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Emerson B. Powery

## PETER

Peter, named Simon at his birth in Bethsaida (John 1:44; Gal 2:11, 14), was the son of John (John 1:42; 21:15–17) or Jonah (Matt 16:17). In Capernaum, Peter lived with his wife, mother-in-law, and brother Andrew, making a living by fishing (Mark 1:16–18, 29–34). The traditions of the Gospels have Jesus call these brothers as his first disciples. In the Synoptics they leave their family for a migrant lifestyle without possessions (Mark 1:16–18; 6:8–9; 10:28–29; Q Matt 10:37/Luke 14:26). Preparing Israel for the arrival of God's Kingdom, Jesus intended the 12 disciples to be a symbol of the restored tribes. He gave Simon the nickname "Kepha" (Aramaic for "rounded stone, precious stone, lump," in Greek transcribed as "Cephas," translated as "Petros"/"stone"; Mark 3:16; John 1:42), distinguishing him from another disciple (Mark 3:18). Neither "Kepha" nor "Petros" had been used as names before, except for one uncertain fifth-century B.C.E. "Kepha" attestation (Fitzmyer, 1979).

Before Jesus's crucifixion, the Gospels have Peter flee (Mark 14:50; John 16:32). His denial (Mark 14:66–72) is historical because after Easter there would have been no interest in inventing such an event. In Galilee, Peter was the first to have a vision of the deceased Jesus (1 Cor 15:5; Mark 16:7; cf. Luke 24:34). He convened other Jesus followers and experienced a second vision among the 12, a third one in a larger circle (1 Cor 15:5, 7).

Based on the conviction that Jesus had been resurrected, Peter and others founded a Jewish-Christian congregation in Jerusalem, which successfully missionized in Judea (Gal 1:22–24) and soon faced antagonism from Jewish authorities (Gal 1:13, 23; Phil 3:6; 1 Cor 15:9). Paul was one of the persecutors. After his conversion, however, he visited Peter for two weeks in Jerusalem around 34–35 (Gal 1:18).

In the Jerusalem congregation, Peter and others shared the leadership (Gal 1:18–19; Acts 1:13—6:7). At the apostles' convention in about 48, the "pillars" James, Peter, and John were the leaders (Gal 2:7–9); the pre-Easter circle of 12 had lost its importance. At the convention (2:1–10), Peter met Paul again. With Peter's consent and against some opposing Jewish-Christians, it was decided that Paul and Barnabas should continue the Torah-free Gentile mission, while the "pillars" missionized Jews with Torah observance. Although Peter, influenced by the Jesus tradition (e.g., Mark 2:15—3:6; 12:28–34), did not attribute any salvific relevance to Torah observance (Gal 2:12a), he recognized that Jewish believers in Jesus in the Jewish milieu of Judea should continue to observe the Torah. Finally, Paul agreed to raise money in his Gentile congregations for the poor among the Jerusalem Christians.

At the time of the convention, Paul considered Peter the leading missionary to the Jews (Gal 2:7–9). However, because Peter was traveling as a missionary, even to Syria (Gal 2:11; Acts 9:32—11:2), Jesus's brother James soon became the main leader among the Jerusalem Jewish Christians (Gal 2:12; Acts 12:17). Soon after the convention decision, Peter and Paul practiced table fellowship with Gentile Christians without observing the Torah in Antioch (Gal 2:11–21). However, when Torah-observant followers of James arrived from Jerusalem they would not join the fellowship. Peter therefore encouraged the Antiochian Christians to observe the Jewish dietary laws for the sake of joint table fellowship and congregational unity (Gal 2:13, 14d). Only Paul opposed Peter, accusing him of hypocrisy. But the Antiochians did not side with Paul, who consequently left the city. At the convention and in the Antiochian conflict, Peter was integrative and compromising, mediating between Jewish and Gentile Christians, which prevented a split between the two wings of the church. He later therefore was viewed as the foundational figure of the whole church.

Peter's subsequent life remains largely unknown. His wife accompanied him on his missionary trips; the congregations paid for their subsistence (1 Cor 9:5–6; more prominent than "the other apostles," Peter is especially mentioned here, as in Gal 2:7–9). Whether Peter visited Corinth, where Christians taught or baptized by him formed a Peter faction (1 Cor 1:12; 3:22), is unclear. When discussing the Corinthian apostle factions, Paul diplomatically spared Peter by using only himself and Apollos as examples when illustrating the absurdity of such factions (3:4—4:6). After the Antiochian confrontation, Paul in 1 Corinthians apparently tried to avoid another conflict with Peter. During Paul's last Jerusalem visit, Peter was not in town (Acts 21:18—23:11).

Sometime after Paul's Letter to the Romans, Peter probably reached Rome and was crucified in the Vatican gardens during the Neronian persecution in 64 (*1 Clem.* 5:1–4; 6:1–2; 1 Pet 5:1, 13; John 21:18–19; 3:36; Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.38–44; *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 4.2f.; *Apoc. Pet.* Rainer frg.). That the author of Mark heard Peter preach (as Papias claimed according to Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.15) cannot be proven but becomes plausible if both stayed in Rome in the early 60s. In the first half of the second century, Christians considered a simple grave at the Vatican to be Peter's tomb. Between 147 and 161, most likely around 160, they decorated it with a modest edicula, which is identical with the Peter "tropaion" mentioned by Gaius around 200 (in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.25.7). Constantine and/or Constantius II erected the original St. Peter's basilica above this tomb.

**New Testament Peter Images.** For Mark, Peter is the most important apostle. He is the first to see the resurrected Christ (16:7) and part of several inner circles of the disciples; he is the first one mentioned of the three (5:37; 9:2; 14:33; cf. 3:16–19) who witness Jesus conquering death (Jairus's daughter), being declared God's Son (the Transfiguration), and being distressed (at Gethsemane); he is the first mentioned of four in 1:16–20; 13:3, and of the 12 who preach and exorcise in 3:14–16. He is the first and last disciple mentioned by name (1:16; 16:7), being a witness of Jesus's work from the beginning to the end.

However, as speaker of the disciples (1:36–38; 8:29, 32–33; 9:5; 10:28; 11:21–24; 16:7), Peter also represents typical traits of discipleship, both positive and negative. Together with his brother, he is obedient to Jesus's call to fish for people (1:16–20), being promised eternal reward (10:28–31). After a long phase of incomprehension, Peter vicariously for all 12 disciples, confesses Jesus as Messiah (8:29). But as this insight is gained because of Jesus's miracles, it is deficient. From 8:31, the disciples, especially Peter (8:32–33), are challenged with new learning: only when Jesus's passion is experienced can his true identity as Messiah and God's Son be understood. The disciples' failure to accept both Jesus's and their own suffering (8:34–38) is exemplified especially in Peter (14:37). Representative of the disciples, he rejects the perspective of suffering (8:33) and is scolded (8:32–34). He also exemplifies the disciples' incomprehension (9:5–6). Although the denial story is peculiar to him (14:29–31, 54, 66–72), he is still representative of believers (see also 14:31c, 50) in the sense that persecuted readers can identify with his conflict. Without diminishing Peter's authority, Mark uses Peter's negative traits to show the ambiguous nature of discipleship, an existence that stands between faithfulness and failure.

Matthew takes over Mark's ambiguity (Peter is called first, confesses the Messiah, rejects the thought of suffering, and fails during Jesus's passion) but adds his own tendencies. "Peter," the most frequently used disciple name in Matthew, is emphasized from the beginning (4:18) in preparation for 16:18, whereas the absolute "Simon" appears only once (17:25).

Matthew's redaction emphasizes Peter's first place among the 12 (10:2). More than in other Gospels, Peter is the leading dialogue partner of Jesus (18:21; 15:15 vs. Mark 7:17; Matt 19:27b vs. Mark 10:28; Matt 17:24–27; Mark is followed in 16:22–23; 19:27; 26:33–35, except for 21:20). Some of his questions aim at Christian ethics. He thus is associated with teaching righteous conduct (also 16:19) and with confessing that Jesus is the Christ (16:16–17). Therefore, Jesus blesses him with the promise of 16:17–19 (only in Matthew).

The wordplay *petros* (stone)/*petra* (rock) in 16:18 is possible only in Greek; in Aramaic this playful use of

two different but phonetically similar words is impossible. As a pre-Matthean logion, it most likely originated in a Greek-speaking congregation such as Antioch, where Peter had played an important role. That *petra* refers to Peter's confession is not likely, considering that not only 16:18a but also 16:19 focuses on the person of Peter; "this rock" clearly refers to 16:18a syntactically. As Peter was called first, saw the risen Christ first, and played a leading and integrative role after Easter, it seemed plausible to consider him the foundational rock of the universal church. The "keys" and "binding"/"loosing" (16:19; 18:18) concern Peter's proclamation: by teaching the Matthean Jesus's ethical commands (28:20), Peter opens the kingdom—instead of shutting it off from people as the Torah teaching by the Pharisees and scribes does according to Matthew (23:13). "Binding" and "loosing" designate authoritative decisions about ethical issues (cf. 23:23) and the power of disciplining (excommunication or forgiveness; 18:15–18; John 20:23). It does not apply so much, however, to binding assertions of salvation or condemnation (cf. Q Luke 10:5f, 10–16). In this way, Peter is the foundation of the church; he sustains its existence and opens heaven for people (7:14; 16:18–19).

Peter's preeminent role is counterbalanced by material that stands in tension with his elevation. Not only Peter but also all the disciples are empowered to bind and loose (18:18). In 23:8 and 4:18, 21, Matthew's redaction emphasizes that disciples are siblings. The other disciples join Peter's pledge to stand by Jesus even in the face of death (26:35; Mark 14:31). Their confession of Jesus's identity as God's son (14:33) precedes Peter's confession (16:16). In 28:7, Matthew eliminates Peter's name from his source, and he does not report that Peter was the first Easter visionary. Indeed, the last time Peter is mentioned by name is in the context of his denial (26:75). That Jesus forgives him is only implied when he commissions all 11 disciples to missionize (28:16–20). Matthew's redaction emphasizes Peter's failures as much as his preeminence: Peter's resistance to the thought of suffering is even more dramatic in 16:22b than in Mark 8:32. Jesus accordingly intensifies his reproach, directing it exclusively to Peter (Matt 16:23, unlike Mark 8:33). Matthew also intensifies Peter's denial (Matt 26:72 vs. Mark 14:70 ff.).

In this ambiguous picture, Peter is not a guardian of church discipline and doctrine, superordinate to other disciples; instead, he is representative of the others, in both positive and negative respects. His sleepiness (26:40) and his little faith when walking on water (14:28–31, only in Matthew) are typical of the disciples (14:31; 6:30; 8:26; 16:8; 17:20; 28:17). Whereas his witnessing of Jesus's work from the beginning (first to be called; first vision, which laid the "rock" foundation for the church) was unique and cannot be reproduced, his commission to teach normatively (16:19) is the task of all disciples (18:18; 28:18–20).

For Luke–Acts, not the typicality but the historical uniqueness of the 12 is emphasized (Acts 1:21–26). More than Mark, Luke puts Peter in the center (e.g., Luke 5:1–11; 22:8, 31–34; 9:20; 24:34; 6:13–16; Acts 1:13, 15; 2:14, 37–42; 3:11–13; 4:8; 5:3, 8–13, 29; 8:45; 12:41) and alleviates his negative traits (Luke 9:22–23; 22:46, 57, 60; Matthew also omits Mark 14:31, 27, 50). Peter's denial is alleviated by the redactionally inserted pledge in Luke 22:33 (see also Peter living up to the pledge in Acts 5:18; 12:3–6). However, important decisions are made collegially (6:2–5; 8:14; 15:23–29), with Peter also working in a team (3:1–11; 4:1–7; 8:14–25; cf. Luke 10:1; 22:8).

The first half of Acts features Peter, who evangelizes Jews in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, whereas the second half positions Paul in the center. Their speeches (e.g., 1:15–22; 2:14–36; 3:11–26; 10:34–43; 11:5–18; 17:22–31) direct the plot, with Peter, not Paul, initiating the mission to Gentiles (10:1–48, prepared for in 2:39; 3:25). Thereafter, Peter is only mentioned in 12:3–19 (when he is miraculously released from prison) and at the apostles' convention (15:7–11), where he supports the mission to Gentiles without the Torah, except for the stipulations in 15:29. Acts pictures both protagonists in more harmony (15:25) than they may have been historically, e.g., in the Antiochian conflict. Peter, as guarantor of ecclesiastical unity (Acts 8:14–25) and in consultation with the other apostles, legitimizes Paul's Gentile mission (10:1–11:18; 15:1–29), which helps Luke's agenda of composing an apologia of Paul.

In John, the relationship between the beloved disciple and Peter mirrors the relationship between John's congregations and the mainline church. Both figures symbolize groups, with Peter's importance being downplayed. The ambiguous material shared with the Synoptics (1:41–42; 6:68–71; 13:36–38; 18:15–18, 25–27) withholds the detail that Peter was the first to be called and the first to confess (1:40–42). Although he is the speaker for the 12 (6:67–71; 21:2 ff.), this function seems unimportant. Peter now is the problematic sword-bearer (18:10–11) with only limited understanding (13:1–11). Correspondingly, the beloved disciple is put in the limelight (20:2–10; 21:1–14 vs. Luke 24:9–12; 5:1–11). Showing himself superior to Peter, he alone remains at the foot of the cross (19:26; 16:32). Closer to Jesus than Peter (13:23–25; 21:20–23), he opens Peter's eyes (21:7) and wins the race to the tomb but generously lets Peter enter first (20:4–8). John's Christianity does not want to be a sect separated from the mainline church. Therefore, John's Gospel acknowledges that Peter is the universal shepherd and martyr (21:15–23; 13:36) who warrants the unity of the universal church (21:11; 17:20–23), but the Johannine Christians claim to have a deeper understanding of Christ.

In the fictive situation of 1 Peter, shortly before his martyrdom in Rome (5:1, 13), Peter strengthens congregations of Asia Minor (1:1, 6, 17) that are struggling with persecution (2:11–12; 3:14, 16; 4:4, 12–14, 16; 5:8–9), attempting to be a model for them (5:3). He instructs their presbyters as a "fellow presbyter" (5:1–11, literal translation from Greek text), calling himself "apostle" only in 1:1 (Greek text). The pseudonymous author usurps Peter's authority. But there is no evidence of a Petrine "school."

Second Peter, a fictitious farewell writing to the entire church (1:1, 13–15), stylizes Peter as a universal authority. The author attempts to secure the apostolic, including Pauline, heritage against false teachers, featuring Peter and Paul in harmony (3:2, 15–17). Peter's authority is used for a corrective rereading of Paul (3:16b; 1:20; 2:1, 19), especially with regard to Paul's eschatological perspective and Paul's concept of freedom (3:3–9; 2:2, 10, 13–15, 18–22). During Jesus's transfiguration Peter received his authority to interpret the doctrinal heritage (1:16–20), when he—as *epoptēs* (one who sees, e.g., the highest mysteries) as in the mystery religions or in philosophy—reached the highest level of initiation: as visionary (see also *Apoc. Pet.*), he witnessed an anticipation of Christ's Parousia in the transfiguration so that those denying the Parousia (3:4; 2:1) are refuted.

The historical Peter's leading, compromising, and integrating role and his unique and nonreproducible experiences of having been the allegedly first to be called by Jesus and the first to see the risen Lord made him a universal authority of the church in the eyes of later New Testament writers. At the same time, writers such as Mark and Matthew considered him representative of typical features of discipleship, both positive and negative.

**Peter in Late Antiquity.** In noncanonical documents, Peter's authority and martyrdom became dominant themes. Since the end of the first century in Rome, the memories of Peter and Paul as local martyrs were closely connected (*1 Clem.* 5:3–7; 6:1; Gaius in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.25.7; Ign. *Rom.* 4.3; Dionysius of Corinth, in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.25.8; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1; Tertullian, *Praescr.* 36; Origen, in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.1.2–3; *Acts Pet. and Paul*).

***Archaeological evidence.*** The veneration of Peter as a martyr, documented in archaeological evidence of Rome since the second century (at the Vatican) and jointly with Paul since the middle of the third century (graffiti under S. Sebastiano) paved the way for the cultic veneration of other martyrs in Rome after the persecutions of the third and early fourth centuries. The archaeological evidence in Rome shows that, as martyrs, Peter and Paul were invoked as intercessors before God—just as Christ was after his death. Christ's, Peter's, and Paul's martyrdoms were paralleled in early Christian art; for example, the two apostolic martyrs were frequently depicted as sacrificial lambs beside the Christ lamb. Christians believed that these martyrs' tombs made the universal importance of Christ's death tangible on the local level. Similarly, in popular pagan religiosity, the divine was perceivable on the local level in hero cults and local deities.

Despite the close Peter–Paul association, Peter is significantly more prominent in Roman catacomb

paintings and sarcophagi reliefs. Some recurring motifs include (1) the story of Peter's denial that served as an illustration of God's grace and forgiveness (John 21), making Peter a person with whom many could identify; (2) a Moses–Peter typology, in which Peter reenacts Moses's miracle of bringing water from the rock by converting the soldiers who arrest him, thus giving them the water of life (later literary evidence is found in Pseudo-Linus's *Passio Petri* 5, fifth century; *Passion of the Saints Processus and Martinianus*, sixth century); (3) a second Moses–Peter typology, which makes Peter the teacher of the church (seen in his receiving of the scroll of Christ's law [*traditio legis*] or the keys [Matt 16:18–20; John 21:15–17]). As Christ's authoritative representative, Peter explains what Christ wants Christians to do (scroll) and possesses the power to forgive and to discipline (keys). By the middle of the third century, Roman bishops claimed the same authority for themselves. In Rome, subsequent depictions of Peter in art therefore alluded to the Roman bishop's authority. Accordingly, Peter appears significantly more often in sarcophagus reliefs commissioned by upper-class Christians than in catacomb frescos (ratio 1:8). Christians of worldly status and power liked to associate themselves with the authority of Peter and the Roman bishop, while less aristocratic Christians commissioning less expensive catacomb paintings avoided this association.

***Literary sources.*** Around 180 Irenaeus anchored his fictive catalogue of Roman bishops (*Haer.* 3.3.3) not in Peter but in "the apostles." Likewise, around 200 Bishop Satornius of Antioch "received" Peter as well as the other apostles "as Christ" and acknowledged that they together represented Christ (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.12.3–6). Similarly, Origen understood Matthew 16:18 in light of 18:18 ("*we* become a Peter... a rock is *every* disciple of Christ"; *Comm. Matt.* 12.10, italics added). Bishop Stephen of Rome in the middle of the third century, however, applied Matthew 16:17–19 to himself alone. Nonetheless, Cyprian opposed him: Stephen "contends that he holds the succession from Peter, on whom the foundations of the Church were laid," which is "folly" (Cyprian, *Ep.* 74.17). Tertullian (*Pud.* 21) and Origen (*Comm. Matt.* 12:11) had contested similar claims earlier. Not until the end of the fourth century did the Western church accept the primacy of the Roman bishop (Bishop Siricius, r. 384–399; Rasmussen, 2001, p. 34). In the fifth century, Leo the Great finally suggested that Peter as primate of all bishops is to be honored in his successors (*Sermones ad Romanam Plebem*, 3–4).

In the second century, Papias anchored Mark's Gospel in Peter's "teachings" (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.15; cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1), trying to secure its apostolic authenticity. Similarly, the Gnostic Basilides claimed Petrine heritage, with his teacher Glaucias allegedly having interpreted Peter (Clement, *Strom.* 7.17.106). Additionally, several pseudonymous writings besides 1 and 2 Peter appropriated Peter's authority. These include the *Gospel of Peter* (second half of the second century), the *Kerygma of Peter* (early second century), and the *Apocalypse of Peter* (second quarter of the second century).

In the influential *Acts of Peter* (originally from the end of the second century), Peter follows Simon Magus to Rome to stop his influence by preaching and performing miracles. He also propagates asceticism, which leads to his martyrdom. The *Pseudo-Clementines* describe the struggle between Peter and Simon Magus as well but not with the intention, as older research held, of creating a polarization between a Petrine mission to the Jews and a Pauline mission to the Gentiles.

Nag Hammadi writings have Peter proclaim a wide variety of messages. In the non-gnostic *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* (NHC 6.1; second to third centuries), Jesus commissions him and the other apostles to preach poverty and asceticism. Similarly, the *Actus Petri* (BG 4; second to fourth centuries) narrates non-gnostic stories about Peter the miracle worker, visionary, and preacher. On the other hand, the other *Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC 7.3; third century) contains polemics against mainline Christianity, while preaching dualism and docetic Christology and attributing a central role to Peter as receptor of gnostic revelations. The *Letter of Peter to Philip* (NHC 8.2; second to third centuries) deals with Christian suffering by propagating gnostic teachings given to Peter by the risen Jesus. Contrary to these images of Peter, in the gnostic *Gospel of Mary* (BG 1), Peter and Andrew become symbols of mainline Christianity by

polemically questioning the legitimacy of gnostic teachings. A similarly critical attitude toward Peter as mainline church representative, and thus downplaying his authority, can be seen, e.g., in the *Gospel of Judas*, the apocryphal *Letter of James* (NHC 1.2), and the *Pistis Sophia*. The Gnostics thus used Peter as both a negative counterpart, representing the larger church that does not acknowledge the gnostic teachings, and a positive authority, supporting their doctrines. Either way, they recognize the unique authority that Peter enjoyed in late antiquity.

[*See also* Apostleship; Authority and Order; Ecclesiology; John and the Johannine Epistles; Luke–Acts; *and* Paul.]

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Peter Lampe

## 1 AND 2 PETER

*See* Catholic Epistles.

## PHILEMON

*See* Pauline Letters.

## PHILIPPIANS

*See* Pauline Letters.