intimated in the immediately preceding narrative. Turner indeed dismisses Peter's proposal to erect the three booths as merely the expression of what happened to be uppermost in his mind at the time, for as Mark tells us, Peter did not know what to say (Mk. 9:6). But something must have stimulated Peter's line of thought. The most obvious suggestion—and indeed what seems to be the only likely one—is that this was the season of Tabernacles. At no other time of the year and for no other reason should we expect booths to be in Peter's mind. The association of rock—Tabernacles in the First Peter could well be traced back, therefore, to that vivid transfiguration experience.

One rabbinic parallel quoted by Abrahams in illustration of the transfiguration booths is that of the 'seven canopies' of the Messiah. These are to be made by God of precious stones,<sup>120</sup> a further point of interest with 1 Peter (2:6, 7). Another saying teaches that God is to make for every righteous man a canopy out of the clouds of glory,<sup>121</sup> *i.e.* the Shekinah.

<sup>118</sup> E. Burrows, 'Some Cosmological Patterns', in *The Labyrinth*, ed. S. H. Hooke, SPCK (1935) 58f.

<sup>119</sup> Note on Mk. 9:5 in *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. C. Gore, H. L. Goudge, and A. Guillaume, SPCK, London (1928).

<sup>120</sup> *Pesiqta R.* 163a; Abrahams, *Studies*, ii, 52.

<sup>121</sup> *Pesiqta* 186b; *Num. R.* 21.22; Riesenfeld, *Jésus Transfiguré*, 196.



For Leviticus 23:43 the Targum<sup>122</sup> uses the paraphrase, 'You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All that are native in Israel shall dwell *under coverts*, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel live *under the covert of my cloud* when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.' 'Covert' here clearly alludes to the Shekinah: the people dwelt in the wilderness under the protection of God's glory. We may compare Revelation 7:15, from a chapter full of Tabernacles' imagery: 'He who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence'; and the similar thought in 1 Peter 4:14, which promises blessing to those reproached for the name of Christ, 'because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you'.

Peter's use here of ἀναπαύεται ('make for himself a place of rest') is perhaps intended to suggest a contrast between the storm of abuse and calumny that raged around the believer's life and the peace within, where the Spirit of God made his resting place. The phrase τὸ τῆς δόξης . . . πνεῦμα could well mean 'the Spirit of the Glory', *i.e.* the Shekinah. Thus the picture is of the Shekinah over God's people as a covering protection in time of trouble,<sup>123</sup> and this is a theme common to First Peter and to Tabernacles.

While the Jew kept the Feast of Tabernacles as an anticipation of future blessedness—when, says the Mishnah,<sup>124</sup> 'the righteous are seated with crowns on their heads and are refreshed in the glory of the Shekinah'—Peter teaches that the Christian, in his God-given restfulness of spirit whatever the circumstances of life, already enjoys a foretaste of the eternal peace of the heavenly home, and experience as ἀπαρχή (first-fruits) or ἀρράβων (deposit) brought to him by the Spirit of God resting upon him.

The thought is carried a stage further in Psalm 27:5, one of the Psalms used in the liturgy of the feast.<sup>125</sup> 'He will hide me in his shelter (הַבַּיִת) in the day of trouble.' The context shows that by 'his shelter' is meant God's dwelling at Jerusalem, a point brought out in the parallelism of another Tabernacles' Psalm (76:3): 'His covert was in Salem, his dwelling place in

<sup>122</sup> D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, Athlone Press, London (1956) 30–32. The 'protective' element in Tabernacles' symbolism is illustrated by Strack–Billerbeck, ii, 779, and Riesenfeld, *op. cit.*, 188.

<sup>123</sup> Ex. 40:34f.; Is. 22:12.

<sup>124</sup> *Tamid* 28.

<sup>125</sup> Thackeray, *Septuagint*, 69.

Zion.' The phrase '*Sukkah* of God' as a designation for the Temple<sup>126</sup> occurs only in these two Psalms.

The drawing together of the threads is best seen in the Fourth Gospel, where a Tabernacles' background is often in evidence.<sup>127</sup> The glory of God which was present first in the Mosaic tabernacle in the desert (Ex. 40:34f.), then in Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem (1 Ki. 8:10f.; Is. 6:1f.), was to be revealed to men in the new age (Is. 40:5). That glory, says John, tabernacled in the person of Jesus (Jn. 1:14), and His glorified body is the new temple (2:21).

We have noted that the plea for seasonable rains for the world was symbolized at the feast by the pouring out of water into the bowl at the side of the altar. The action also indicated that the altar, or rather the rock on which it rested, was the spot where the world's thirst was quenched. In rabbinic thought the rock in the Jerusalem Temple was identified with the rock that had followed Israel in the desert and provided the people with water.<sup>128</sup> Jesus' claim at the Feast of Tabernacles to provide living water (Jn. 7:38; cf. 4:10) could not fail to challenge the Jews. It meant that the centre and source of the world's life was no longer the Temple in Jerusalem but Jesus Himself—and that He was the new temple.<sup>129</sup> This is precisely the thought which Peter is expressing. In 2:4f. he speaks of Christ and Christians together forming the new spiritual temple, and the same paragraph makes it clear that that temple is not confined to Israel but is for the whole world. It is a spiritual building of and for all born-again believers, whatever their origin, Jewish or Gentile. In time past they were 'no people', but now they are the 'people of God' (2:10). The Feast of Tabernacles in recalling the sojourn of the people in the wilderness was recalling the time when a rabble ('no people') was made into a nation ('the people of God').

We have mentioned that much of the imagery of the Apocalypse is based on the Feast of Tabernacles.<sup>130</sup> There are references, for example, to the faithful bearing palm branches

<sup>126</sup> The usual term is *לְמִשְׁכָּנוֹ*.

<sup>128</sup> *Tosephta Sukkah* 3.11.

<sup>129</sup> R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple*, OUP (1969) 81.

<sup>130</sup> J. Comblin, 'La Liturgie de la Nouvelle Jérusalem (Apoc. 21:1-22:5)', *ETL* 29 (1953) 5-40; N. Burch, *Anthropology and the Apocalypse*, Macmillan, London (1939); McKelvey, *New Temple*, 155-178.

<sup>127</sup> Jn. 1:14; 4:13f.; 7:37f.; 19:34.

(Rev. 7:9), the hosanna cry of Psalm 118:25 (7:10), and trumpets sounding (9:14, *etc.*). The tabernacling presence of God (7:15; *cf.* 21:3; Jn 1:14) leads naturally to the thought of His care and provision for Israel in the wilderness being repeated in heaven (7:15f.). Springs of living water are promised (7:17), as if in response to the prayers for rain, and the water will flow like a river from God's throne (22:1), as symbolized by the ceremony of water-pouring at the Temple altar during the feast, and as prophesied in the Tabernacles chapter in Zechariah (Zc. 14:8). The sixth vision (Rev. 15:2f.) represents the saints standing in triumph beside the dangerous sea as they sing praises to God. The scene recalls the singing of Psalms at the feast 'on the steps of *Tehom*',<sup>131</sup> as the Targum puts it in its superscription to the fifteen Songs of Ascents (Pss. 120-134). All these Tabernacles' reflections are concerned with liturgical situations.

We may take it, therefore, that Tabernacles' imagery is behind the theme of the new royal priesthood, a theme which appears both in Revelation and in First Peter, linked also to their common allusion to Exodus 19:6.<sup>132</sup> In Revelation (7:9) the faithful in heaven, 'standing' in the posture of priests, are those who 'have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb' (7:14). If 'robes' are taken to represent 'the life lived', as in the case of the 'fine linen' and 'righteous deeds' of Revelation 19:8, Peter's references in 1:2 and 1:19 are parallel: the elect are those who have been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ; they have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a perfect lamb. So they stand before God a holy and royal body of priests,<sup>133</sup> offering up spiritual sacrifices (2:5, 9).

But at once the writer brings his argument back with a jolt to the everyday realities of spiritual warfare and hostile neighbours, and the sufferings they involve (2:11).

Peter's reference to being 'partakers of Christ's sufferings' prompts the query as to what is meant by that phrase. Hort's

<sup>131</sup> McKelvey, 163.

<sup>132</sup> Rev. 5:10; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.

<sup>133</sup> J. H. Elliott, *The Elect and the Holy* (*Supp. Nov. Test.* 12), E. J. Brill, Leiden (1966) 166. A Tabernacles' background to *ἱεράρευμα* would support Elliott's thesis that corporate priestly service is in view here (rather than the priesthood of the individual believer) for only at this feast were all the Jewish priests engaged at once.

translation of τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα in 1:11 as 'the sufferings destined for Messiah' is not entirely satisfactory. The reference could be to the 'Messianic woes', the apocalyptic sufferings preceding Messiah's coming.<sup>134</sup> Apocalyptic literature was concerned with what Peter calls in this verse the 'time', or period of the End, and the 'manner of time', the character of the period preceding the coming of Messiah. Striking features include παθήματα, and δόξαι to follow. In 1:11 Peter has in mind the appearance of Christ 'a second time unto salvation' and the 'manifold trials' of which he was thinking were perhaps the sufferings preceding and leading up to the return of Christ,<sup>135</sup> rather than the early passion of Jesus in view elsewhere in the Epistle.<sup>136</sup>

The expression 'pangs of Messiah' occurs a number of times in rabbinic writings.<sup>137</sup> The emphasis, however, is not on the personal sufferings of Messiah Himself, but on the experience of Israel, for these are Mother Zion's 'birth-pangs' ushering in the new age.<sup>138</sup> The advent of Messiah is pictured as being preceded by a period of great distress and suffering.<sup>139</sup> It may well be that Peter's thought is similar and that he views the present troubles his readers were facing as apocalyptic and as symbolized by the Feast of Tabernacles, holding the promise of deliverance into the new age of peace and joy.

It is widely recognized that much Exodus typology is contained in this Epistle. In the first chapter alone we are taught that Christians are elect, sprinkled with blood and obedient. They have an inheritance, and are being proved on their way to it. They must have their loins girt, and be holy. They are redeemed with the blood of the Lamb. And so on.<sup>140</sup> These points are plain enough from even a cursory reading of the Epistle.

We may concede that Passover/Exodus typology is frequently to be found throughout Scripture. David Daube has devoted a book<sup>141</sup> to the theme in the Old Testament, while R. E.

<sup>134</sup> C. A. Scott, *Expositor* 12, 6th series (1905) 234-240.

<sup>135</sup> 1:11; 4:13.

<sup>136</sup> 2:21; 3:18; 4:1; 5:1.

<sup>137</sup> R. A. Stewart, *Rabbinic Theology*, Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh (1961) 47, 52.

<sup>138</sup> Moore, *Judaism* ii, 361.

<sup>139</sup> *Shabbath* 118a; *Pesahim* 118a; *Sanhedrin* 97a.

<sup>140</sup> 1 Pet. 1:1, 4, 7, 13, 16, 18, 19.

<sup>141</sup> D. Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (All Souls Studies 2), Faber, London (1963).

Nixon has written on the subject in the New Testament.<sup>142</sup> But it is as well to keep in mind one factor which is often overlooked. Some motifs in the Exodus typology are also common to that of Tabernacles. It could be that Tabernacles rather than Exodus holds the key to some biblical themes and ideas. That the two festivals are linked is plain enough. They fall in nice balance at the spring equinox and at the autumn equinox respectively, Nisan 15 and Tishri 15. Their association in origin, and so in significance, comes out in the reason given in Leviticus for keeping the Feast of Tabernacles: 'that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt'.<sup>143</sup>

Let us take one or two of the more obvious motifs common to Exodus and Tabernacles. *Sojourner* (תושב) is rendered in LXX by *παρεπίδημος*, a term which Peter uses twice (1:1; 2:11). In Leviticus 25:23 the Lord tells the people that the land was to be regarded as inalienable because the land was his, 'for you are *גֵרִים וְתוֹשָׁבִים*, strangers and sojourners with me'. In the Leviticus context the Israelites are depicted as no longer sojourning and journeying in the wilderness, but as having reached the Promised Land. Even there, however, their status is to remain that of sojourners and pilgrims, since their true home is with the Lord. The outlook is forward-looking, eschatological, that of the Feast of Tabernacles with its expectant hope of eternal settlement with the Lord, rather than that of Passover, where the emphasis is on deliverance from enemies and oppression.

From the opening verse of the Epistle, Peter's readers are reminded of their position as exiles. They are sojourners and pilgrims, *παροικοὶ καὶ παρεπίδημοι*,<sup>144</sup> terms which are fairly close in meaning. The LXX regularly uses *παροικος* for *גֵר* which in Old Testament signifies a foreigner living among Israelites as a resident alien, *i.e.* it indicates his legal status as a non-citizen. On the other hand *παρεπίδημος* emphasizes the transitory nature of the sojourner's stay in a place.<sup>145</sup> Both aspects

<sup>142</sup> R. E. Nixon, *The Exodus in the New Testament* (Tyndale New Testament Lecture, 1962), Tyndale Press, London (1963).

<sup>143</sup> Lv. 23:43. Some Rabbis also linked the Babylonian exile with Tabernacles (Strack-Billerbeck ii, 779; *Pesiqta* 186a).

<sup>144</sup> 2:11; cf. Gn. 23:4; Ps. 38:13 LXX; 1 Pet. 1:17.

<sup>145</sup> E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, Macmillan, London (1946) 118.

are illustrated by life in a booth: the absence of a proper house suggests a non-citizen, while the booth itself is but transitory in nature.

In not a few passages in Old Testament a more technical legal sense of 'sojourner' is used, meaning 'one living as subject to someone or something', implying dependence—be it as resident alien, hireling, slave, or inferior wife.<sup>146</sup> This idea of subjection too comes out in 1 Peter. The writer three times defines Christians as those who have been born again (1:3, 23; 2:2), which implies that their lives are now subject to a new overriding principle. He exhorts them to live *unto righteousness* (2:24), *i.e.* subject to the requirements of divine moral standards; and to live *according to God* (4:6), subject to His will and authority. On the other hand they are not to live *to the lusts of men* (4:2), subject to human desires which spring from envy, pride, or even mere fashion. One purpose of every religious exercise is to remind the worshipper of the supreme place occupied by God. This is brought out prominently in the Feast of Tabernacles, for the act of living in booths highlights the passing nature of the present world—not only in the physical realm<sup>147</sup> but also with regard to the submission claimed by human governments and authorities. No doubt this is why Peter can calmly urge his readers to maintain an attitude of respect towards the powers that be,<sup>148</sup> despite the persecutions Christians were facing at the time.<sup>149</sup> By contrast with the transitory nature of human institutions symbolized in the booths, the unique and eternal nature and authority of God is illustrated by the people acknowledging for the week of the festival that it is the Temple of the Lord which is the one permanent building to be used.

*Deliverance* is another concept associated not only with the Exodus but also with Tabernacles. Thus in the Book of Jubilees<sup>150</sup> Jacob is described as celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles when he is 'blessing and thanking the Lord who had delivered him out of all his tribulations'.

The verb <sup>148</sup> appears twice in the Exodus epic.<sup>151</sup> Daube prefers the translation 'recover' rather than the more usual 'redeem', since the element of payment is not essential to the

<sup>146</sup> Daube, *Exodus Pattern* 24, 26.

<sup>148</sup> 2:13-17.

<sup>149</sup> 1:6.

<sup>147</sup> 1:24; *cf.* 1:4; 5:4.

<sup>150</sup> Jubilees 32:4-7.

<sup>151</sup> Ex. 6:6; 15:13.

concept.<sup>152</sup> From Deutero-Isaiah onwards the verb (or its noun  $\eta\lambda\theta\eta\varsigma$ , 'recovery') becomes central in thought about salvation. One of the divine titles in the Eighteen Benedictions is 'the Recoverer of Israel'. The LXX uses  $\lambda\upsilon\tau\rho\acute{o}\omega$  in the Exodus passages, and Peter employs the same verb in 1:18, when speaking about redemption with the precious blood of Christ. As in Exodus, and despite Peter's mention of silver and gold, this redemption also is not a business transaction involving the passing over of money. We still use the commercial metaphor: 'The victim sold his life dearly.'

Something of the same idea of 'recovery' is to be seen in 5:10, where Peter assures his readers that the God of all grace will himself 'restore' them after their suffering, an experience which must always imply loss in some sense.

The theme recurs in the passage about the Flood (3:20), where the emphasis is far less on the destruction of those 'who formerly did not obey' than on the fact that eight persons were 'saved' by the intervention of God. It is just possible that the mentioning of the number may imply more than an adding up of the Ark's passenger list. The *eighth day*<sup>153</sup> is a title for the Christian Sunday almost certainly as early as the first century, and is the day for baptisms (on the analogy of Jewish circumcision on the eighth day). It is also linked with the thought that with the beginning of the Christian era the *eighth* and final aeon had now opened, following the 'week' of seven thousand years. The Flood story is again quoted in 2 Peter 2:5 and the number brought out: 'Noah, the *eighth* person'.<sup>153a</sup> The Feast of Tabernacles<sup>154</sup> lasted *eight* days, and the *eighth* day, as we saw earlier, was viewed by the Rabbis as specially for Israel alone. It would be a short step for the Church to take a similar line over the eighth day in a Christian calendar.<sup>155</sup>

Enough of the themes and ideas common to the Jewish festival and to Peter's Epistle have been noticed to suggest that, while the author is not writing with Tabernacles consciously in mind—though a case for this might well be made out for

<sup>152</sup> *Exodus Pattern*, 27f.

<sup>153</sup> W. Rordorf, *Sunday*, SCM, London (ET 1968) 96–100, 275–285.

<sup>153a</sup> 'Eighth' is usual Classical idiom for 'with seven others'; but  $\delta\gamma\delta\omicron\omicron\varsigma$  is normally accompanied in such cases by  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ , not used by Peter here.

<sup>154</sup> The final Hallel Psalm (118) has an eight-verse structure.

<sup>155</sup> *Ep. Barnabas* 15.9 speaks of the eighth day being kept in *joyfulness*—an appropriate parallel with Tabernacles.

Second Peter<sup>156</sup>—he and his readers are familiar with the feast. The destruction of the Temple in AD 70 knocked the heart out of the festival so far as Jews were concerned for some considerable time, since it had come to be so centred upon the altar. It also needs little imagination to appreciate that celebrating a festival of joy was for the Jews out of the question for many a long day. If it is accepted that Peter's First Epistle does reflect recent knowledge of the Feast of Tabernacles, then the date of its writing must be brought back sufficiently near AD 70 to support traditional authorship.

<sup>156</sup> *E.g.* 2 Pet. 1:13, 16-18; 2:5, 17; 3:3f., 6, 8, 11.