



1 PETER

A COMMENTARY

CRAIG S. KEENER

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Craig S. Keener, 1 Peter

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Translation of 1 Peter

Part of my strategy in this translation is to experiment with ways to articulate the text that often differ from standard translations, simply to provide a complementary perspective on texts that may seem too familiar to some readers. Thus I have used simpler language in many texts but have made some others less readable in an effort to bring out nuances often missed. All translations involve compromises, obscuring some nuances in the effort to highlight others. Thus this translation is designed to work for this commentary, not as a typical translation.

From Peter to God's Chosen in Asia Minor

- 1:1 From: Peter, a commissioned agent of Jesus Christ.
To: Those God has chosen—resident aliens dispersed throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia—
- 1:2 chosen, indeed, because God the Father foreknew you. Your chosenness is evident by God's Spirit consecrating you so you can obey and be sprinkled by Jesus Christ's blood. May God cause his grace and peace to abound in your lives!

Assured of Future Salvation

- 1:3 God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ deserves all praise! By his abundant mercy he birthed us anew. This new birth brings us into a living expectation—an expectation that is living through Jesus Christ's resurrection from among the dead.
- 1:4 This new birth thus also brings us into an inheritance that will never perish, is undefiled, and will never fade. It's guarded in the heavens for you.
- 1:5 It's guarded for you who, by God's power and through your loyal trust, are guarded for the salvation that's ready to be revealed in the last time.

- 1:6 That's why you celebrate. Granted, now for a brief period various necessary testings have grieved you.
- 1:7 These testings are meant to prove the genuineness of your trust in God. Even though fire proves the genuineness of gold, gold is perishable. But your trust in God is worth far more than gold. The result of such unalloyed trust in God will be praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed!
- 1:8 Though you haven't seen him yet, you love him. Thus, though you don't see him now, you trust him and celebrate with inexpressible and glory-filled joy.
- 1:9 Thus you are receiving the outcome of your trust in God: your ultimate salvation.

More Than the Prophets Knew

- 1:10 The prophets tried hard to learn more about this salvation, searching carefully. These prophets prophesied about the grace that you would experience.
- 1:11 They were trying to understand what person or what sort of time the Spirit of Christ within them was announcing as this Spirit was testifying in advance about Christ's sufferings and subsequent glory.
- 1:12 It was revealed to them that they weren't serving themselves, but you. These matters that they once announced are the same good news now brought to you by those who preached it. They did so by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. These are matters that angels want to investigate!

Live Wholly for God

- 1:13 In light of this, keep your minds ready and disciplined! Stake all your future expectation on the grace that you'll receive when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- 1:14 Like obedient children, don't follow the pattern of the passions you used to indulge when you were ignorant.
- 1:15 Instead, in all your behavior be consecrated as holy to God, just as the one who called you is holy.
- 1:16 Do this because the Bible says, "You shall be consecrated to me as holy, because I am holy."

Ransomed from the World by the Precious Lamb

- 1:17 If you call on the Father who fairly judges the actions of each individual, behave with reverence during your stint as resident foreigners in this world.
- 1:18 Do this because you know how you were ransomed from the empty way of behavior passed down from your ancestors. You weren't ransomed with perishable things such as silver or gold.
- 1:19 Instead, you were ransomed at the cost of Christ's priceless blood. He was like an unblemished, ritually acceptable lamb.
- 1:20 Christ was known before the world's beginning, but he was revealed for your sake at the end of the eras of this age.

1:21 It was for the sake of you, who through him trust in God who raised him from among the dead and glorified him, with the result that your trust and expectation are in God.

Transformed by God's Eternal Message

- 1:22 You purified your souls by obeying the truth, so as to sincerely love the rest of God's family. So always love each other from the bottom of your hearts!
- 1:23 Love like this because you have been reborn. This rebirth comes not from perishable seed but from imperishable. The seed it comes from is God's living and enduring message.
- 1:24 We recognize this because the Bible says, "Everyone is like grass, and all their glory is like a blossom of grass. The grass dries up, and the blossom falls off,
- 1:25 but the Lord's message endures forever." This message is the message that was preached as the good news to you.
- 2:1 So lay aside every kind of evil and every kind of deceit, acts of hypocrisy and envy, and all slanders.
- 2:2 And like just-born babies, crave the pure, mind-engaging milk, so that by it you may grow toward salvation,
- 2:3 if you've tasted that the Lord is kind.

Chosen Foundation for a Chosen People

- 2:4 That's the Lord to whom you come: a living stone rejected as unfit by people, but chosen by God as priceless.
- 2:5 In the same way, as living stones, you're being built as a spiritual house, for a consecrated community of priests that offers up spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God through Jesus Christ.
- 2:6 The Bible includes comment about this: "Look, I'm putting a stone in Zion, a chosen, invaluable cornerstone, and whoever trusts in it will not be shamed."
- 2:7 So he's invaluable to you who trust him. For those who don't trust him, however: "The stone that the builders rejected as unfit is the very one that became the cornerstone!"
- 2:8 Moreover: "A stone to trip over and a rock over which they fall!" Because they disobey the message, they fall, a destiny to which they've been consigned.
- 2:9 By contrast, *you're* a chosen people, "a royal community of priests, a consecrated nation," a people precious to God. That's so you may make known the greatness of the one who called you out of darkness into his amazing light.
- 2:10 Although at one time you were "not a people," now you are "God's people." Although at one time you "hadn't received mercy," now you "have received it."

Don't Act like the World

- 2:11 Loved ones, I urge you as resident foreigners and resident aliens to stay away from those physical passions that battle against the soul.

2:12 Behave well among the gentiles. That way, those who slander you as wrongdoers for something may see your good works and honor God on the day when he comes.

Submit to the World’s Authorities

- 2:13 Submit to every human system for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme in rank;
- 2:14 or to governors, whom God sends to punish people who do wrong and to praise those who do good.
- 2:15 This is what God wants: by doing good you may silence the ignorance of foolish people.
- 2:16 So live as people who are free, but don’t use “freedom” as a cloak for wrong, but live as people who are God’s slaves.
- 2:17 Honor everyone! Love the spiritual family—your brothers and sisters in Christ! Reverence God! Honor the king.

Submission of Slaves

- 2:18 Slaves, submit to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and tolerant, but even to the corrupt ones.
- 2:19 Do this because it brings God’s favor when, for the sake of one’s conscience before God, one puts up with grief while suffering unjustly.
- 2:20 For what kind of credit do you merit for enduring being beaten as a result of sinning? But if instead you endure suffering as a result of doing right, this brings God’s favor on you.
- 2:21 Indeed, it’s for this sort of thing you’ve been called, because Christ also suffered on your behalf, leaving a model for you to follow in his steps.
- 2:22 He’s the one who “didn’t sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth.”
- 2:23 When others abused him verbally, he didn’t abuse them back. When he was suffering, he didn’t threaten his abusers. Instead he handed himself over to the one who judges justly.
- 2:24 He’s the one who “carried our sins” in his body on the cross, so that, since we have died to sins, we may live for righteousness. It’s “by his wounds” you “were healed.”
- 2:25 That’s because you were like straying sheep. Now, however, you’ve returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

Submission of Wives; Mutuality with Husbands

- 3:1 In the same way, wives, submit to your own husbands, so that even if any are disobedient to the message, they may be won without speech through their wives’ behavior.
- 3:2 This can happen as they observe your pure behavior and respect.
- 3:3 Don’t let your adornment be merely external, such as braiding your hair, wearing gold, or putting on clothes.

- 3:4 Instead, let your adornment be the inner person, by the imperishable character of a gracious and quiet spirit, which is what God deems invaluable.
- 3:5 For this is how the women of the past, who were consecrated to God and placed their expectation in him, used to adorn themselves. They submitted to their own husbands;
- 3:6 for example, Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him, “My lord.” You have become her children if you do good and are not frightened by any terror.
- 3:7 In the same way, husbands, live together with your wife, taking into account what you know. Thus treat her as the more vulnerable member, granting her the honor appropriate to a fellow heir of the grace of life. Do this lest your own prayers be hindered!

Treat Everyone Kindly

- 3:8 Finally, to all of you: be like-minded, feeling for one another, familial in your love, tender-hearted, and humble in your thinking.
- 3:9 Don’t pay back wrong for wrong. Don’t answer an insult with another insult— instead, bless your mockers! Because God called you for this lifestyle, so that you would inherit blessing.
- 3:10 We know this because, “Whoever wants life and loves to see pleasant times needs to keep their tongue from wrong and their lips from speaking deceit.
- 3:11 “Let them turn from wrong and do good. Let them seek peace and pursue it!
- 3:12 “For the Lord watches over people who are just, and he heeds their requests. But he’s against those who do wrong!”

Better to Suffer Unjustly than Justly

- 3:13 Now, who’s going to wrong you if you become zealous for good?
- 3:14 But even if you suffer because of righteousness, it’s well with you. “Don’t fear what scares them or be shaken,
- 3:15 “but consecrate” Christ as “Lord” in your hearts. Always be ready to provide a defense to anyone who questions you about your expectation.
- 3:16 But make sure you do it with graciousness and respect. Likewise, keep a clear conscience, so that when your abusers slander you for your good behavior in Christ, they may be shamed.
- 3:17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if this is God’s will, than to suffer for doing wrong.

Christ’s Suffering and Exaltation

- 3:18 This is true because Christ also suffered, in his case as a once-for-all sacrifice for sins. He suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring you to God. Although he was killed in the flesh, he was made alive by the Spirit.
- 3:19 By that Spirit he also, as he went, made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits.

- 3:20 These were the spirits that disobeyed long ago, when God patiently waited in the time of Noah, when the ark was being built. In that ark, a few—to be more precise, eight—people were saved through water.
- 3:21 That water also prefigures how now immersion saves us. By this I mean not the putting off of dirt from the flesh. Rather, I mean the commitment of a conscience clear before God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- 3:22 He's at God's right hand. He went into heaven, now that angels and authorities and powers have been made to submit to him.
- 4:1 In light of this, since Christ suffered in the flesh, get your own hearts ready to suffer! Do so because whoever has suffered in the flesh has given up sin.
- 4:2 Thus they no longer live the rest of their lives for human passions; instead, they live it for God's will.

Live for God's Assessment, Not the World's

- 4:3 For the time that's passed away was already more than enough for you to live the way gentiles want to. They like to go around uninhibited, in passions, drunkenness, wild partying, and unrestrained worship of statues of false gods.
- 4:4 As they go about this behavior, they're amazed that you don't join them in their wasteful excesses. That's why they say terrible things about you.
- 4:5 But they are going to have to render an accounting to the one who's ready to judge the living and the dead.
- 4:6 That's why the good news was also preached to those who are dead: so that they might be judged in the flesh, from the human standpoint, but have life by the Spirit, from God's standpoint.

Serve One Another

- 4:7 The climax of everything has drawn near. Therefore think in a wise and sober way so that you may pray.
- 4:8 Most important, love each other devotedly, because "Love covers many sins."
- 4:9 Show hospitality to each other without complaining.
- 4:10 Just as each of you has received a gift, use that to serve each other as good managers of God's many-sided grace.
- 4:11 If anyone speaks, let their speech be like oracles from God! If anyone serves, let them do so from the strength that God supplies! Let each believer act as God's agent so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. Yes, the glory and power are rightly his, forever and ever, amen!

Suffering for Christ

- 4:12 Loved ones, don't think strange the fiery burning that comes to test you, as if something strange were happening to you.
- 4:13 Instead, to the extent that you're sharing Christ's sufferings, be glad, so you may celebrate with joy when his glory is revealed.

- 4:14 If you're reproached because you bear Christ's name, it's well with you! It's well with you because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.
- 4:15 But don't let any of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or a wrongdoer or as a troublemaker.
- 4:16 But if any of you suffers for being a "Christian," don't be ashamed of that. Instead, give honor to God by this name.
- 4:17 Be ready for such hardship, because it's time for judgment to begin with God's household. And if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who disobey God's good news?
- 4:18 And "If it's hard for the just to be saved, what can we expect for the irreverent and sinners?"
- 4:19 Keeping this pattern in mind, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their lives to the trustworthy creator. You entrust yourself to him by continuing to do what's good.

Servant Leaders and Mutuality

- 5:1 In light of all this, I'm appealing to the elders among you. I do so as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings, who also shares in the glory that will be revealed.
- 5:2 Shepherd the part of God's flock that is among you. Don't watch over them as if this is something you were forced to do, but willingly; that's what God wants. Don't do it greedily; instead do it enthusiastically.
- 5:3 Don't lord it over those whom God has allotted you to lead. Instead, be a role model for the flock.
- 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will get the victors' unfading wreath of glory.
- 5:5 Likewise, those of you who are younger should submit to those who are older. Now *all* of you: clothe yourselves with humility, since God "stands against the arrogant, but bestows grace on the humble."
- 5:6 So humble yourselves under God's powerful hand, so that he may exalt you at the right time.
- 5:7 "Cast all your concerns on" him, because he cares about you.

Stand Firm in God

- 5:8 Stay disciplined and watchful. Your opponent the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for somebody to devour.
- 5:9 Stand firm against him in faith, knowing that your spiritual family throughout the world is experiencing the same sorts of sufferings.
- 5:10 Now may the God of all grace himself, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered for a little while, restore, strengthen, fortify, and establish you.
- 5:11 The power is his forever and ever! Amen.

Closing

- 5:12 Silvanus, whom I consider a trustworthy brother, helped me write this short message. It's meant to encourage you and to testify that this is God's true grace. Stand firm in it!
- 5:13 Your fellow-chosen, she who is in "Babylon," greets you, as does my son Mark.
- 5:14 Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you, who are in Christ.

Introduction to 1 Peter

Scholarship thrives on debate. Yet in contrast to the case with Paul's letters, debates exist even concerning the genre of 1 Peter. Is it "a baptismal sermon in the form of an epistle"?¹ First Peter includes some common early Christian themes possibly circulated in catechetical materials.² Evidence is not, however, sufficient to determine that it reflects a paschal vigil (as some have proposed)³ or a baptismal homily or even liturgy;⁴ dependence on traditional material need not entail that 1 Peter is strictly liturgical⁵ or a baptismal homily in particular.⁶ Early baptismal instructions may well have employed images of putting off the old life and putting on the new, and subsequent teaching (such as in 1 Peter) could evoke such familiar images, but this letter mentions baptism explicitly only once (1 Pet. 3:21).

1. Reicke, *Epistles*, 74; Robinson, *Trust*, 66–67. In 1897 Adolf von Harnack first proposed that 1 Peter was an earlier homily framed as a letter ca. 90 CE (*Chronologie*, 451–65, as cited in Elliott, *Peter*, 7).

2. Selwyn, *Peter*, 363–466; Davies, *Paul*, 123–28; much more cautiously Best, *Peter*, 29–32. Pace many (Beare, *Peter*, 192–96; Mitton, *Ephesians*, 18; Best, *Peter*, 35–36), the shared material does not require dependence on Ephesians (see, e.g., Brox, "Petrusbrief"), any more than similarities require dependence on *1 Clement* (which most recognize as improbable; e.g., Best, *Peter*, 36). Moreover, although the authorship of Ephesians is heavily disputed, if Paul genuinely wrote it from Rome ca. 62, its content would certainly be known in Rome afterward (Hort, *Peter*, 5; writers of significant letters normally retained a backup copy: cf. Cicero, *Fam.* 7.25.1; *Att.* 9.11; 9.13a; 9.14; 10.3a; 13.29; Seneca Y., *Lucil.* 99; Richards, *Letter Writing*, 158–60 [including some poorer letter writers, 159]; Schmidt, "Letter," 437).

3. Cross, *Peter*, 23–27; more tentatively, Selwyn, *Peter*, 62.

4. Cross, *Peter*, 28–35; Reicke, *Epistles*, xxxi–xxxii; Brooks, "Clue"; cf. Boismard, "Liturgie"; Gryglewicz, "Liturgia."

5. Kelly, *Peter*, 15–20; Best, *Peter*, 21–23.

6. Best, *Peter*, 24–27; Kistemaker, *Peter*, 22–23; Marshall, *Peter*, 20; Grudem, *Peter*, 40–41; Prasad, *Foundations*, 48–58; Feldmeier, *Peter*, 28–30; Witherington, *Peter*, 47. Peter explicitly mentions baptism only in 3:21.

None of these reservations deny the possibility that 1 Peter could include sermonic material converted into epistolary format.⁷ Since I have friends whose aides converted their sermons into books, the idea seems quite plausible to me in principle.

But most scholars today view 1 Peter as a genuine letter,⁸ nearly always now as a literary unity.⁹ The epistolary frame raises issues also treated in the letter, and theories about its prehistory are necessarily speculative.¹⁰ This epistolary consensus, with which I concur, succeeds, however, only if we also recognize that letter styles range from rudimentary news updates or business correspondence to letter essays.¹¹ The vast majority of ancient letters were brief, an average of roughly eighty-seven words long, whereas 1 Peter is closer to 1,700 words in length.¹² Ancient critics would regard such long letters as more like essays than letters.¹³ Moreover, the level of Greek in 1 Peter far exceeds the level found in typical papyri.¹⁴

Ancient epistolary theorists do not ordinarily discuss public letters such as some of those in the NT.¹⁵ In general, ancient letters were supposed to be conversational.¹⁶ Yet while some ancient essays or other works have epistolary frames,¹⁷ 1 Peter is not simply an essay with an epistolary introduction and farewell. It is somewhat more like a letter essay in its length, arrangement, and depth, but it remains tied to the original (or ideal) situation. As a circular letter, however (see 1:1), it is not limited to a *local* situation in any one city, unless perhaps the author's own.

7. Cf., e.g., Cranfield, *Peter*, 13 (prior sermonic material in 1:3–4:11 with material for the present situation in 1:1–2; 4:12–5:14).

8. With, e.g., van Unnik, “Christianity”; France, “Exegesis,” 265; Thurén, *Strategy*, 79–88; Feldmeier, *Peter*, 30–32; see esp. Martin, *Metaphor*, 41–78; summary of consensus in Horrell, *Peter*, 8. Greek letters assumed their essential form half a millennium before Peter's time, and secondary grammatical education introduced students to elementary letter-writing form (Malherbe, “Theorists,” 12–13). Often students learned by imitating model letters (Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 33).

9. See, e.g., Michaels, *Peter*, xxxvii–xxxix; Guthrie, *Introduction*, 788–93; Achtemeier, *Peter*, 58–62; Senior, *1 Peter*, 10; fuller discussion in Prasad, *Foundations*, 53–61.

10. Elliott, *Peter*, 9–10.

11. With, e.g., Best, *Peter*, 13.

12. Cf. Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory*, 113. Even Cicero's letters average roughly only three hundred words (Morris, *Romans*, 1).

13. See Demetrius Phalereus, *Style* 4.228, noting this for many of Plato's and Thucydides's letters.

14. Cf., on Paul, Judge, *First Christians*, 710–11; Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory*, 113–14; cf. Malherbe, *Social Aspects*, 54–58; Smit Sibinga, “*Serta Paulina*.” The rhetorical level of 1 Peter is at least as sophisticated as Paul's.

15. Forbes, “Comparison,” 151.

16. So Seneca Y., *Lucil.* 75.1–3. Weima (“Theory,” 328–29) notes that Pseudo-Demetrius, *On Style* 223–35, prefers somewhat more attention.

17. E.g., 2 Macc. 1:1–6; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.1; Rev. 1:1–5; cf. Cicero, *Brut.* 2.11 (noted in the preliminary narrative).

First Peter is not simply an essay, but neither is it a private letter to an individual, in contrast to most extant ancient letters.¹⁸ Exhortation, which is common in Paul's letters and in 1 Peter, is much more characteristic of moral philosophy than of the interests addressed in rhetorical handbooks;¹⁹ the closest analogy to this particular feature, then, might be letters such as Seneca the Younger's letters to Lucilius or the pseudepigraphic Cynic epistles.²⁰

A letter this length would have taken several hours to copy,²¹ plus several hours more to produce the backup copy (and still more if, as is likely, Peter's secretary or secretaries produced earlier drafts on reusable material).²² As opposed to a short note on a scrap of papyrus or an oral greeting, the composition of 1 Peter constituted a fairly significant task.

Structure

The structure of 1 Peter has been a subject of debate through most of subsequent history;²³ the limited perspicuity of the letter's structure does not match the author's generally acknowledged facility in Greek grammar. Some elements of the letter's structure, such as major divisions,²⁴ are more obvious, whereas others are more open to dispute. As one rhetorical critic observes, sections are clear enough, but the material within the sections lacks "a clear sequential development."²⁵

18. Cf. Hansen, *Abraham*, 23, on Paul's letters.

19. Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 52. The rhetoric of 1 Peter (on which see, e.g., Campbell, *Honor*; Thurén, *Strategy*) is undoubtedly deliberative (Campbell, *Honor*, 30) and reflects some features characteristic of the so-called Asianic rhetoric (Witherington, *Peter*, 42–45). "The dramatic accumulation of synonyms for effect" (Elliott, *Peter*, 65, citing 1:3–5, 7, 18; 2:6, 9; 3:3bd, 8; 4:3b, 15; 5:2c–3a, 10d) fits flowery Asianic flourishes, though Asianism was sometimes simply an Atticist pejorative title (Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory*, 283) for grand, eloquent Koine (Calboli, "Asianism"). Nevertheless, rhetorical structural analyses (treating 1 Peter as a speech; e.g., 1:13–16 as the *propositio*, in Campbell, *Honor*, 58–59) seem forced (Horrell, *Peter*, 18, noting also Martin, "Inventing"). Heil (*Peter*) suggests a different but sophisticated literary structure in terms of microchiasms focused on the center of each section (5–19) and a larger macrochiastic structure (20–23).

20. Seneca's letters average about one thousand words (Morris, *Romans*, 1).

21. Richards, *Letter Writing*, 165.

22. For production of second copies of important letters for personal records, see Richards, *Letter Writing*, 158–59.

23. See Martin, *Metaphor*, 3–39, concluding (39) that no structural proposal had yet carried the day.

24. Most scholars recognize the division between 1:13–2:10 and 2:11–4:11 (Thurén, *Strategy*, 90–91). For the address *agapētoi* (2:11; 4:12) as a structural marker, dividing the letter into three parts (1:1–2:10; 2:11–4:11; 4:12–5:14), see, e.g., Michaels, *Peter*, xxxiv.

25. Watson, "Peter," 11.

Yet for oral hearers, the repetition and interweaving of topics would have sufficiently reinforced the message.²⁶ This letter’s focus is paraenetic, and paraenesis “is not determined by its compositional structure”; it varies devices and structure.²⁷ Emphasizing this point, Troy Martin groups three major sections of the body around three metaphor clusters related to Diaspora:²⁸ God’s chosen household (1:14–2:10);²⁹ foreigners and aliens (2:11–3:12);³⁰ and the Diaspora as a context for suffering (3:13–5:11).³¹ It is not so clear, however, that Peter’s obvious focus on suffering in the last section depends on the Diaspora metaphor.

Outline

Most ancient works lack a table of contents,³² and there are usually multiple possible ways to outline them, depending on one’s approach. (Ancient writers, like modern ones, do not always think in terms of hierarchical outlines.) The following asymmetric, conceptual but hierarchical outline for 1 Peter is one possible way to approach the letter, but it is, as we shall see, by no means the only one.

- I. Opening (1:1–12)
 - A. Epistolary prescript (1:1–2)
 - B. Praising God for salvation (fitting epistolary thanks, prayers, wishes) (1:3–12)
 - 1. Future of salvation (1:3–9)
 - 2. Background of salvation (1:10–12)
- II. Letter body (1:13–5:11)
 - A. Live for God’s eternal values (1:13–2:3)
 - B. God’s people (2:4–10)
 - C. Submit for the sake of witness (2:11–5:11)
 - 1. Submission (2:11–3:12)
 - a. Behave honorably, refuting slanders (2:11–17)

26. Watson, “Peter,” 12.

27. Martin, *Metaphor*, 102–3. Thuren (*Strategy*, 94) recognizes the paraenesis and its potential deliberative function, but (less plausibly, in my opinion) connects the letter as a whole with the epideictic genre (96–100), though rightly highlighting the dimension of honor and shame.

28. Martin, *Metaphor*, 160–61.

29. Martin, *Metaphor*, 161–88.

30. Martin, *Metaphor*, 188–208.

31. Martin, *Metaphor*, 208–66.

32. For exceptions, see, e.g., Pliny E., *Nat.* bk. 1; cf. Pliny’s explanation in *Nat.* pref. 33; see also Aulus Gellius, *Att.* pref. 25.

- (1) Introduction (2:11–12)
- (2) Submit, honor all (2:13–17)
- b. Slaves to slaveholders (2:18–25)
 - (1) Call to slaves (2:18–20)
 - (2) Christ's example (2:21–25)
- c. Wives and husbands (3:1–7)
 - (1) Wives of unbelieving husbands (3:1–6)
 - (2) Husbands (3:7)
- d. General exhortation before God (3:8–12) (applied esp. to 3:7)
- 2. Suffering for and with Christ (3:13–4:19)
 - a. Behave honorably, refuting slanders (3:13–17)
 - b. Christ's example (3:18–4:6)
 - (1) Christ suffered and was exalted (3:18–4:2)
 - (2) No longer living like gentiles (4:3–6)
 - c. General exhortation: serve fellow believers (4:7–11)
 - d. Suffering for and with Christ (4:12–19)
- 3. Elders and younger (5:1–7)
- 4. General exhortation (5:8–11)
- III. Epistolary postscript/closing (5:12–14)

The inadequacy of such a hierarchical outline is evident. One could, for example, retain 2:11–12 as a transitional conclusion to the section on the identity of God's people (2:4–10). A greater problem is one that characterizes top-down hierarchical outlines in general in works not designed to reflect them: parallel units identified from bottom-up are assigned quite different functions in sections of dramatically different length. For example, Christ's example dominates both 2:21–25 and 3:18–4:6. General paraenesis appears in 1:13–2:3, but again in smaller units in 3:8–13 (how to treat everyone), 4:7–11 (how to treat fellow believers), and 5:8–11 (how to resist the devil). Behave honorably, refuting slanders describes two sections (2:11–17; 3:13–17).

A more satisfactory bottom-up outline thus might be closer to the following:

- 1. Epistolary prescript (1:1–2)
- 2. Praising God for salvation (fitting epistolary thanks, prayers, wishes) (1:3–12)
 - a. Future of salvation (1:3–9)
 - b. Background of salvation (1:10–12)

3. Live for God's eternal values (1:13–2:3)
4. God's people (2:4–10)
5. Behave honorably, refuting slanders (2:11–17)
 - a. Introduction (2:11–12)
 - b. Submit, honor all (2:13–17)
6. Slaves to slaveholders (2:18–25)
 - a. Call to slaves (2:18–20)
 - b. Christ's example (2:21–25)
7. Wives and husbands (3:1–7)
 - a. Wives of unbelieving husbands (3:1–6)
 - b. Husbands (3:7)
8. General exhortation before God (3:8–12) (applied esp. to 3:7)
9. Behave honorably, refuting slanders (3:13–17)
10. Christ's example (3:18–4:6)
 - a. Christ suffered and was exalted (3:18–4:2)
 - b. No longer living like gentiles (4:3–6)
11. General exhortation: serve fellow believers (4:7–11)
12. Suffering for and with Christ (4:12–19)
13. Elders and younger (5:1–7)
14. General exhortation (5:8–11)
15. Epistolary postscript/closing (5:12–14)

This arrangement, too, fails to highlight many connections. It is not designed to allow for chiasmic connections (such as in 3:17–4:2) or for repetition of motifs throughout the letter. The submission theme that dominates 2:13–3:7 recurs clearly in 5:5; the call to no longer live like gentiles in 4:3–6 echoes 2:11–12; logically somewhat parallel exhortations to follow Christ's example in suffering (2:21–25; 4:12–19) still fall in different levels of units in the outline, inviting shorter divisions.

Especially since earlier interpreters' attempts to discern in 1 Peter two letters, one addressing the prospect of persecution and another addressing its current reality, scholars have generally started a new section in 4:12. If one need not parallel suffering with Christ in 2:21–25 and 4:12–19, one might arrange 2:11–3:17 somewhat chiasmatically:

- A Behave honorably, refuting slanders (2:11–17)
- B Subordinates (slaves) should submit (2:18–20)
- C General exhortation (2:21–25)

- B' Subordinates (wives) should submit (3:1–7)
- C' General exhortation (3:8–12)
- A' Behave honorably, refuting slanders (3:13–17)

But a general relational exhortation also recurs in 4:7–11; Peter raises these after multiple sections.

- A Behave honorably, refuting slanders (2:11–12)
- B Submission, respect in relationships (2:13–17)
- C Subordinates (slaves) should submit (2:18–20)
- D Suffering for/with Christ (2:21–25)
- C' Subordinates (wives) should submit (3:1–6)
- B' Submission, respect in relationships (3:7–12)
- A' Behave honorably, refuting slanders (3:13–17)
- D' Christ's example (3:18–4:6)
- B' Submission, respect in relationships (4:7–11)
- A'' and/or D'' Suffering for/with Christ; and, Behave honorably, refuting slanders (4:12–19)

That is, themes recur and therefore multiple points of contact among units are possible, depending on the elements one highlights. No one has yet proposed an outline on which all scholars concur, nor is such concurrence likely in the near future, not least given the rarely unanimous character of scholarship generally in the humanities. The differences among the sorts of outlines arranged by different interpreters reflect the lack of a single objective way to outline the material; Peter's exhortations are too tightly interrelated throughout the letter to be graphed in a single manner. The letter is not a mere haphazard collection of motifs, such as Proverbs, and it is organized more tightly than 1 John; Peter's concern is to highlight his exhortations, not to organize his material to fit our outlines.

Some works influenced by rhetoric offer a sort of thesis statement. By usual definition, a *thesis* offers a theoretical topic, whereas a *hypothesis* offers a concrete topic with particulars.³³ Orators often stated their theses or topics

33. Aelius Theon, *Progymn.* 1.60; 2.91–104; 11.2–6, 240–43; Hermogenes, *Progymn.* 11. On Thesis 24–25; Aphthonius, *Progymn.* 13. On Thesis, 49S, 41R; Nicolaus the Sophist, *Progymn.* 12. On Thesis 71–72; see further Anderson, *Glossary*, 63–65 (esp. on Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.5.5–18; Cicero, *Or. Brut.* 125; for the use of thesis in first-century school exercises, Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.4.24–32; Aelius Theon, *Progymn.* 2.p.120,12ff. Sp.; on *hypothesis*, Cicero, *De or.* 2.133–47; *Top.* 80; *Or. Brut.* 45–46); more briefly, Aune, *Rhetoric*, 459–60; Schenkeveld, “Philosophical Prose,” 247; Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 198–99. For developing a hypothesis (a sample declamation theme), see, e.g., Hermogenes, *Inv.* 1.1.93–100.

toward the beginning of a speech;³⁴ a rhetorical argument was to begin with a proposition.³⁵ Other skilled writers likewise often stated their topic at the beginning of books;³⁶ Paul probably uses a thesis or hypothesis in his most polished extant letter (Rom. 1:16–17).³⁷ (Because philosophers proposed theses for discussion, their proposals were generally not self-evident statements.)³⁸

First Peter 2:12 or 2:12–13 may introduce the theme for the entire following section. Finding a thesis statement for the entire letter seems more difficult; perhaps it appears in 1:13–16, but it is likelier that Peter simply introduces themes in a more general way toward the beginning. The theme of enduring suffering in light of future salvation already dominates the blessing, just as Paul often introduces some themes in his letters in his thanksgiving sections.³⁹ Some of these themes already appear as early as 1:1–2. One of the rhetorical functions of introductory sections, in addition to building rapport,⁴⁰ was to introduce a work's direction.⁴¹

Authorship

Here I venture a somewhat contrarian opinion, while aware that many colleagues whom I esteem highly do not share it. While many letters in antiquity

34. E.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 1.11; 38.5–6.

35. Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.4.1–2.

36. E.g., Thucydides, *Hist.* 1.23.6; Pliny E., *Nat.* 8.1.1; 18.1.1; 33.1.1; 34.1.1; 36.1.1; 37.1.1; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 7.1; 8.1. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Thuc.* 10–11) critiques Thucydides for inadequate arrangement (Moessner, “Arrangement,” 161).

37. E.g., Tobin, *Rhetoric in Contexts*, 104; Johnson, *Romans*, 26; Aune, *Rhetoric*, 430 (as the *prothesis*); Jewett, *Romans*, 135. Others are less certain here (Keck, “Pathos,” 86; Elliott, *Arrogance*, 17).

38. Schenkeveld, “Philosophical Prose,” 247.

39. Keck, *Paul*, 19; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 21–22. Despite some distinctive characteristics (Arzt, “Thanksgiving”; cf. Thiselton, *Corinthians*, 87; Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory*, 207n44), Paul's resemble other ancient epistolary thanksgivings (Aune, *Environment*, 163, 186; Reed, “Thanksgivings”).

40. See, e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 29, 1436b.17–36; 36, 1441b.36–1442b.27; Cicero, *De or.* 1.31.143; 2.80.322–23; *Inv.* 1.15.20; Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7.23–24; 4.1.16, 23; Menander Rhetor, *Treat.* 2.3, 378.4–9; cf. further Calboli Montefusco, “Exordium,” 272; Heath, “Invention,” 103; Aune, *Rhetoric*, 176; Gärtner, “Prooemium,” 16; examples include Aeschines, *Ctes.* 1; Cicero, *Sest.* 1.2; *Rosc. com.* 3.7; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.7–8; 39.1; 41.1; Chariton, *Chaer.* 5.7.1; *Sipre Deut.* 343.1.2; in other genres, Cicero, *Fam.* 13.66.1; Statius, *Silu.* 2.pref.; Heraclitus, *Hom. Prob.* 59.7.

41. *Rhet. Alex.* 29, 1436a, lines 33–39; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 24; Cicero, *Or. Brut.* 40.137; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 38.8; cf. Seneca E., *Controv.* 1.pref. 21. This practice is not limited to speeches; in histories, see Polybius, *Hist.* 3.1.3–3.5.9 (note esp. 3.1.7; 11.1.4–5); Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 19; Velleius Paterculus, *Comp.* 2.129.1; Lucian, *Hist.* 53; elsewhere, e.g., Virgil, *Aen.* 1.1–6; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.2; Soranus, *Gynec.* 1.intro.2; 2.5.9; Philostratus, *Vit. apoll.* 7.1; 8.1; Hippolytus, *Ref.* 1.proem.

are pseudepigraphic, a far greater number are not,⁴² so by normal standards the burden of proof should remain with those who contest the authorial claim of 1 Pet. 1:1, which if taken at face value at least is more apt to *support* Petrine authorship than to contest it.⁴³ Nevertheless, the number of pseudepigraphic works is sufficient to invite investigation in a given case, and the evidence needed to surmount a given burden of proof is a matter of degree on which scholars with differing methodological assumptions will debate. My approach, then, will be to ask which side of the debate has stronger evidence.

The widely differing opinions among scholars make clear that not all of us evaluate the evidence the same way. I will offer here my own reasons for why I believe that the external evidence is sufficiently strong to make the case compelling for Petrine authorship. Before turning to such external evidence, however, let me first address some of the objections that many colleagues often raise against Petrine authorship, invariably on the basis of internal evidence.

Some scholars do also offer internal evidence supporting Petrine authorship—evidence consistent with authorship by an early Jewish Christian leader who knew Jesus’s teaching, biblical tradition, and the mid-first-century range of Christian teachings⁴⁴—some of the very points sometimes argued the other way. Because such evidence can be judged as subjective as the inconsistencies often alleged against Petrine authorship, however, and because it will neither convince detractors nor be needed to convince advocates, I will exclude such discussion here. I focus instead on internal-evidence objections to Petrine authorship, though most of these appear to me no less subjective.

After addressing the most important objective internal argument against Petrine authorship (the style), I will therefore simply survey briefly other internal objections to Petrine authorship before turning to our more concrete external evidence.

Greek Style and Style Assistants

One cannot dismiss Petrine authorship by contrasting the letter’s style with a style that scholars elsewhere universally attribute to Peter, since we lack

42. One can respond by selectively appealing to later Christian pseudepigrapha, but these are all pseudepigraphic by virtue of being later and therefore do not allow us to predict what proportion of first-century works (which I believe we have strong reason to accept as 1 Peter’s century) are pseudepigraphic.

43. Michaels (*Peter*, lxii–lxvii) tentatively supports Petrine authorship, partly because the burden of proof lies with those who contest it.

44. See, e.g., Stibbs, *Peter*, 31–39. Some also suggest that a later first-century author would have also granted Peter a more exalted status than what appears in 1 Pet. 5:1 (Moffatt, *Introduction*, 340); moreover, the probable reading of 5:2 fits an earlier rather than later form of church government.

undisputed Petrine material for comparison. Nevertheless, a large proportion of scholars—indeed, the majority of those publishing in conventional academic venues—doubt that Peter authored 1 Peter.⁴⁵ Their most important argument stems from their (correct) observation that the style of 1 Peter is fairly eloquent Greek.⁴⁶

Some defenders of Peter as author respond that a Galilean fisherman could have known Greek. While Peter undoubtedly *did* know Greek,⁴⁷ however, it is not likely that he could, without great effort and learning, produce the sophisticated quality of this letter's Greek on his own.⁴⁸ There are plausible signs of Semitic interference, suggesting that the author, or at least one of the authors, was bilingual.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, there are also signs of stronger skill in Greek composition than we would expect of a Galilean fisherman,⁵⁰ unless we suppose that Peter underwent something like rhetorical training while leading the Jerusalem church.⁵¹ Peter's decades in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18; 2:1, 9) surely familiarized him further with Greek, but I believe that he would likelier depend on assistants rather than developing his own literary Greek style to this degree.

Since authorship normally was by dictation, however, it did not require writing literacy. The poor used scribes out of necessity and the wealthy did so out of convenience. As a prominent leader, Peter would certainly have ready access to scribal and stylistic assistance.⁵² Josephus, for example, depended

45. E.g., Beare, *Peter*; Best, *Peter*; Schmidt, "Garderobe."

46. Krodol, "Peter," 54–55; Best, *Peter*, 49–63 (arguing instead for a Petrine school, 63). On the high quality of the letter's Greek, see also Aune, *Rhetoric*, 351; on its rhetoric, Aune, *Rhetoric*, 352; Thurén, "Writings," 596–98.

47. Bilingualism was common in Lower Galilee (Porter, "Papyri, Palestinian," esp. 766; Mussies, "Vehicle"; Millard, *Reading and Writing*, 102–17; Fiensy, "Composition," 230; van der Horst, "Funerary Inscriptions"), though Aramaic was the dominant mother tongue (Wilcox, "Influence," 1094; Horsley, *Galilee*, 247–49), and most bilingual speakers are stronger in one language (Horsley, *Documents* 5, 23–24; for significant modern exceptions with full competence, see Grudem, *Peter*, 30–31). Cf. Wuellner, *Fishers*, 57–59.

48. One should not, however, rest this observation on Acts 4:13; see Johnson, *Acts*, 78; Barrett, *Acts*, 233–34; Keith, "Claim," 63–64; Keener, *Acts*, 2:1154–57.

49. See the thorough treatment in Jobs, *Peter*, 325–38; note esp. charts on 333, 336. Cf. the oft-cited proposal of the imperatival participle, although scholars have proposed alternative explanations; see discussion in the note at 1 Pet. 1:14. Cf. Wifstrand, "Problems."

50. See esp. Elliott's thorough treatment of 1 Peter's vocabulary (*Peter*, 41–64) and style (68–80, 83), including "literary refinement," such as "the near-Classical employment of the definite article and exact use of tenses" (64). It is not comparable to a Polybius or a Josephus, and may include some Semitic features (Jobs, "Syntax"; Jobs, *Peter*, 7; cf. Elliott, *Peter*, 68, on such exceptions), but it is still of a higher register than typical NT Koine.

51. Unlikely as I consider this solution, it is not impossible. Johnson (*Writings*, 432–33) points out that "two of the great English stylists of the twentieth century (Conrad and Nabokov) learned and mastered English only as adults."

52. Kelly, *Peter*, 31–32; Sevenster, *Greek*, 191. For varying levels of scribal involvement in composition, see esp. Richards, *Secretary*; Richards, *Letter Writing*.

on others for stylistic help in Greek;⁵³ unlike Josephus, Peter would depend on volunteers rather than scribes funded by imperial patronage, but the church was surely large enough by this time to provide such help. Patristic interpreters recognized that Peter could allow his amanuensis some liberty.⁵⁴ That some early Christians besides Paul possessed this literary skill is evident from this letter itself—regardless of the author(s) to whom we attribute it. Why should we assume this skill possible only later than Peter’s day, when we know that Rome included a flourishing Christian community before Nero’s persecution, and we know that at least some Christians already possessed such skill?⁵⁵

We have no way to know for certain who may have helped Peter, but among those explicitly present with him are Mark and Silvanus (1 Pet. 5:12–13), both of whom may well have been literate.⁵⁶ If Mark is the John Mark of Acts, he grew up in a household of some means.⁵⁷ Silvanus was apparently a Roman citizen (cf. Acts 16:37), a fairly rare privilege for those from the eastern empire, suggesting at least some status and therefore likely higher than usual education. Peter in fact indicates Silvanus’s help at some stage in the process (1 Pet. 5:12), possibly at the stage of actual composition (again see comment on 5:12). However one understands 5:12, there is solid reason to believe that Silvanus was known to participate somehow in composing some apostolic letters (see 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1).

Peter does not specify the degree of dependence, even if (a much-debated point) he implies Silvanus as his scribe in 5:12;⁵⁸ yet mention of a mere scribe was not typical. (Tertius inserts himself in Rom. 16:22 because he sends greetings as a fellow believer, but this was exceptional, and Silvanus does not directly insert himself.)⁵⁹

Some scholars even find similarities in style to earlier letters in the composition of which Silvanus participated.⁶⁰ Although these shared features appear

53. Cf. Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.50.

54. See Jerome, *Ep.* 120.11 (Wikenhauser, *Introduction*, 506; Williams, *Persecution*, 26n58).

55. Paul could not have been the only one; cf. Paul’s rivals in 2 Cor. 11:5–6; see Keener, *Corinthians*, 227–28.

56. For Mark, cf. Papias, *Frag.* 3:14–15; 21:1–2.

57. Acts 12:12–13 (see comments in Keener, *Acts*, 2:1892–906); cf. also Col. 4:10 with Acts 4:36–37. For Mark as a contributing amanuensis to 1 Peter, see Moon, *Amanuensis*. For those who dismiss as uncritical any argument based on Acts, see my response in Keener, *Acts*, 1:51–401; more concisely, Keener, *Cambridge Acts*.

58. Correctly noted in Moffatt, *General Epistles*, 86; Zahn, *Introduction*, 2:150–51.

59. Scribes do appear sometimes; see, e.g., P.Hercul. 1426, the more polished version of a work, noted in Larsen, *Gospels*, 71.

60. Selwyn, *Peter*, 7–17. On matters of Greek rhetorical scale, see Barr, “Structure”; Barr, “Dependence”; Barr (“Impact”) argues for possible associations between Silvanus’s potential authorship of Hebrews and the Petrine epistles.

more readily to an observer already optimistic regarding shared influence in these works, style certainly cannot be used *against* authenticity if, as we would expect, Silvanus or others participated in its composition. Scholars debate whether Silvanus was merely a courier (now the majority view) or also a literary collaborator (contrary to what advocates of the courier view often claim, the wording in 5:12 can have either or both meanings; see discussion there), but whether through Silvanus or not, certainly Peter would have had access to any collaboration that he needed.

While Peter's authority stands behind the letter, therefore (1 Pet. 1:1), others are likely primarily responsible for the quality of Greek and perhaps even input on some of the Diaspora allusions.⁶¹ Thus, in an earlier generation, A. M. Hunter contended, "We may reasonably assume (with most British scholars) that St. Peter's authority stands behind the first epistle bearing his name."⁶² While many scholars today support the letter's pseudonymity, the self-assurance of some who place the matter beyond debate⁶³ reflects their unwillingness to engage scholarship that comes to different conclusions. Many scholars do in fact continue to support Petrine authorship,⁶⁴ and to simply ignore their voices by relegating the matter beyond dispute is parochial.

Silvanus or someone else could even have put Petrine preaching into an epistolary frame after Peter's death,⁶⁵ allowing for the work's early acceptance as Petrine even if Peter were deceased. Thus many scholars suggest that a Petrine circle or school in Rome arranged Petrine teachings in this form;⁶⁶ this

61. With, e.g., Cranfield, *Peter*, 14, 18, 137; Reicke, *Epistles*, 70; Skaggs, *Peter*, 3; *pace* Grudem, *Peter*, 23–24, 199–200; see comment on 1 Pet. 5:12.

62. Hunter, *Message*, 22.

63. Or speak of a consensus (e.g., Boring, "Recent Study"). Contrast scholars more respectful of the range of views (sometimes also noncommittal regarding authorship)—e.g., Hagner, *New Testament*, 699; Powell, *New Testament*, 481–82, 493–94.

64. See, e.g. (I borrow some examples from Williams, *Persecution*, 24–25n54; Jobes, *Peter*, 19), Heard, *Introduction*, 169–72; Congar, *Mystery*, 175; Wikenhauser, *Introduction*, 501–6; Stibbs, *Peter*, 15–30; Ketter, *Petrusbrieife*, 191; Reicke, *Epistles*, 69–71; Dalton, "Faith," 265; Robinson, *Redating*, 169; Martin, *Letters*, 330–34; Drane, *Early Christians*, 109–11; Kistemaker, *Peter*, 5–9; Michaels, *Peter*, lxii–lxvii (tentatively); Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 421–24; Spicq, *Pierre*, 17–26; Thiede, *Peter*, 177; Holmer and de Boor, *Briefe*, 13–18; Bénétreau, *Pierre*, 33–41; Davids, *Peter*, 3–7; Marshall, *Peter*, 21–24; Hillyer, *Peter*, 1–3; Wendland, "Grace," 25; Miller, *Rock*, 57–75; Green, *Peter*, 6–10; Jobes, *Peter*, 5–19; Burge, Cohick, and Green, *New Testament*, 401–2; Charles, "Peter," 277–79; McKnight, *Peter*, 26–28; Schreiner, *Peter*, 21–36; Gäckle, "Grüsse"; Mosser in Paul, Rosner, and Mosser, "Letters," 254–55; Watson, "Peter," 3–5; Edwards, *Peter*, 18–19; and myself. Many note the detailed case in Guthrie, *Introduction*, 762–81.

65. Cf. Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 85, mentioning the Jewish practice of compiling characteristic teachings of prominent religious leaders.

66. See, e.g., Elliott, *Peter*, 118–30 (esp. 127–30); Knoch, "Petrusschule." Cf. Chatelion Counet, "Pseudepigraphy." Contrast Horrell, "Petrine Circle."

is a genuine possibility that cannot be ruled out. Whether authored during Peter's lifetime or by a Petrine circle afterward, the substance would remain consistent with Petrine teaching and would explain the early external attestation of Petrine authorship.⁶⁷ Ockham's razor, however, suggests that the simpler solution is more apt to be correct, and the simpler solution here is that Peter remained alive and composed or directed the letter with significant collaboration or assistance.

Limitations of the Usual Internal Arguments against Petrine Authorship

Where internal evidence is decisive, it should take priority over external evidence. Yet the weight of alleged internal evidence marshaled against Petrine authorship appears to me quite questionable. Although some find it very compelling, even some of its supporters recognize its vulnerabilities. While accepting what he viewed as the consensus of scholarship that someone composed 1 Peter after Peter's lifetime, Raymond Brown, for example, recognizes that none of the evidence such scholars cite is conclusive against Peter's authorship.⁶⁸ Though reticent to commit explicitly to Petrine authorship, James Dunn suggests that it is much likelier Peter than critics often argue, refuting objections against it.⁶⁹

Arguments that the letter contains little that is distinctively Petrine are circular, begging the question of how to determine what is Petrine. If 1 Peter is not Petrine, we lack undisputed Petrine sources with which to measure it.⁷⁰ Some characteristics of 1 Peter fit other sources about Peter, such as the substance⁷¹ of Peter's speeches in Acts,⁷² but scholars often dispute the authenticity of those sources as well.⁷³

67. Goppelt (*Peter*, 51–52, 370) argues that the Roman church may have used tradition shaped by Peter and Silvanus and therefore usefully attributed to them. Cf. Elliott, *Peter*, 130: “ascribed to Peter the Apostle because the group responsible for its composition knew that they were expressing not primarily their own ideas but rather the perspectives and teaching of their foremost leader, the Apostle Peter.”

68. Brown in Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 129–30; likewise Feldmeier, *Peter*, 38.

69. Dunn, *Jerusalem*, 1148–53.

70. Green, *Peter*, 7.

71. Parallels sometimes cited (here from Drane, *Early Christians*, 109) include the execution “tree” in Acts 5:30; 10:39; 1 Pet. 2:24; the highlighting of the Isaian servant in Acts 3:13, 26; 4:25–30; 1 Pet. 2:21–25; the cornerstone in Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7; and the approach to the fulfillment of OT prophecies in Acts 3:18–24; 1 Pet. 1:10–12.

72. See, e.g., Ridderbos, “Speeches of Peter”; Smalley, “Christology Again,” 92; Elliott, *Peter*, 25–26 (a lengthy list of affinities); Thiede, “Scriptures”; Green, “Narrating”; Himes, “Word”; cf. also Combet-Galland, “Susciter” (suggesting that 1 Peter develops the Petrine traits). Ishodad of Merv, *Commentaries* 38 (Bray, *Peter*, 66), considered Petrine speeches in Acts rhetorically superior to this letter; by Greek rhetorical standards, I would argue the opposite.

73. On the nature of the speeches in Acts (Luke's compositions but probably based on some knowledge of various speakers), see the range of approaches in Cadbury, “Speeches”;

Clearly 1 Peter does make use of some common early Christian traditional language,⁷⁴ but whether this language originated with Peter, Paul, or others we cannot know. Ancient homiletics did not require attribution, especially of commonly used material. Nor does a criterion of double dissimilarity work well here: the letter's teaching need not be unique to be authentic. This observation should make ready sense to us today: today no less than in other periods, Christian preaching often echoes widely shared motifs within popular Christian culture.

More concretely, some complain that the letter sounds too Pauline; others respond that Silvanus could also account for alleged Paulinisms (cf. 2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1).⁷⁵ The question of Silvanus's participation aside, however, Peter himself knew Paul (Gal. 2:11–14), and they shared some beliefs more widely held among early Christians. This includes some views often deemed distinctively Pauline (see Gal. 2:16).⁷⁶ Many contend that 1 Peter reflects simply wider pre-Pauline Christian tradition.⁷⁷ The most common parallels cited for Paul are in Paul's letter to the Romans.⁷⁸ Because this letter reached Rome before either Paul or (likely) Peter did, there is no reason to suppose Peter ignorant of such a letter (see comment on 1 Pet. 2:6), which may have been treasured by and circulated among Roman Christians (cf. even 2 Pet. 3:15–16).

Some object that if 1 Peter were authentic, it should echo Jesus, since Peter knew him personally. Aside from the fact that 1 Peter is merely 105 verses long,

Bruce, *Speeches in Acts*; Bruce, "Speeches Thirty Years After"; Schweizer, "Speeches"; Gasque, "Speeches"; Horsley, "Speeches"; Porter, "Thucydidean View?"; Soards, *Speeches*; Padilla, *Speeches*; Plümacher, "Missionsreden"; other sources and discussion in Keener, *Acts*, 1:258–319.

74. See clearly and concisely Davies, *Paul*, 123–28. Ancient readers also recognized this; on similarities to James, cf. Andreas Presbyter, *Catena* (CEC 41–42); esp. Oecumenius, *Comm. 1 Pet.* (PG 119:513), in Bray, *Peter*, 65–66.

75. E.g., cf. already Moffatt, *Introduction*, 331–32. Davids (*Peter*, 5) suggests that a pseud-epigrapher advancing Paulinisms in Asia Minor would likelier attribute the letter to Paul himself than to Peter.

76. See Dunn, *Galatians*, 134; Hays, *Conversion*, 71; Hays, "Galatians," 236; deSilva, *Readings*, 128; Das, *Galatians*, 240–41; Riesner, "Rechtfertigung," 207–11; Sumney, *Steward*, 78–81; de Boer, "Justification"; de Boer, *Galatians*, 143; Keener, *Galatians* (2019), 171–72; Barr, "Preaching."

77. E.g., Taylor, *Atonement*, 34; Achtemeier, *Peter*, 15–19; Elliott, *Peter*, 40. Differences (emphasized, e.g., in Elliott, *Peter*, 37–40) cannot demonstrate independence (rightly noted by Williams, "Intertextuality"), but as a control alleged parallels should also be tested by word usage in clearly independent works from the same circles, where possible. Before surveying parallels between 1 Peter and other NT writings, Powell (*New Testament*, 482–84) rightly observes that 1 Peter reflects "mainstream Christianity."

78. Best (*Peter*, 32–34) argues for such dependence; Kelly (*Peter*, 11–15) argues fairly persuasively against it. Peter's adaptation of Isaiah reflects a form earlier attested in Rom. 9:33 (Koch, "Quotations"), possibly originally from that letter; adaptations toward the Hebrew text appear especially in Isaian texts in Romans (Marcar, "Quotations").

and that Peter would now have three decades of additional Christian experience following his initial time with Jesus, Peter *does* echo Jesus's teachings at various points,⁷⁹ and in much more space proportionately than we find in Paul's letters. These echoes themselves raise complaints by scholars who find them too *close* to the language of the Gospels, suggesting dependence on the finished Gospels.⁸⁰ Yet oral traditions normally assume a standardized form;⁸¹ community memories often quickly assume a standardized form even in witnesses' own narratives.⁸² Verbatim is not the norm for recall⁸³—but neither are most of Peter's allusions to Jesus's teachings verbatim. Moreover, the one form of material most often recalled close to verbatim, and typically rehearsed and remembered by disciples, was aphorisms.⁸⁴ A majority of scholars already posit such a tradition, and possibly even a written source,⁸⁵ before Peter's death—what we typically call Q.⁸⁶

79. See commentary; also Gundry, "Verba Christi"; Gundry, "Further Verba"; Maier, "Jesus-tradition." Thus cf. Drane, *Early Christians*, 109: "Much of its teaching is exactly what we would expect from a disciple of Jesus," given how much it echoes Jesus. Despite weaker connections, many of Gundry's allusions are strong; dismissing Johannine ones (such as John 3:3–5; 20:29 ["Verba Christi," 337–38]) presupposes more skepticism about John than is necessary today (see, e.g., Hengel, *Question*; Anderson, Just, and Thatcher, *John, Jesus, and History*; Anderson, *Quest*; Charlesworth, "Shift"; Charlesworth, *Mirrored in John*; Charlesworth with Prusinski, *John in Inquiry*; Wright, "Reliability"); complaints that Peter follows Luke's redaction of the tradition (Best, "Tradition") are as debatable as whether Matthew or Luke reflects the earlier form of Q in a given instance.

80. Achtemeier, *Peter*, 11–12, following Best, "Tradition," 95.

81. Rodríguez, *Structuring*, 87.

82. See Kirk, "Nexus," 148, and Kirk, "Memory Theory," 835, following Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 56, 106, 244.

83. Finnegan, *Oral Poetry*, 140; Ong, *Orality*, 56–57; Rubin, *Memory*, 7, 319; Small, *Wax Tablets*, 7, 192; McIver, *Memory*, 120; see further Hunter, "Recall"; Keener, *Christobiography*, 385–88. For exceptions, see Finnegan, *Oral Poetry*, 73–86, 142; Finnegan, *Literacy*, 90, 158, 166–67, 172–73 (although she defines accuracy more generally than do her detractors); Ong, *Orality*, 61–63; Byrskog, *Teacher*, 323–24; Keener, *Christobiography*, 388–90.

84. McIver, *Memory*, 176–80; McIver and Carroll, "Experiments"; McIver and Carroll, "Characteristics"; cf. Bailey, "Tradition" (*Themelios*), 6–7; Bailey, "Tradition" (*ExpTim*), 365; Dunn, *Tradition*, 238; Keener, *Christobiography*, 389–90, 426–27. Against those who might suppose that I cite Bailey here uncritically, see Keener, "Weeden's Critique."

85. For Q being perhaps as early as the 40s, see Theissen, *Gospels*, 220–21, 230–32.

86. Michaels (*Peter*, xli) sees Q material here. That some sayings appear to follow Matthean form (Best, "Tradition," 109–10) is a problem only if we assume that Luke always preserves the original form. Moreover, some find parallels with both Matthean and Lukan forms (Michaels, *Peter*, xli). Further, some scholars even argue that the earliest form of Q is Papias's Matthew (Papias, *Frag.* 3:16; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16; see Filson, *History*, 83; Hill, *Matthew*, 23–27, 53; Bruce, *Documents*, 40; Trevijano Etcheverría, "Obra"; Edwards, "Genre," 55; Knight, "Problem"), which could have been developed into the discourses of our current Matthew, to which Mark's narrative structure was added. Peter would not need to be author of Q material to accept it as a valid source if he trusted its authors and it remained consistent with his recollections; we need only compare how two intimate colleagues, both students of a revered professor, might recall different but (they could expect) complementary elements of her life and teaching.

In contrast to many of his OT quotations, however (and in contrast to 2 Pet. 3:16 and perhaps even 1 Tim. 5:18), Peter does not yet treat these as citations.⁸⁷ He also narrates some details about Christ's passion (1 Pet. 2:21–24), and claims to have witnessed (5:1 [see comment there]) at least some of it. While it is true that Peter may draw disproportionately from material that now appears in two sections of the Gospel tradition,⁸⁸ the historical Peter was presumably one of the witnesses who frequently recounted such material.⁸⁹ Moreover, that these two sections would predominate is not surprising when we notice where Peter employed them: Jesus's ethical teaching in Peter's paraenetic material and Jesus's eschatological teaching in Peter's encouragements.⁹⁰

Others object that Peter would not use the Septuagint⁹¹ but would follow a Hebrew or Aramaic version. Aside from influence from assistants, such an argument is quite weak. When composing in Greek, one will normally use the Greek translation available to one's audience. In both Rome and Asia Minor this would be the basic text-type that we generally call the Septuagint.⁹² Granted that Peter's own memory of Scripture, probably learned especially orally from growing up in the synagogue, would not follow this form, neither should we expect a polished rhetorical document⁹³ to reflect merely free translation. Silvanus and/or other assistants would want to conform to the standard available in Rome and that they could presume in Asia Minor. In the section "Date" below, I treat the objection regarding Peter's use of "Babylon" for Rome (1 Pet. 5:13).

External Attestation

Whereas the particular sorts of arguments marshaled against 1 Peter from internal evidence reflect what I would consider subjective inferences, external attestation provides concrete benchmarks. Its concreteness need not entail its correctness, but in the case of 1 Peter the attestation is early enough to warrant

87. Horrell, *Peter*, 35–36.

88. Best, "Tradition"; Michaels, *Peter*, xli. On the likely reliability of one of these sections, coextensive with much of Luke's Sermon on the Plain, see Allison, *Jesus*, 353–63, 374.

89. See discussion in Keener, *Christobiography*.

90. Davids, *Peter*, 26–27.

91. Allusions to Daniel (Dan. 4:1; 6:26 in 1 Pet. 1:2; Dan. 6:27 in 1 Pet. 1:23) appear closer to proto-Theodotion (Feldmeier, *Peter*, 26), but this may simply reflect the scrolls or traditions most available.

92. What NT scholars typically employ as the LXX actually is a composite of recensions and variations; it is, however, the familiar form among NT readers today, and will suffice for most ordinary purposes in this commentary.

93. The quality of Greek in 1 Peter does not suggest spontaneous composition, as with typical letters, but probably drafts and reworking. This was, after all, a circular letter to a wide swathe of churches (1 Pet. 1:1).