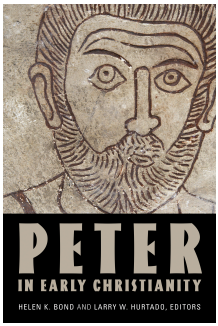
Peter in Early Christianity, edited by Helen K. Bond and Larry W. Hurtado



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The Centre for the Study of Christian Origins at the University of Edinburgh hosted a conference on the apostle Peter during July 4–6, 2013. Since I had the privilege of attending it, I am pleased to review the fruit of the scholarly labours that went into producing this volume. In their editorial introduction, Helen K. Bond and Larry W. Hurtado clarify the rationale for this conference: "After years of playing second fiddle to Paul, Peter has been the focus of a number of scholarly works over the last decade, and so it seemed like an opportune time to gather together an international team of experts to reconsider the apostle and his legacy within the early church" (xvi). The book is divided into three main sections, covering the historical Peter, canonical traditions, and non-canonical traditions about him.

The book opens and closes with essays on Peter's reception among Protestant and Catholic exegetes respectively. In the first essay, Hurtado reviews the seminal studies on Peter by Oscar Cullmann, Martin Hengel, and Markus Bockmuehl. Although they stop short of endorsing the papacy as Peter's authoritative successor, Hurtado displays the ecumenical interests driving their research from the exegesis of specific texts (e.g. Matt 16:17–19) to the larger picture of Peter as an apostolic pillar who acted as a centrist figure between the faction advocating Gentile Judaizing and Paul. In the final essay, Bockmuehl enters into critical dialogue with the Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar. Von Balthasar defends the pastoral and juridical functions of the Petrine office, yet insists that it must not be exalted above other apos-

tolic "charisms" like the Jamesian ideal of tradition, the Johannine ideal of love, and the Pauline ideal of spiritual freedom. Though Bockmuehl critiques the reduction of Peter to an ecclesiastical cipher, he maintains that the task entrusted to Peter of building up the church and pastoring the flock (Matt 16:17–19; Luke 22:31–32; John 21:15–17) has not expired as long as the flock endures.

In the first section, Sean Freyne draws on literary and archaeological data on sites such as Tarichea and Bethsaida/et-Tell to reconstruct the fishing industry in Galilee. Margaret Williams brings Jewish onomastic practices to bear on the name "Simon bar Yonah" and the supernomen rendered in Aramaic as *Kepha* and Greek as *Petros*. She contends that Jesus bestowed the Aramaic epithet on Simon, though its meaning was forgotten over time, against Bockmuehl's view that Simon was previously known by the Greek nickname in Bethsaida. Bond offers a nuanced, non-apologetic case that Peter served as the evangelist Mark's informant. Peter's recollections were subject to the frailties of human memory and were conformed to the collective memories of the Roman Christ followers. She adds that the generic conventions of Mark's professional *bios* meant that the spotlight was on Jesus's public deeds, with little interest in Peter's musings about his private encounters with Jesus. Conceding that ancient historiographers either conveyed the gist of a speech, even if not at the verbatim level, or freely invented speeches, Jonathan W. Lo is adamant that the common elements of Peter's missionary proclamation are accurately summarized in the literary style of the author of Acts. Granted, Paul's speech in Acts 13:16–41 contains similar elements and stresses the continuity of Paul's message with that of his predecessor, but Peter's preaching is generally distinctive from the other characters in Acts. Timothy D. Barnes interprets John 21:18–19 to mean that Peter was dressed in a flammable tunic and burned alive in the cruciform position, corroborating Tacitus's report that Christians were set ablaze while affixed to crosses in a modified form of burning (*Annals* 15.44.4).

The second section analyzes the New Testament portrayals of Peter. To explicate Peter's behaviour in the Synoptic tradition, from his antagonistic stance against Jesus's passion prediction to his nonsensical suggestion at the Transfiguration (Mark 8:32–33, 9:5–6 par), John R. Markley surmises that there is an apocalyptic motif at work which features "*human imperception in the face of divinely revealed mysteries*" (101, 103, 105, 108 [emphasis original]). Whereas the relationship between Peter and the Johannine Beloved Disciple is often construed in oppositional or complementary terms, Jason

S. Sturdevant argues that it is the connection with Jesus which is the key to unlocking Peter's characterization in John's narrative. Jesus leads Peter on the path of discipleship, employing varied didactic methods to mold Peter's character so that he will become a shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11–18; 21:18–19). After highlighting Luke's redactional tendency to edit or omit Markan parallels denigrating Peter, Finn Damgaard ponders why Luke re-narrated Peter's denials. By turning back after his momentary lapse, Peter is qualified to preach repentance to his "brothers [and sisters]" who equally acted in ignorance in condemning Jesus (Luke 22:32; cf. Acts 3:17). Sean A. Adams and Matthew V. Novenson underscore the precedent set by 1 Peter in representing Peter as possessing grapho-literacy and inspiring the production of additional pseudonymous Petrine epistles, but certain Christian writers struggled to reconcile this with the description of Peter as *agrammatos* or "without letters" in Acts 4:13. The scribal Peter who delves into the biblical scrolls to confirm the *gnosis* (knowledge) about the deity's transcendence and the inadequacy of the temple cult resurfaces in William Rutherford's paper on the Preaching of Peter in the third section.

As for the third section, Todd D. Still lists the assessments of Peter as an apostle, pillar, witness, teacher, example, or letter writer in the Apostolic Fathers, yet marvels that the images of Peter as a rock, elder, missionary, shepherd, miracle worker, or holder of the keys are missing. Paul A. Hartog compares 1 Clement with Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians*; the former explicitly lifts up Peter as a model to be emulated (1 Clem. 5.3–4; cf. Pol. *Phil.* 9.1–2) and the latter is indebted to 1 Peter for its paraenesis and exhortations. Tobias Nicklas explores the spectrum of "Gnostic" responses to Peter, from virtual neglect in writings of Sethian or Valentinian provenance to the validation of Peter as the principal recipient of revelation. Curiously, texts with sharply dissimilar views on Peter like the Gospel of Judas and the Epistle of Peter to Philip were read together in the same codex. Paul Foster surveys a wide range of "Apocryphal" gospels, acts, epistles, and apocalypses. Some texts embellish canonical episodes involving Peter or contribute to the hagiography surrounding Peter's miracles or martyrdom in Rome, while other texts depict Peter as promoting or disparaging post-Easter revelatory teachings. Foster concludes that these writers were not constrained by the memory of Peter, for "Peter" authorizes whatever ideologies are advanced in their texts. Paul Parvis traces Peter's transformation from the apostle who instituted a line of bishops at the See of Antioch to Antioch's original bishop. Lastly, Peter Lampe examines the archaeological and iconographic record for

where Christians located Peter's burial site and for the popular veneration of Peter in Rome.

Bond and Hurtado should be commended for organizing an outstanding conference hosting several experts on various aspects of Peter's career and legacy. Space does not permit a full evaluation of all the diverse perspectives collected in this volume, so I will briefly engage with some arguments put forward about the canonical representations of Peter, the Papian tradition on the evangelist Mark, and the episcopacy of Peter in Rome. First, Bond and Damgaard rightly perceive that Peter's denials, like the memory of Paul as a former persecutor, could have performed a paraenetic function for Christ followers who recalled Peter's rehabilitation and years of service (59, 128–29). Moreover, Peter's bewilderment may be a literary device that allows for Jesus to elucidate his teachings and parables. On the other hand, the hard-heartedness of the Twelve, presumably including Peter, in the Markan narrative (Mark 6:52; 8:17–21; contra Matt 14:33; 16:12) seems to move beyond the motif of a seer's imperception and temporarily aligns them with the outsiders hardened against Jesus (Mark 3:5). At least in these pericopes, it is difficult for readers to empathize with the Twelve when they are repeatedly corrected about the same issue (6:35–37; 8:2–4, 14–21). As for Peter's character arc in John's story, Sturdevant's reading may depend on whether one agrees with Paul S. Minear and Richard Bauckham that the Johannine epilogue is an integral part of the Gospel's narrative structure rather than an editorial addition (117, n. 27). Lo looks at criteria for detecting possible sources behind the Petrine speeches in Acts such as the presence of Semitisms or primitive Christological titles, but he may undercut some of these points by noting the rhetorical practice of *ethopoeia* or speech in character and dismissing the evolutionary Christology paradigm (69–73). His statement that "Luke was acquainted with Paul and other characters in his narrative" needs to be fleshed out (74).

As for Peter's role behind the composition of Mark's Gospel, Bond notes the reluctance of biographers, such as Tacitus (cf. *Agricola* 4.3; 22.4; 24.3), to refer to their sources or eyewitness testimony (55, n. 23). This reluctance may still stand out from the total absence of any explicitly identified source in Mark's narrative, which also contrasts with a few other evangelists (cf. Luke 1:1–2; John 19:35). It remains plausible that the evangelist may have consulted some eyewitness informants, but the idea that Peter was Mark's primary source rests on the testimony of the Elder John and Papias of Hierapolis (cf. *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.15–16). Given their erroneous judgment that Matthew's

logia was originally written in a Semitic language (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.16) and Papias's naïve acceptance of extravagant oral reports (cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 5.33.3–4; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.9; Apollinarus of Laodicea on Matthew 27:5), Papias's credibility may be open to question. Bond and Still also assign the tradition in *Ecclesiastical History* 2.15.1 to Papias (46, 165–66), but it seems more likely to me that Eusebius loosely paraphrased a section from the *Hypotyposes* of Clement of Alexandria and asserted that Papias was in agreement with the basic sentiments expressed therein (*Hist. Eccl.* 2.15.2; cf. 6.14.5–7).

A number of chapters interact with the textual witnesses for Peter's presence and martyrdom in Rome (e.g. John 21:18–19; 1 Pet 5:13; 1 Clem. 5.4; Ignatius, *Rom.* 4.3; Acts of Peter 37[8]; Gaius in Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 2.25.7). Michael Goulder's article "Did Peter Ever Go to Rome" (2004) is a surprising omission. Only Barnes directs a few polemical remarks towards Otto Zweirlein's 2009 monograph *Petrus in Rom*, calling it the "nadir in historical criticism" and taking issue with Zweirlein's exegesis and "hypercritical" dating of the Ignatian epistles (86–87). Barnes's theory relies on the meaning of the verb *zōnnumi* as girding oneself in contrast to the crucifixion of victims in the nude (77–80, 84–86), so I would be interested to see his response to the recent 2014 monograph *Crucifixion in the Mediterranean World* by John Granger Cook that discusses some limited evidence that crucified victims might wear some kind of loincloth or undergarment on pages 192–193. In the end, these critical observations are intended to stimulate further dialogue around these thought-provoking essays and should not detract from the fact that Bond and Hurtado have produced a must-read volume for all future studies of the apostle Peter.

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