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THE CHRISTOLOGY OF PETER

by

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## INTRODUCTION

### A. The Theological Problem:

#### The Christology of Peter

This paper investigates the Biblical passages containing Peter's Christology. According to Oscar Cullmann "Christology" and "Christological" are expressions used "in a general sense to comprehend everything which refers to the uniqueness of the person and work of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> "The New Testament hardly ever speaks of the person of Christ without at the same time speaking of his work."<sup>2</sup>

Evidence from early Christian confessions shows the centrality of Christology. The oldest formulas are "expressed exclusively in Christological terms. . . . The theological thinking of the first Christians proceeds from Christ, not from God."<sup>3</sup> They mention God "not as Creator, but as the 'Father of Jesus Christ'" and as the one who resurrected Christ.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, "all the elements which are connected with the Holy Spirit in the third article of the earlier formulas of faith are named as direct functions

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Cullmann, Christology of the New Testament, rev. ed., (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Cullmann, p. 4.      <sup>3</sup>Cullmann, pp. 1-2.

<sup>4</sup>Cullmann, p. 2.

of Christ [in the earliest Christian confessions]--for example, the forgiveness of sins and resurrection."<sup>5</sup>

Karl Barth claims that Christology is the "fountain of light by which the other two [articles of the Creed] are lit," and it is "the touchstone of all theology."<sup>6</sup>

It is necessary to examine first Peter's relationship with his Lord. Because of his intimate knowledge of Jesus, what he said about him is of particular interest and relevance. Unfortunately for present purposes, more attention has been paid to Paul's theology than to Peter's. Paul's theology is certainly no less significant because he was not one of the Twelve, but it is important not to neglect the teaching and witness of one of the three disciples closest to Jesus.

Because of Peter's leadership<sup>7</sup> in the primitive church, it is significant to study what he proclaimed about his Lord. His speeches as recorded in the Acts of

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<sup>5</sup>Cullmann, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>Karl Barth, Dogmatics in Outline, trans. by G. T. Thompson, (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), pp. 65, 66.

<sup>7</sup>There has been much debate over the interpretation of Matthew 16:17-19 concerning the leadership of Peter. One view sees Peter as a "type" of church leader, that type which has kept the church alive for nineteen centuries. (See A. J. Findlay, A Portrait of Peter, New York: Abingdon Press, 1935, p. 6.) The Roman Catholic Church understands him as the beginning of the Petrine succession. On the contrary, others see Peter's leadership limited in time and connected with the Jerusalem Church only. (John Lowe, Saint Peter, Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1956, pp. 13-18, 61-64.) From the evidence in Acts 1-12, it is clear that Peter took up the leadership on the Day of Pentecost and continued it through the first part of Acts.

the Apostles have been generally considered the primitive kerygma<sup>8</sup> and, although their theology is primitive, they provide a framework for his Christology.

Since this is to be a study in Biblical theology, the primary source of this investigation is of course Holy Scripture, in particular the Gospel According to St. Mark, the Acts of the Apostles, and the First Epistle of Peter. The question first to be examined, then, is whether these books contain the Petrine teaching about Christ.

#### B. Sources

It is clear from various sources, dating back to Papias (who himself relies on first century sources) who quoted what the John the Presbyter said concerning Mark's relationship to Peter, that the Gospel of Mark is the "Gospel According to St. Peter."<sup>9</sup> The unanimous agreement of the Church Fathers concerning Peter's role in the authorship of the Gospel of Mark is often quoted in books dealing with this Gospel. Morison probably gives the best summary

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<sup>8</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments, (New York: Harper & Row, 1964),

<sup>9</sup>James Morison, A Practical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark, (Boston: N. J. Bartlett & Co., 1882), pp. xix ff. See also: Dom Gregory Dix, Jew and Greek: A Study in the Primitive Church, (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1953), pp. 72-75, 90-91; Lord Elton, Simon Peter, (New York: Doubleday, 1966), pp. xi-xiii; J. S. Howson, Horae Petrinae: or Studies in the Life of St. Peter, (London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d.), pp. 135-138, 159-161; Alexander Souter, The Text and Canon of the New Testament, sec. ed., (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1954), p. 154.

of it. The Fathers agree that Mark was the secretary and interpreter of Peter in the sense that he was Peter's message-bearer making available in writing the oral teachings of Peter.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, Origen and Eusebius both cited some internal evidence to support their belief that Peter was the narrator of this Gospel. Eusebius noted in particular the detailed account of Peter's denial of his Lord, and his excess of modesty in the Gospel. Origen put emphasis on Peter's special relationship to Mark as seen in Peter's referring to Mark as "My son, Mark" in I Peter 5:13b.<sup>11</sup>

Other internal evidence given by various authors supports the view that there was a close relationship between Peter and Mark and Mark's mother.<sup>12</sup> That it was to the house of Mark's mother that Peter went after his miraculous delivery from prison indicates he must have known them well. It is most probable that Mark was a convert of Peter. Dix writes:

'Mark the stump-fingered', who was Peter's secretary in Rome, who wrote that curiously 'Latin' Greek (who sometimes even thought in Latin while writing Greek)

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<sup>10</sup>Morison, pp. xix-xxxv.

<sup>11</sup>Morison, p. xix.

<sup>12</sup>A. E. J. Rawlinson, The Gospel According to St. Mark, (London: Methuen & Co., 1925), pp. 215-216. See also Howson, p.135; and Lord Elton, pp. 99-200. Lord Elton discusses in detail the relationship between Peter and Mark's family, believing for example that the Last Supper was held at Mark's house.

. . . was the 'Marcus my son' of I Peter v.13, and who stood to S. Peter in much the relation that Timothy and Titus and Luke stood to S. Paul.<sup>13</sup>

The following are a few examples of this internal evidence:

(1) the detailed accounts of Peter's denial of his Lord, and the predictions concerning it; (2) the very severe rebuke by the Lord near Caesarea Philippi that was "so faithfully and circumstancially recorded"<sup>14</sup> in Mark 8:33; (3) the exclusion of the "splendid eulogium and distinguishing blessing, which had been previously pronounced,"<sup>15</sup> (Matt. 16; 17-19); and (4) the multitudes of details throughout the Gospel that only an eyewitness would have known.

While the Lukan authorship of the Acts of the Apostles has been indisputably established, the authenticity of the speeches attributed to various people has been much questioned and debated. The problem is whether Peter was actually the source of the speeches that are attributed to him. Most of those advocating the Lukan authorship of the speeches based their arguments on (1) the fact that the speeches are so brief that they cannot possibly have been delivered at the stated occasions; (2) the speeches in Acts are not independent of one another in style and content; and (3) the occasion does not always agree with the speech. Furthermore, others claim that Luke composed the speeches

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<sup>13</sup>Dix, p. 73.

<sup>14</sup>Morison, p. xxxv.

<sup>15</sup>Morison, p. xxxv.

in keeping with classical historiography, perhaps following the pattern of Thucydides.<sup>16</sup>

Some claim that all the speeches in Acts are inventions of Luke, except Paul's speech at the Areopagus and Stephen's speech. One or perhaps both of these were based on earlier sources.<sup>17</sup>

In arguing against Lukan authorship of the speeches in Acts, Torrey contends that the first half of Acts came from a single Aramaic source, and that Luke translated it. He cited evidence of Aramaisms and mistranslations to support his theory.<sup>18</sup> But Cadbury strongly refuted this by showing that the Aramaisms which Torrey found were evident in other Greek writings as well, and that whatever Semitic element remains can be explained as the influence of the LXX which Luke used extensively. He said, "Even conscious imitation is not out of the question, if we recall the emphasis on style that prevailed among Greek writers of Luke's day. Luke himself was not mean artist."<sup>19</sup> He claimed Lukan authorship of these speeches also on the basis that Peter's

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<sup>16</sup>These reasons can be found variously in: Henry J. Cadbury, "Luke--Translator or Author?" The American Journal of Theology, XXIV, No. 3 (July 1920); Martin Dibelius, Studies in the Acts of the Apostles, (London: SCM Press, 1956), pp. 138-185; Eduard Schweizer, "The Concept of the Davidic 'Son of God' in Acts and Its Old Testament Background," in Studies in Luke-Acts, ed. by L.E. Keck & J.L. Martyn, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), pp. 186-193.

<sup>17</sup>John T. Townsend, "The Speeches in Acts," Anglican Theological Review, 42, (1960), p. 153.

<sup>18</sup>Quoted in Cadbury, pp. 436ff.

<sup>19</sup>Cadbury, p. 452.

and Paul's speeches had a common style and a common interdependent exegesis of Old Testament quotations.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, there are many who do not subscribe to the theory that Luke invented the speeches in Acts. C. H. Dodd concluded that:

There is good reason to suppose that the speeches attributed to Peter in Acts are based upon material which proceeded from the Aramaic-speaking Church at Jerusalem, and was substantially earlier than the period at which the book was written.<sup>21</sup>

F. J. Foakes-Jackson said:

Whatever these speeches may be, it cannot be disputed that they are wonderfully varied as to their character, and as a rule admirably suited to the occasion on which they were delivered. Luke seems to have been able to give us an extraordinarily accurate picture of the undeveloped theology of the earliest Christians.<sup>22</sup>

He believed that the original substance was imbedded in these speeches.

F. F. Bruce seems to be presenting the best argument for this point of view. In brief, his reasoning is as follows. From the linguistic evidence available, the presence of Aramaisms in the evangelistic speeches suggests that Luke had reproduced his source with considerable literalness rather than composing them. Acts 3:16 and 10:36 have

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<sup>20</sup>Henry J. Cadbury, "Note 32. The Speeches in Acts," in Beginnings of Christianity, ed. by F.J. Foakes-Jackson & K. Lake, Part I: The Acts of the Apostles, 5 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1920-33), vol. 5, pp.407ff.

<sup>21</sup>Dodd, p.20. See also F.H. Chase, The Credibility of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, (New York: Macmillan, 1920), pp. 106-159.

<sup>22</sup>Quoted in F.F. Bruce, The Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles, (London: Tyndale Press, 1945), p.5.

been cited as examples where the sentences can be translated word for word into intelligible Aramaic. It is evident from the Gospel of Luke, particularly from the idiomatic Greek used in the Prologue that Luke knew Greek well. Bruce pointed out that the Greek in some of the speeches in Acts "is surprisingly awkward," and that these speeches "can by no means be called the summit of Luke's literary perfection."<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, in terms of subject matter, he quoted Dodd to show that the speeches contain a Christology that is "undeveloped and pre-Pauline,"<sup>24</sup> and that an outline of the Gospel story can be reconstructed from these speeches.

In light of these arguments and others, the writer is in agreement with F. F. Bruce when he concluded:

We need not suppose that the speeches in Acts are verbatim reports in the sense that they record every word used by the speakers on the occasions in question. . . . But I suggest that reason has been shown to conclude that the speeches reported by Luke are at least faithful epitomes, giving the gist of the arguments used. Even in summarizing the speeches, Luke would naturally introduce more or less of his own style; but in point of fact it frequently seems to be less, not more. Taken all in all, each speech suits the speaker, the audience, and the circumstances of delivery; and this, along with other points . . . gives good ground, in

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<sup>23</sup>Bruce, pp. 7-8.

<sup>24</sup>Bruce, pp. 9-10. See also, C.H. Dodd, History and the Gospel, (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1938), pp. 92ff. These ideas are also contained in: Willard G. Miller, "Resurrection of Christ in Peter's Speeches," unpublished Th. D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1952, pp. 143-148; and R.B. Rackham, The Acts of the Apostles, (London: Methuen & Co., 1901), p. 24.

my judgment, for believing these speeches to be, not inventions of the historian, but condensed accounts of speeches actually made, and therefore valuable and independent sources for the history and theology of the primitive Church.<sup>25</sup>

Peter's speeches as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles will therefore be used as the main source for a study of Peter's Christology, and hence the Christology of the primitive Church. As Bruce wrote:

While the theology of these speeches is primitive, they are none the less essentially theological. . . . No matter how we classify the material in the Gospels, each separate cross-section presents us with a theological portrayal of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. . . . And the same conclusion emerges from the summaries of the original kerygma in these early chapters of Acts.<sup>26</sup>

The material in the First Epistle of Peter and the Gospel of Mark will be used to supplement that which is in the first twelve chapters of Acts.

The First Epistle of Peter has generally been recognized to be of Petrine origin. From internal evidence Selwyn proves that Peter was its author. In particular, Peter rests his writing on Apostolic authority; he wrote as "an apostle of Jesus Christ." (I Peter 1:1) This apostolic authority was employed in the three cases where he used the first person singular. (I Peter 2:11, 5:1, 5:12) In 5:12 he clearly stated that he was writing through Silvanus. Furthermore, the impression of a disciple's eyewitness account is borne out by many passages.<sup>27</sup> (e.g. 1:3,7,8,9;

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<sup>25</sup>Bruce, p. 27.

<sup>26</sup>Bruce, p. 10.

<sup>27</sup>Edward G. Selwyn, The First Epistle of St. Peter, (London: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 27-33; J.R. Lumby, "On the Epistles of St. Peter, the First Epistle," Expositor, Ser. 1, vol. 4 (1876), pp. 113-33.

2:20-25; 3:15; 5:1)

In addition, comparison with the speeches of Peter in Acts strengthens the claim of Peter's authorship of I Peter. There are parallels in thought and terminology. For example, (1) Christ's resurrection and exaltation are closely linked (Acts 2:32-36; I Peter 1:21, 3:21b-22); (2) Christ is the "stone" (Acts 4:11; I Peter 2:4-8); and (3) the purpose of baptism is similar (Acts 2:38; I Peter 3:21).

Selwyn also gave authority to Peter's authorship when he compared it with the Gospel of Mark. He declared that

in matters concerned with the Passion . . . I Peter follow/s/ St. Mark, the 'Petrine' Gospel, more closely than any of the other Evangelists. . . . This identity of attitude towards the Passion and its meaning between St. Mark and I Peter is significant for all who believe the ancient tradition about that Gospel.<sup>28</sup>

The interrelatedness of Mark, Peter's speeches in Acts, and I Peter indicates their common usefulness to the study of Peter's Christology.

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<sup>28</sup>Selwyn, p. 30.

## CHAPTER I

### PETER AND HIS LORD

#### A. Introduction

The second Gospel is the "Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," (Mark 1:1) and not the Gospel of St. Peter. Even though scholars agree that the Gospel According to St. Mark is the Gospel According to St. Peter, it is obvious that one cannot rely solely upon it for a biography of the disciple himself. For this Gospel is essentially about what Jesus did and said as seen by Peter and not Peter's autobiography. Therefore, the center of attention is Christ and not Peter, hence the other Gospels are necessary to fill in the gaps and to elucidate the relationship between Peter and his Lord.

For example, the most important omission in the second Gospel is the calling and naming of Peter. Turner claims that this omission is due to Peter's general self-suppression in this Gospel.<sup>1</sup> Lord Elton repeatedly emphasizes the fact that Peter related the story to Mark after he had learned the lesson of humility. Peter, therefore, kept silent those events which pointed him out as the recipient of a special promise or benediction.

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<sup>1</sup>C. H. Turner, A New Commentary on Holy Scripture, iii, (London:S.P.C.K., 1928), p.72.

"It is to be noticed that whenever Simon has led Mark to name him as taking an initiative the outcome is usually humiliating."<sup>2</sup>

This first chapter will not prove that Peter had a place of pre-eminence among the disciples, although this is by no means denied. It will, however, attempt to show that Peter's knowledge of Jesus is valuable primarily because it was based on first-hand and intimate experiences.

### B. The Calling of Peter

Little is known about Peter before his association with Jesus, except that he was from Bethsaida, on the coast of the Lake of Galilee. In this region there was evidently strong Hellenistic influence, as seen in the names of Simon, Andrew, and Philip, which are Greek and not Hebrew. According to Oscar Cullmann, "Symeon is a Hebrew name much used among the Jews."<sup>3</sup> But this form of the apostle's name was used only twice in the New Testament. (Acts 15:15; II Peter 1:1) Peter was the son of a man named John and the brother of Andrew. He was married and his mother-in-law lived with them. Probably he was a disciple of John the Baptist.

While most scholars treat the accounts of Peter's calling in Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; and Luke 5:1-11

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<sup>2</sup>Lord Elton, Simon Peter, (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), p.17.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Cullmann, Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr, (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1958), p. 17.

as one incident, Elton clearly marks these as two separate summons, with Mark and Matthew giving parallel accounts of the first calling, and Luke relating the second.<sup>4</sup> Elton's interpretation of these passages is more satisfactory. Simon had, however, encountered Jesus before the first calling. (John 1:35-51) His brother Andrew had met and stayed with Jesus for a day. The next day he declared to Simon that he had found the Messiah. Simon, Andrew, and the unnamed disciple had obviously been searching for the Lord about whom John the Baptist had preached. Simon went with Andrew to Jesus, who "looked" at him and said, "So you are Simon, the son of John? You shall be called Cephas." (John 1:42) This form of address Jesus used at two other turning-points in Simon's life: at Caesarea Philippi and at the shore of the Sea of Tiberias after Christ's resurrection. Evidently people of somewhat higher economic status were known by their father's name. Jesus extended this to Simon, a poor fisherman, to show that such distinctions were meaningless to him.

Then Jesus gave him a new name. The Jews knew the significance of such a re-naming from the cases of their fathers Abraham and Israel. A new name signified a change or a new life. Now the re-naming is essentially a promise: "You shall be called Cephas," which was later fulfilled in Matthew 16:18: "And I tell you, you are Peter."

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<sup>4</sup>Lord Elton, pp. 7-27.

Cephas is an Aramaic word meaning "stone" or "rock". Its Greek translation is "Petra" or "Petros". The Aramaic form is seldom used.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that the word Kepha was translated into Greek is significant. It confirms the fact that the word is not a proper name; proper names are not translated . . . . It is only because Peter has become for us today a familiar proper name that we are often tempted to forget that Kepha is a common noun. But this fact is important if we desire to judge rightly the bearing of the fact that Jesus gave Peter this title.<sup>6</sup>

The first call came when Jesus was strolling along the Sea of Galilee. He had not yet begun healing and casting out demons, and did not draw a large crowd. He saw Simon and Andrew "casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen." (Mark 1:16) When Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men," they left their nets and followed him without hesitation. Likewise John and James left their father and their boat to follow Jesus. (Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20) Westcott makes the distinction that the first meeting of Jesus and Simon was "the establishment of a personal relationship," while the later callings were "a call to official work."<sup>7</sup> The accounts of Simon's first callings clearly imply some previous acquaintance.

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<sup>5</sup>Cullmann, pp. 18-19. The Aramaic form is used only in I Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal. 1:18; 2:9; 2:11; 2:14.

<sup>6</sup>Cullmann, p.19.

<sup>7</sup>B.F. Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 25.

After the four were called first they went with Jesus into Capernaum, where they were astonished at his teaching with authority in the synagogue and amazed at his power to cast out demons. They also witnessed his healing of Simon's mother-in-law and many others. Mark notes especially that Jesus' original intent was to teach and not to heal. He said to the disciples, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also; for that is why I came out." (Mark 1:38) In addition, Mark is the only Gospel that also notes carefully that Jesus healed because he was moved with pity, or with compassion.

(Mark 1:40-45)

Jesus' name spread like wildfire, however, not because of his teaching but because of his healing. The crowds came to him mainly for miracles of healing and not to hear the preaching about the Kingdom of God. But at the occasion of Simon's second calling, the people did come to hear the word of God. Standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, Jesus was pressed by the crowd. He went into Simon's boat nearby and asked him to row out from the land a bit so all could see and hear him.

When Jesus had finished teaching the people he told Simon to row out to the deep part and cast down his net. Simon said, however, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." (Luke 5:5) Simon realized that Jesus was a great teacher

and healer but no fisherman. Nevertheless he was their master and they would obey however futile it might be. When Simon and Andrew found their net so full that they had to ask their partners' help, Simon was so overwhelmed by his sense of unworthiness in the presence of the Holy that he cried out, falling on his knees, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke 5:8)

Yet although consciousness of sin was uppermost in Simon's mind it was not the only motive of his cry, 'Depart from me,' and Jesus, as was his custom, responded first to the deeper impulse. He did not reply 'Do not let your sins trouble you,' but 'Fear not.' For beneath the sudden and unaccustomed awe, and the subsequent self-abasement, to which Simon had instinctively given utterance, there lay a deeper and more familiar emotion, fear. He must have been dimly aware that the miracle, for surely it had been a miracle, was also an acted parable. 'Launch out into the deep' had been the command, and it was to him that it had been addressed. Had the time then come to bid farewell to the sea and his nets and all that was familiar, and to launch out into another, illimitable deep? The near prospect of such a venture, in such company, suddenly appalled him,<sup>8</sup>

The second part of Jesus' answer to Simon was a promise that he would be catching men successfully. Some, Lord Elton for one, feel that this promise was addressed to Simon only, thus marking him the leader of the disciples from the start.<sup>9</sup> This point is perhaps a bit pressed. Although uttered in response to Simon's cry, this promise was most likely meant for all four disciples: Simon, Andrew, John and James. The Greek word for "catch" means to "capture alive" and the form used here suggests the

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<sup>8</sup>Elton, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup>Elton, p.26.

continuous act of catching men alive for God's Kingdom. To this task the four fishermen responded immediately. As soon as they landed they left everything, and followed Jesus.

There is only one feature in common between the first calling and the second: Jesus found the men busy at their work. All other features are different enough for Lord Elton to be correct in supposing that there were two separate events of calling.

Jesus early took a special interest in Peter. At their first meeting, it was to Peter alone that Jesus gave a new name. At the second calling Jesus concerned himself with Peter only, while the other three disciples remained in the background. It was to Peter alone that Jesus gave the command to go into the deep and cast down the net. So also, when confronted with the miracle, it was Peter and not the others who earnestly exclaimed, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

#### C. Witness to Jesus' Teaching and Healing

In the days following much was like what the disciples had seen before: teaching, healing, and casting out demons. But now they began to be conscious of sin, as Jesus forgave sinners and even called a publican to be his disciple and their colleague. At the healing of the paralytic, Jesus' first statement was, "My son, your

sins are forgiven." (Mark 2:5) But sensing the questioning among the scribes, Jesus then commanded the paralytic to take up his pallet and walk. In Jesus' own words this action was explained: "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . ." (Mark 2:9-10) When the paralytic immediately walked, everyone was amazed and glorified God.

A greater evidence of the extent of Jesus' love for sinners and his power to forgive sins is seen when he called Levi, the tax-collector, to follow him. Levi was called in spite of his odious occupation, perhaps even because of it. He left all he had to follow Jesus. Perhaps materially speaking, he actually left more than the other four disciples. He was richer than they ; while they could always return to their trade one day, Levi could never return to his. (Mk 2:13-17)

Many tax-collectors and publicans came to the feast Levi gave for Jesus. What is most significant about this feast is that Jesus apparently did not dislike his company. He had attracted these people. When his disciples were questioned by the scribes of the Pharisees they could not explain this. But Jesus explained that he had come for the sinners and not the righteous; he came to heal the sick and not the healthy. (Mark 2:15-17)

From then on, Simon witnessed many more times when the Scribes and the Pharisees tried to accuse Jesus and his

disciples of sinning, especially of violating the Mosaic Law concerning the sabbath. In each case Jesus showed them by his answer that he had a greater knowledge and understanding of the Law than they. (Mark 2:18-3:35; 7:1-23)

In the midst of rising opposition and growing popularity, Jesus chose the twelve that were to be close followers. From among these twelve three began to emerge as the inner circle: Simon whom Jesus had surnamed Peter at the selection of the Twelve; John, and James, both of whom Jesus had surnamed Boanerges at the same time. From that moment on, the same three were repeatedly singled out to witness some very intimate and revealing events. For example, they were the only ones, besides Jairus and his wife, who saw Jesus raise Jairus' daughter. (Mark 5:21-43) They also were the only three whom Jesus took to witness the Transfiguration, (Mark 9:2-8) and later to pray with him during the last hours in the garden. (Mark 14:32-33)

In these days of discipleship Peter began to see that Jesus' summons "Follow me" meant not only great popularity, but rejection and opposition as well. He also saw Christ's power in a different manner: the feeding of the five thousand and the four thousand.<sup>10</sup> In the first of the two storms which Jesus calmed the disciples had asked each other, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?" (Mark 4:35-41) Even after they had seen him calm one

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<sup>10</sup>Whether these are two separate events or not is not at issue here. Evidence in Mark 8:14-20 seems to indicate that there were two separate feedings, however.

storm, they were still astounded when Jesus stopped the strong winds a second time. Matthew gives a more detailed account of the second storm. (Matthew 14:22-33) When Peter realized that it was Jesus walking on the water he asked, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water." When Jesus bid him come, Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water. But as soon as he became aware of the danger around him and his own vulnerability to it, he began to sink. He cried, "Lord, save me."

When Jesus had caught him, he asked Peter, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?" This question summarizes the story of Peter up to the time of the Resurrection. Peter was always eager to show his loyalty to his Lord. But his faith proved weak. Jesus' reproach points out Peter's main weakness evident both now and at the time of his denial of Jesus in the courtyard.

As they got into the boat the wind ceased, and all those in the boat fell down before Jesus saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." The Twelve were indeed strengthened in their faith by this miracle pointing to Jesus' lordship even over the elements. Suzanne de Dietrich feels that "the disciples' confession of faith anticipates that which will be made a little later" at Caesarea Philippi.<sup>11</sup> (Matt. 16:16)

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<sup>11</sup>Suzanne de Dietrich, The Gospel According to Matthew, (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1961), p. 88.

#### D. Peter's Confessions

Largely because of what Jesus said to Peter after his confession at Caesarea Philippi, the stature and status of Peter have been so "bedeviled by ecclesiastical controversy"<sup>12</sup> that the importance of Peter and his theology have not received proper attention. Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21) has usually been viewed in isolation from the other Christological confessions of the Gospels. In the last section it has been pointed out, for example, that the twelve disciples had all confessed that Jesus is truly the Son of God after they had watched him walk across the sea and calm the storm.

John 6:66-71 records a confession that seems to be a parallel to the Messianic confession at Caesarea Philippi recorded in the Synoptics. Jesus' discourse on being the bread of life caused many of his followers to leave him. His statement that all who come to him must eat his flesh and drink his blood surely shocked their Jewish understanding. The test had come to the followers of Jesus and many found themselves unable to accept it; even among the Twelve one had hardened his heart. (John 6:70-71)

After these had deserted Jesus, he asked the Twelve if they too would leave him. Peter answered for the rest of the group when he said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have

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<sup>12</sup>John Lowe, Saint Peter, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 1.

the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:68-9)

The disciples have found in Jesus all that they seek. He has the words that mean eternal life, for they come from God just as he does. Why would they go to someone less? They have believed and have come to know with increasing assurance that Jesus is he who had been promised. But once again, as he did before (Luke 5:10), Jesus did not speak directly to their confessed faith, but to their unspoken doubt. He told them bluntly that although Peter had indeed spoken for the Twelve, the arrow of unfaith had already pierced through the inner circle. One among them will betray him.

On this occasion not only have the disciples expressed their loyalty and faith to Jesus, but they have also revealed their increasing understanding of his person and office. Westcott writes:

With this confession of St. Peter that which is recorded in Matt. xvi.16, which belongs to the same period but to different circumstances, must be compared. Here the confession points to the inward character in which the apostles found the assurance of life; there the confession was of the public office and theocratic Person of the Lord. To suppose that the one confession is simply an imperfect representation of the other is to deny the fulness of the life which lies behind both. This confession must be compared with the confession in [John] ch. 1. Here the confession is made after the disappointment of the popular hope, and reaches to the recognition of that absolute character of Christ which the demons tried to reveal prematurely.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Westcott, p. 111.

The Gospels usually record Peter most ready to confess his faith and the faith of his fellow disciples. He also frequently asked Jesus to explain to them those parables which they did not understand (Matt. 15:15), and to teach them about forgiveness. (Matt. 18:21-22) In short, Peter was more open and expressive about his thinking and feeling than the other disciples.

This openness was displayed once again at Caesarea Philippi. The details of this event are sufficiently well known that they need no lengthy reiteration. After the disciples had reported to Jesus whom the people thought he was, he asked their belief. Simon Peter answered: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."<sup>14</sup> To this Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this Rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16:17-19)

This chapter concerns Peter's relationship with his Lord, not the history of the exegesis of this passage.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>The account in Matthew 16 is more explicit than those in Mark 8 and Luke 9.

<sup>15</sup>For a discussion of the exegesis see Cullmann, pp. 158ff.

Once again Jesus addressed Peter as Simon, son of John, as he had greeted him at their first meeting. But this time, instead of saying "You shall be called Peter," Jesus said to him, "I tell you, you are Peter." Finally Jesus explained the significance of this name.<sup>16</sup>

Because of the controversies over this passage more attention has been paid to Peter the recipient rather than to Jesus the giver of this promise. But the important point to stress here, and always, is the divine initiative. God has revealed to Peter, not suddenly but gradually, that Jesus is indeed the Christ. Peter proclaimed this faith to Jesus and to his fellow disciples. As it were in response to this statement of faith, Jesus gave Peter the promise. Because he was faithful in proclamation to that which he had received he was given the promise of being faithful in more. Jesus designated him as the rock on which he will build his church, and to whom he will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

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<sup>16</sup>Precisely when Simon received the name Peter, or even how many times Jesus gave him the name, is not clear from the Gospel accounts. (John 1:35-42; Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19a; Luke 6:12-16; Matthew 16:13-20) Cullmann (p.21) had said, however, "in itself the time when the name was given has no fundamental significance. What is important, however, is first of all the fact that according to the unanimous witness of the Gospels Mark, Matthew, [ Luke, ] and John, Jesus did give this name to Peter and, second, that according to a tradition handed down only by Matthew, Jesus explained this name on a special occasion by his purpose of founding his Church upon the Apostle whom he designated as the Rock."

### E. Witness to the Transfiguration and Gethsemane

The only three witnesses to the Transfiguration were Peter, John, and James. While Jesus prayed he was transfigured before their eyes, and Elijah and Moses were seen talking to him. Jesus' appearance was so different from anything they had ever seen, that Peter could not even find appropriate words to describe it to Mark. His only description was, "his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them." (Mark 9:3)

Without even thinking, Peter, in his fear, suggested that they build tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Mark clearly explains that "he did not know what to say, for they were exceedingly afraid." (Mark 9:6) Lord Elton offers an explanation for Peter's action:

If he had fully known what he was saying he would hardly have suggested that spiritual beings were in need of booths for shelter. Yet latent in the preposterous suggestion was a sudden memory of the annual Feast of Tabernacles and, vaguer still, of the Feast as a symbol of the ancient hope of Israel that in the day of fulfillment God would again, as of old, tabernacle with his people . . . . He could not yet understand that the true significance of the Transfiguration was its assumption of the whole mission of Jesus, and its conflict and suffering, not least, into the glory proper to it.<sup>17</sup>

The voice from the cloud, saying "This is my beloved Son, listen to him," placed its seal on Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi. It also commanded the disciples to accept Jesus' new teaching concerning his suffering. "The appearance of Moses and Elijah, the founder and reformer of

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<sup>17</sup> Lord Elton, pp. 122-123.

the Old Israel, representing the Law and the Prophets, indicates that Jesus is the fulfillment of all that they were anticipating. What the Law intended, and what the prophets promised, is now here in its fulness in Jesus."<sup>18</sup>

The Transfiguration was in fact that sign the Scribes and the Pharisees had been demanding from Jesus, but it was given only to the three disciples, whom Jesus charged not to reveal it until after the Resurrection. They were chosen to be the witnesses of this glory now kept hidden even from the other disciples. God had chosen to reveal such a mystery to the unlearned but not to the wise, as Jesus elsewhere rejoiced in the Holy Spirit saying, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (Luke 10:21-22)

But even this experience did not help Peter understand fully Jesus' Messiahship. Peter's ignorance was evident at the Last Supper. Peter had been sent with John<sup>19</sup> to fetch the colt on which Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem.

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<sup>18</sup>Donald G. Miller, The Gospel According to Luke, (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1959), p.99.

<sup>19</sup>Only Luke identifies the two disciples as Peter and John. Luke 22:8 reports that these two were the ones to prepare the upper room for the Last Supper.

He and the other disciples had walked along with Jesus dazed in a dream of glory, for they still had not realized that Jesus must suffer.

At the Last Supper, Peter refused to let Jesus wash his feet. He was motivated by his self-willed reverence for Christ as he had been at least once before, and been reproved by Jesus. (Matt. 16:23) Jesus had warned him that what he was about to do Peter would not understand, but must accept. Peter would not submit, however, until he understood a little about the sacramental nature of Jesus' act. He wanted very much to be a part of Jesus. If in letting Jesus wash his feet he would have a part in him how much more would washing his head and hands accomplish. He had only a very shallow understanding, so Jesus told him then that entire cleansing was symbolized in the limited physical cleansing of the feet only.

After they had eaten they all (except Judas) went out with Jesus to Gethsemane, where Jesus took to pray with him only Peter, John, and James. As Jesus was praying Peter and the other two fell asleep. Jesus came back and said to Peter sorrowfully, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Mark 14:37-38) Jesus called him Simon, and not Peter, as he did earlier in the upper room (Luke 22:31-34), when he said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that

your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren." Jesus usually reverted to Peter's old name, Simon, when he warned or reproached him.

Twice that night in the garden Peter's strengths and weaknesses were evident. First, he fell asleep while Jesus was praying, and the Lord rebuked him in sadness more than in anger. Then, he showed the strength of his temper when he cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. (John 18:10) In his ignorance he was once again acting as Satan preventing God's purpose: he still was eager to keep Jesus from suffering. He was thinking man's thoughts and not God's thoughts.

#### F. Peter's Denial of His Lord

The shepherd had been struck and the sheep are scattering (Zech. 13:7); all the disciples forsook Jesus and fled. (Matt. 26:56) Jesus had prepared these disciples for his death. He had constantly told them about the suffering that the Son of man had to endure. But now when Jesus allowed himself to be arrested, they who had once forsaken all for Jesus now forsook him.

Even though all the others had left Jesus, however, Peter returned to follow him right into the courtyard of the High Priest. John's Gospel claims that another disciple, presumably John, who was known to the High Priest, had gained admittance for Peter. It was most likely that Peter

followed out of a personal deep devotion and love for Jesus, curiosity about what would happen, and perhaps a small tinge of hope that he might be of use to his Lord. Peter had said that he would never leave Jesus even if all the others did. Now all the others had fled, but he would keep his word and follow Jesus to the very end.

The four Gospels gave similar but discrepant accounts of Peter's three-fold denial of Jesus. Though in each instance it is not clear who the accusers were, the denials are certain. The sequence might be unclear, but the fact remains that those in the courtyard of the High Priest recognized Peter as a Galilean because of his dialect, and therefore suspected that he was a disciple of Jesus. (Matt. 26:73; Mark 14:70; Luke 22:59)

Why Peter denied his Lord thrice can only be conjectured. Findlay feels that the first denial was not actually a denial of Jesus:

Peter (Mark 14.68) did not at first disown Jesus outright; he simply professed that he had no idea what [the maid] was talking about. What he may very well have meant to say was, 'I refuse to discuss the matter with you,' but his nervous exasperation made him say more than he meant, and involved him in a statement tantamount to denial . . . .<sup>20</sup>

Lord Elton asserts that the true translation of the maid's question should be "'No' - 'Surely you aren't a disciple too?'" and that it was not really a challenge so much as a "half-playful expostulation from a mere maidservant". He also agrees

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<sup>20</sup> J. Alexander Findlay, A Portrait of Peter, (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1935), p. 124.

with Findlay that "no thought of denial of allegiance entered [Peter's] head."<sup>21</sup> When the maid followed him and pointed him out to others, he wanting to be left alone in his bewilderment and misery exclaimed strongly, "I do not know the man." (Matt. 26:72) But when accused a third time ("Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean,") Peter exploded in his fright by invoking a curse on himself and swearing that he absolutely did not know this man. (Mk. 14:70) It is believed that the bystanders really were "interested not so much in unmasking a malefactor as in baiting an uncouth Galilean intruder."<sup>22</sup> But to Peter, who was afraid of being recognized, who wanted to be able to stay as close as possible to Jesus without falling into danger, it sounded very much more like a threat than it was meant.

So Peter denied his Lord thrice, as Jesus had foretold. And immediately the cock crowed twice.<sup>23</sup>(Mark 14:72) The cue came and the association was made. The remembrance of one event leads to another. Peter must have remembered his own vehement exclamation that even unto death he would not deny Jesus. Shame, guilt, and humiliation overwhelmed him;

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<sup>21</sup>Lord Elton, p. 202.

<sup>22</sup>Lord Elton, p. 205. cf., Findlay, pp. 124-126.

<sup>23</sup>Various interpretations of the cock's crow can be found in: A.E.J. Rawlinson, The Gospel According to St. Mark, (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1925), pp. 209-224.

he broke down and wept. He had failed many times before; but this was his utter failure. He who had been named Peter, the rock on which the inviolable church was to be built; who had left everything to follow Jesus; who had confessed Jesus to be the Messiah; and who had received the "sign from heaven" at the Transfiguration has now completely denied his Lord. His self-assurance was completely shattered. The rock is but quicksand. Peter, most miserable of all the disciples, is only Simon - weak, vulnerable, and afraid.

#### G. Witness to the Resurrection

From the categorical statement in I Cor. 15:5 that Jesus "appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve," many writers have claimed that Peter "was the first to be vouchsafed a vision of the risen Lord."<sup>24</sup> Both Mark and John, however, record that Jesus "appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons." (Mark 16:9; cf., John 20:11-18) Howson suggests that the passages in I Corinthians and in Luke 24:34 indicate that Jesus appeared to Simon alone, before he appeared to all the disciples.<sup>25</sup> The other Gospels do not support this, however, and Luke does no more than mention it. The most significant thing is that Jesus did appear to his disciples, and Peter did witness the resurrected Lord several times.

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<sup>24</sup>Lowe, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup>J. S. Howson, Horae Petrinae; Studies in the Life of St. Peter, (London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d.), p. 62.

Although the other Gospel accounts do not mention Peter in particular, Mark quotes the angel saying to the women at the empty tomb, "But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you into Galilee." (Mark 16:7) It is significant that it is in Mark's (Peter's) Gospel that Peter's name is singled out. Peter's usual self-suppression in this Gospel suggests that here he sees himself in a very humble role; he does not even claim for himself the name of disciple after his denial of Jesus.<sup>26</sup>

When the eleven were together in a room with the door shut Jesus appeared to them. To show them that he was not a spirit but was in fact the risen Lord, Jesus revealed the nailmarks in his hands and the pierced side. Then he asked for a piece of boiled fish and ate it. Later Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples, when Thomas was in their midst. (Luke 24:36-43; Mark 16:14-18; John 20:19-25)

The Gospel of John has the only account of the third appearance of Jesus to the disciples. Peter and six others had gone fishing in the Sea of Tiberias, but had caught nothing all night, when Jesus appeared unrecognized by them. He asked if they had any fish, and they answered "No". When he said, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some," (John 21:6) they readily obeyed. The result was a large haul. When John pointed out to Peter that the man was Jesus, he immediately swam to him.

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<sup>26</sup>The usual phrase is "Peter and the disciples," but note the reversal of the order here.

They all had breakfast with Jesus by the sea. When it was finished, Jesus turned to Simon Peter and asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" (John 21:15) "The mention of St. Peter's natural descent here appears to direct attention in the first place to the man in the fullness of his natural character, as distinguished from the apostle."<sup>27</sup> In reply to the Lord's question Peter did not say self-assuredly, "Of course, I do." He appealed instead to Jesus' knowledge of him, saying, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He made no comparisons with others, nor claims for future valiant actions. But his answer differed from Jesus' question in the word he used for "love". Jesus had used the word "ἀγαπᾶς" but Peter used "φιλῶ". Jesus had asked about a higher love, but Peter laid claim only to the feeling of natural love. To this sincere confession Jesus charged Peter to feed his lambs. The second question came: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" This time Jesus made no comparison to others either, but used the same verb as before. Peter gave the same answer. Jesus replied, "Tend my sheep."

Peter was grieved when Jesus asked a third time, "Do you love me?" This time Jesus used Peter's word: φιλῶ instead of ἀγαπᾶς. The three questions undoubtedly reminded Peter of the three denials not so long ago. Now he began to doubt if he could lay claim even to this love he professed twice already. If he had after all failed so miserably once

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<sup>27</sup>Westcott, p. 302.

before, what assurance had he that he would not fail again? Instead of despairing, Peter appealed to Jesus. "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus could see that Peter did love him and so he completed the commission: "Feed my sheep." Then Jesus once again told Peter, "Follow me," this time to follow him all the way.<sup>28</sup> Earlier Jesus had said, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow afterward." (John 13:36)

The last time Peter saw the Lord was when he witnessed Jesus' glorious ascension. (Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1:6-11) While Jesus was blessing the disciples he was lifted up into heaven. Peter and the sons of Zebedee were perhaps less astonished than the others, for they had witnessed the Transfiguration. But as the disciples were gazing up, two men in white robes told them that Jesus had been taken into heaven and in like manner would return again.

#### H. Conclusion

Since only Peter and the sons of Zebedee were the most intimate disciples of Jesus, it seems reasonable that they knew Jesus well. In the Synoptic Gospels, however, the sons of Zebedee never figured as prominently as Peter.

Peter had walked with Jesus and lived with him. He had witnessed many miracles: healings, casting out of demons,

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<sup>28</sup> John 21:19 indicates that Peter will follow his Lord all the way to martyrdom.

feeding of multitudes, raising of the dead; he was present at Jesus' Transfiguration; he had followed Jesus because he was called, even into the courtyard of the High Priest, where he experienced his greatest humility and failure; he had been with Jesus after the Resurrection. Peter had sinned many times, but Jesus was always ready to forgive. He had failed often, but the Lord continued to strengthen him. The greatest blessings and commissions were his. What Peter proclaimed about his Lord resulted from all these and many other experiences not recorded in the Gospels. (John 20:30; 21:25)

The Apostolic experience that gave authority and purpose to John's writing is also valid for Peter:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life--the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us. . . . (I John 1:1-2)

## CHAPTER II

## PETER'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE LIFE OF JESUS

## A. Introduction

The earliest of the Synoptic Gospels, Mark, is the only one not to have an account of the birth and childhood of Jesus. Peter in his preaching also did not mention Jesus' birth.<sup>1</sup> To Peter, the story of Jesus begins with his baptism, the first of those events which Peter saw pointing to his Messiahship.

The authors of the Gospels intended to give direct portraits of Jesus, but in the Acts of Apostles such presentations are indirect.<sup>2</sup> The speeches in Acts "contain statements of historical reference, as well as interpretations of Christ's present meaning for life, all of which constitutes portraiture of the highest order."<sup>3</sup>

In Peter's preaching the main emphasis was on the living Christ, the Christ who is resurrected and exalted. The picture of Jesus' earthly ministry is sketchy. Peter was not interested in retelling the story of Jesus' life.

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<sup>1</sup>For the relationship of Peter to the Gospel of Mark see above, pp. vi-viii.

<sup>2</sup>Charles M. Laymon, Christ in the New Testament, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>Laymon, p. 39.

His listeners were probably already familiar with the life of Jesus. Therefore, it was only at the house of Cornelius that Peter gave in greater length a brief history of the ministry of Jesus. (Acts 10:34-43)

#### B. Life

Even though Peter's main interest and aim was to preach that Jesus is the Messiah he did not emphasize only the divinity of Jesus. He wanted to make clear that Jesus was certainly a man. Peter came to see Jesus as human and divine. It is not enough to promulgate only what Jesus has taught and stood for. "The entire Christian gospel disintegrates when deprived of the historical existence of Jesus as a real human figure."<sup>4</sup>

This Jesus whom Peter preached is Jesus of Nazareth. He was not an abstract embodiment of humanity nor a symbol of ethical ideals. He is a man, a man from Nazareth. "The name is Jesus, not Jesus Christ, not the Lord Jesus, simply Jesus. He is localized as coming from Nazareth, a definite and identifiable Galilean place. He is bluntly and uncompromisingly called a man (ἄνθρωπος)."<sup>5</sup> This Jesus had no inherent social prestige. He was not from Jerusalem, but from lowly Nazareth, out of which certainly no good thing,

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<sup>4</sup>Floyd V. Filson, Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 45.

<sup>5</sup>William Barclay, "Great Themes of the N. T. - 4. Acts 2:14-40," Expository Times, 70 (1958-59), p. 243.

and especially not the Messiah, was expected to come. Nathaniel clearly expressed this attitude when he asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46; cf. John 7:41, Mark 6:2)

The name "Jesus of Nazareth" is distinctive in Peter's vocabulary after the Resurrection. It appears seven times in Acts: once attributed to Stephen (Acts 6:14), twice to Paul when reporting his conversion (Acts 22:8, 26:9), and the other four to Peter (Acts 2:22, 3:6, 4:10, 10:38).

There was no need for Peter to expound on the earthly ministry of Jesus. Whether accurately or inaccurately, people knew much about his activities. They heard of his miracles of healing and casting out of demons. They knew about his teachings. These events were still fresh in their minds. Peter needed only to remind them that this Jesus was a man like them and had lived among them. He had a history.

Yet on the other hand, he was no ordinary man. This was certain. He was a man in whom and through whom God was made manifest. God had "anointed<sup>6</sup> Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38a) at the time of his baptism. God himself had witnessed to Jesus' power by performing works of miracles through him. They were

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<sup>6</sup>The word "anointed" is related to the title "Christ." (see F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Book of the Acts, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1955, p.106, n.37; and also F. J. Foakes-Jackson & Kirsopp Lake, eds., The Beginnings of Christianity. Part I: The Acts of the Apostles, 5 vols., London: Macmillan, 1920-1933, Vol.1, pp.346-363.)

signs of the Kingdom of God. Jesus had said, "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." (Luke 11:20)

So Jesus of Nazareth was consecrated by God and "went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." (Acts 10:38) Peter was one of the chief witnesses of Jesus' ministry.

### C. Death

Even though Jesus of Nazareth was anointed by God and went about doing good he was put to death by the Jews by the hands of lawless men, the Romans.<sup>7</sup> (Acts 2:23, 3:13-14, 4:10, 5:30, 10:39b) In his five speeches Peter talked about the crucifixion of Jesus, but failed to see in it spiritual implication for believers. The primitiveness of Peter's Christology is here evident. An examination of the Gospel of Mark, Peter's speeches, and his Epistle shows that Peter's understanding of the meaning of Jesus' crucifixion underwent a gradual development. "The cross meant supreme contempt and disgrace. . . . It was not until after the resurrection that [the disciples] were able to bear the idea of the cross; and not until very much later were they able to understand its full meaning."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>The Romans were lawless men in the sense that they were men without the Law of Moses and also often referred to in Jewish literature as "the wicked" (Bruce, p.70, n.55).

<sup>8</sup>R. B. Peery, "Peter's Thought of the Cross," The Lutheran Quarterly, 33, (1903), pp.268-269.

When Jesus told his disciples about his forthcoming suffering, death, and resurrection, Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked him. (Mark 8:31-32) Peter refused to believe what Jesus said, showing that he failed to understand the necessity of Jesus' suffering. Though all the prophets had prophecied the suffering of the Messiah (Acts 3:18) Peter and every one else did not understand that until after the Resurrection. The cross was a stumbling-block to Jesus' followers because it seemed to them "a frustration of [Jesus'] designs, a falsifying of his claims."<sup>9</sup> To Peter, it was "the destruction of his own hope--a misunderstood and hated thing."<sup>10</sup>

After Jesus' resurrection, however, Peter saw that on the one hand the death of Jesus was the work of sinful men. Yet it was no mere calamity. It was "according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." (Acts 2:23) Barclay correctly states that:

Here is an eternal paradox of the Cross; the Cross is at one and the same time the action of the purpose and the plan of the love of God, and an unspeakably terrible crime at the hands of wicked men. . . . But it is the paradox which lies at the very heart of the human situation, because it sets side by side the divine will of God and the mystery of the free will of man.<sup>11</sup>

The crucifixion of Jesus was not man's triumph over God. Rather, it was part of the plan of God. There is no

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<sup>9</sup>Peery, p. 270.

<sup>10</sup>Peery, p. 271.

<sup>11</sup>Barclay, p. 245.

suggestion that anything had gone out of God's hands. What might seem to be the disgrace of God was already known to him and allowed to happen.

Peter believed that this foreknowledge of God does not excuse man from his responsibility and guilt. The Jews were as guilty as the Romans, even though it was the Romans who had carried out the sentence. Peter saw it as a Jewish crime. He put the responsibility on the Jews in saying that the Jews had crucified and killed Jesus by the hands of lawless men (Acts 2:23, 4:10, 5:30, 10:39) when they delivered him up and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Jesus. (Acts 3:13) They asked that a murderer be released to them instead of Jesus.

On the other hand, Peter also realized that the Jewish people as well as their leaders had acted in ignorance. (Acts 3:17) They did not know that Jesus was the Messiah, even though they had been given many signs. Hence, Peter offered the promise of the forgiveness of God "to all who took part in the death of Jesus, if only they realize their error, confess their sin, and turn to God in repentance."<sup>12</sup>

Soon after the Resurrection Peter came to see that suffering and death were part of the Messiah's mission. But he made no connection between Christ's death and man's salvation in the sense of his death being a sacrifice for

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<sup>12</sup>Bruce, p.90.

the remission of sins, the redemption of man, and reconciliation with God. Peter, in short, did not have an explicit doctrine of substitutionary atonement. Simpson sums this up:

The death of Jesus is viewed as a Jewish crime. It was a work of Jewish ignorance. But this is not a theological explanation. It was part of the eternal design. This is theology. But no account is given of its redemptive effect. It was divinely predicted that the Christ would suffer. But why the sufferings should occur, and what their results would be, S. Peter leaves among the unsolved mysteries.<sup>13</sup>

From this primitive understanding of Jesus' death, Peter over the years came to a fuller understanding of and appreciation for the meaning and relevance of Jesus' death. Now he saw the death of Jesus as a redemptive act. In his first Epistle he emphasized over and over again that Jesus did not die because of his own sin or crime, but that his Lord had died for man's sins. (I Peter 1:18-19, 2:21-25; 3:18)

The condition of Jesus and the condition of man were strongly contrasted. He was sinless but they were full of sins. He was righteous but they were unrighteous. Yet it was the sinless and the righteous one who died. A lamb without blemish or spot<sup>14</sup> (I Peter 1:19) bore the sins of the world. He did not die without reason, but

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<sup>13</sup>W.J. Sparrow Simpson, The Resurrection and Modern Thought, (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1911), p. 251.

<sup>14</sup>In I Peter two particular references to the O.T. are evident but not crucial to his teaching: the Paschal Lamb, and the scapegoat of the Levitical Law. (See Charles Bigg, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Peter and Jude, New York: Scribner's Sons, 1905, pp. 119-120.)

died that the unrighteous might die to sin and live to righteousness. (I Peter 2:24) He died so that men who have been leading in vain a life inherited from their fathers might be liberated from this bondage. (I Peter 1:18-19) Christ released them with the shedding of his precious blood, the blood of a sinless man, more precious even than silver or gold. That which is bought with the imperishable is also imperishable. The atonement with God is accomplished by Christ once for all. (I Peter 3:18) Many years after Jesus' crucifixion Peter had come to see that

Christ died with a definite aim, viz., in order that we may escape from the penalty and bondage resulting from our past sins, and may live a new and righteous life. The actual result of the death of Christ is then added: 'by whose wounds ye have been healed.'<sup>15</sup>

#### D. Resurrection

The sins of man have caused the death of Jesus of Nazareth; but the power of God has raised him from the grave. Peter proclaimed

This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. (Acts 2:23-24)

Elsewhere he said, "Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead." (Acts 4:10; cf. 3:15, 5:30, 10:39b-40) What men thought they had

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<sup>15</sup>Joseph A. Beet, "The Doctrine of the Atonement in the New Testament", The Expositor, Series 4, vol. 15 (1892), p. 187.

accomplished was thwarted by the action of God.

To Peter and all the disciples the Resurrection of Jesus is probably the most significant event of all. Before the Resurrection the disciples could make no sense out of the life and death of Jesus. Everything was puzzling and seemingly incongruent. Now, however, they had a perspective from which to interpret and understand these events. It is easy to agree with Ramsey:

We are tempted to believe that, although the Resurrection may be the climax of the Gospel, there is yet a Gospel that stands upon its own feet and may be understood and appreciated before we pass on to the Resurrection. The first disciples did not find it so. For them the Gospel without the Resurrection was not merely a Gospel without its final chapter: it was not a Gospel at all. Jesus Christ had, it is true, taught and done great things: but He did not allow the disciples to rest in these things. He led them on to paradox, perplexity and darkness; and there He left them. There too they would have remained, had He not been raised from death. But His Resurrection threw its own light backwards upon the death and the ministry that went before; it illuminated the paradoxes and disclosed the unity of His words and deeds. <sup>16</sup>

The Resurrection, to Christology and to one's entire understanding of Jesus, is always central. It was the climax of the Gospel preached by Peter and the disciples.

For Jesus' eschatological message had been radically called in question. An apparently unanswerable question mark had been placed against it by his crucifixion. Jesus' own proclamation could only have been continued by the vindication of Jesus and his message through the resurrection. <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Arthur M. Ramsey, The Resurrection of Christ, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Reginald H. Fuller, The Foundations of New Testament Christology, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 143.

Jesus' word and deed had been vindicated by the act of God in the Resurrection. It also gave the disciples the reassurance and courage necessary to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Take Peter for example,

in the time of the Cross, his faith collapsed, fear conquered him, and he denied his Lord. After the resurrection this self-same Peter courageously defied the same Sanhedrin which had sent his Lord to the Cross, and which could send him to a like fate.<sup>18</sup>

As Christ's crucifixion was according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God so was his Resurrection. Peter saw this Resurrection foretold by David centuries before:

I saw the Lord always before me,  
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;  
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;  
moreover my flesh will dwell in hope.  
For thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades,  
nor let thy Holy One see corruption.  
Thou hast made known to me the ways of life;  
thou wilt make me full of gladness with thy presence.  
(Acts 2:25-28; cf. Psalm 16:8-11)

For Peter David's prophecy was fulfilled when God raised Jesus, "having loosed the pangs of death."<sup>19</sup> (Acts 2:24) Jesus is also the one to whom God had made known the ways of eternal life, and the Holy One of God who is the lamb without blemish or spot. (I Peter 1:19)

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<sup>18</sup>Barclay, pp. 244-245.

<sup>19</sup>The words "pangs of death" have been variously interpreted. It has been translated as "bonds of death" (Robert G. Bratcher, "Having Loosed the Pangs of Death," The Bible Translator, 10, 1959, pp.18-20), but others who translated it as "birth pangs of death" (W.A. Cox, "The Pains of Death (Acts 2:24): A Plea for an Old Interpretation," The Interpreter, 8, 1911-12, pp. 330-331; and E. G. Selwyn, The First Epistle of St. Peter, London: Macmillan, 1955, p.29) have taken it to mean either pangs suffered by

Peter made it very clear that when the patriarch David spoke of the Resurrection he was speaking not of himself but of one of his descendents--Jesus. (Acts 2:29-31) It was evident that the patriarch had died and lay buried. His tomb was still with them. Furthermore, David was recognized as a prophet. Therefore, his words "Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades nor let thy Holy One see corruption" were spoken when he foresaw the Resurrection of the Christ. David is still in his tomb but Jesus was raised by God.

Before the Resurrection, Peter could not have exegeted the Psalm this way.

St. Peter's exposition of the Psalm suggests that he is propounding a new idea, not that he is repeating an accepted exegetical commonplace. His personal faith in Jesus' resurrection did not begin with the prophecy, and advanced thence to the fact. Its fulfillment in Jesus was the thing to be demonstrated, not assumed. Indeed it seems quite clear that the fact of Jesus' resurrection created this interpretation of the Psalm. It is an exposition after the event and not before it. The object of this exposition is to show that apostolic experience is in conformity with Scriptural anticipation of the Messiah. <sup>20</sup>

The disciples had been the witnesses of Christ's miracles while he was with them in the flesh. They were also witnesses of his Resurrection. (Acts 2:32, 3:15, 5:32) It was to them that Jesus appeared after he rose from the

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death which was terminated when Jesus was delivered from death, or as the pains the dead suffer. But Swellengrebel ("Acts 2:24", The Biblical Translator, 10, 1959, pp.127-128) understood it as a vague sense conveying the terror of death. There does not seem to be any overwhelming agreement for one or the other of these views, and it also seems not to be of great significance to the understanding of the Resurrection of Christ.

<sup>20</sup>Simpson, pp. 230-231.

dead, and he ate and drank with them. (Acts 10:40-42)

This was certainly significant not only for the experience of the apostles but also for their testimony. "Their witness was sealed by their eating and drinking with him. This was a proof not only of the reality of the risen body, but also of his fellowship with the apostles."<sup>21</sup>

The fact that Jesus rose "on the third day" was only mentioned once by Peter, and that in the sermon to Cornelius and his friends. (Acts 10:40) It seems that it was not of particular significance to Peter or to the early Christians.<sup>22</sup> What was important was the fact that this Jesus put to death by the hands of men had been raised by God according to the Scriptures.

The significance of the Resurrection for men everywhere and at all times is seen in Fuller's statement:

According to the testimony, however, what occurred in the 'visions' [ of the risen Lord ] is not merely that God produced faith in the resurrection. Rather, he revealed to them Jesus as the One he had raised from the dead. The Easter testimony asserts an act of God upon Jesus himself, whereby he has taken Jesus out of the past of history and inserted him into his own eternal now. Henceforth encounter with Jesus is not limited to those who saw him in his earthly ministry, or to his post-resurrection appearances or to the memories of these experiences. This means that the salvation which was inclosed in the words and deeds of Jesus is not a mere past memory, but is a salvation which continues to be offered always in the here and now.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>R. B. Rackham, The Acts of the Apostles, (London: Methuen & Co., 1901), p. 158.

<sup>22</sup>The chronological discrepancy of the Gospel accounts bears this out.

<sup>23</sup>Fuller, pp. 142-143.

This is Peter's final understanding. The Resurrection did not initially convince him that Christ was for all men. It is most important for his Christology that God finally brought him to see this.

#### E. Ascension

The exaltation of Christ like his life, death, and resurrection was according to the definite plan of God. To Peter the ascension of his Lord was but one part of the same scheme. He said little about the ascension because that is seen as the natural outcome. God raised Jesus so he could exalt him: the ascension is not treated as an event separate from the Resurrection. (Acts 2:32-36; I Peter 1:21, 3:21-22) For example, Peter said of Jesus, "Through him you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God." (I Peter 1:21)

Once again Peter saw in the words of David a prophecy of Jesus' exaltation:

The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand,  
till I make thy enemies ~~the~~ stool for thy feet.  
(Psalm 110:1)

The argument follows as before: David who spoke these words was not speaking of himself, for he did not ascend into heaven. These words were about the Messiah and were fulfilled in Jesus. Yet Jesus had also died and was buried. Though the disciples claimed that he had risen from the dead, and though the tomb was indeed empty, people wanted to know where his body was. Peter's implied answer was

that this risen Jesus has been exalted by God to sit on his right hand, to share with him all authority and power, and to be the Leader and Saviour of his people. (Acts 5:31) This God did in order "to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:31) With his exaltation, Jesus received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, which he poured out to his disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33) and to others who obey him (Acts 5:32).

He who had earlier received the Spirit for the public discharge of his own messianic ministry had now received the same Spirit to impart to His representatives on earth, in order that they might continue the ministry which He began. His present impartation of the Spirit to them, attended as it was by sensible signs, was a further open vindication of the claim that He was the exalted Messiah. And the claim was clinched by another Scriptural proof, this time from Psalm 110:1.<sup>24</sup>

From all these facts as witnessed by the apostles and supported by the testimony of prophecy came but one conclusion: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2:36) "His Messiahship was acclaimed at His baptism and confirmed by His resurrection. . . .But He was exalted not only as Messiah, but as Lord."<sup>25</sup>

Barclay points to the significance of the ascension:

It is this exaltation which gives Jesus Christ the right to make His unparalleled demands and to offer His unparralleled promises. It is this which proves Him to be both Lord and Christ (v. 36). It is this which demonstrates Him to be the promised and awaited Messiah.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Bruce, p. 72.

<sup>25</sup>Bruce, p. 73.

<sup>26</sup>Barclay, p. 245.

#### F. Continued Presence

Even though Jesus has ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God sharing with him all power and glory, and although he is no longer to be seen in his human body, his presence is nonetheless still very real. He continues to be in the midst of his people performing miracles now as once he did during his earthly ministry. His power is so great that belief in his name alone will give one salvation (Acts 2:21, 4:12, 5:23); restored health (Acts 3:16); forgiveness of sins (Acts 3:19, 5:31, 10:43); and peace (Acts 10:36).

The name of Jesus Christ signifies all that had been revealed of God in Jesus.<sup>27</sup> Therefore belief in his name is belief in all that Jesus has revealed of the Father in his works and words. As he is the "prophet" of God foretold by Moses, Peter quoting Moses said of him that "every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed." (Acts 3:23; cf. Deut. 18:19)

Jesus is the only one by whose name there is salvation. "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) The belief in Jesus makes all the difference in the world, for "once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy." (I Peter 2:10) This is salvation

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<sup>27</sup>Rackham, p. 49.

from destruction (Acts 3:23), from a futile way of life (I Peter 1:18, 2:25), from sin (I Peter 2:24), and from wickedness (Acts 3:26). What is offered in place of sin and aimlessness is righteousness (I Peter 2:24), restored relationship with God (I Peter 2:10, 3:18), forgiveness of sins (Acts 3:19, 5:31, 10:43), and peace (Acts 10:36). This salvation is not earned by any kind of work; it only requires faith. It is also not limited; it is offered to all "whom the Lord calls to him" (Acts 2:39) and "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:21)

The believer is commanded to be baptized (Acts 2:38; cf. I Peter 3:21-22), for in baptism the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are personalized. By being baptized one partakes of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord. Baptism is accompanied, however, by repentance. Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38) "Repent therefore, and turn again that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts 3:19)

Repentance involves a turning again, the turning away from wickedness. (Acts 3:26) Believing in Jesus inherently involves repentance.

Plainly a complete change of heart, a spiritual right-about-turn, was essential in those who had so lately rejected their Messiah, not recognizing Him in Jesus of Nazareth, if they were to enjoy the salvation which He came to earth to procure for them and which He was now offering them from His place of exaltation. The call to repentance, already sounded by John the Baptist

and by Jesus in the years preceding the crucifixion remained an essential element in the proclamation of the Christian message.<sup>28</sup>

To the believer is given the promise of forgiveness of sins, and the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, 5:32), who is to continue the ministry which Christ himself anointed with the Holy Spirit, had begun. The Holy Spirit bears witness to all that Jesus had said and done, and to the Gospel offered to man. (Acts 5:32)

#### G. Second Advent

Peter believed that his present time was the time between the times. These are the "last days" prophecied by all the prophets. Peter proclaimed that they had begun with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:16-21), and will consummate with Jesus' second advent. (Acts 3:19-21) Peter linked this returning of Jesus from heaven with the repentance of the Jews. "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out. . . ." (Acts 3:19)

Jesus had been received into heaven that he might give the Holy Spirit to all believers. In so doing he inaugurates the establishment of all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets. This restoration is not only strictly speaking of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, but of the establishment of the Kingdom of God. The hope and the promise is

that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ anointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time

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<sup>28</sup>Bruce, p.75.

for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. (Acts 3:20-21)

It is now the time between times: between the time of revelation and the time of seeing God face to face. Jesus shall return as the judge ordained by God to judge the living and the dead. (Acts 10:42)

Peter, in his Epistle, speaks of this day of the Lord as the day when Jesus' glory will be fully revealed. (I Peter 1:7, 1:13, 4:13) When Jesus was crucified he died as a criminal but when he returns to earth he shall come in his full power and glory, which is partially manifested now through his believers. When he comes on the "day of judgment" all shall witness his power and glory, for he shall come as the judge of all men.

#### H. Fulfillment of Prophecy

"What God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, . . . he thus fulfilled." (Acts 2:18) This was central to Peter's preaching of the Messiahship of Jesus, and underlay all the events of Jesus' life. His ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension had been foretold by all the prophets since Samuel. (Acts 3:24) He is also the promised "prophet" foretold by Moses, and the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that in his posterity "shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Acts 3:25; cf. Genesis 22:18)

The coming of the Messiah is the beginning of the "last days" prophesied by all the prophets. It is the expected time when God, after long centuries of waiting,

should visit His people with judgment and blessing, bringing to a climax His dealings with them in history. The apostles, then, declare that the Messianic age has dawned<sup>29</sup>

through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. These all had taken place according to the "definite plan and foreknowledge of God." (Acts 2:23)

His sufferings and death had been foretold by all the prophets. (Acts 3:18) His resurrection and exaltation were spoken of by the patriarch David. (Acts 2:25-28, 2:34-35) The outpouring of his Holy Spirit to his disciples on the day of Pentecost and later to all believers was foretold by the prophet Joel. (Acts 2:17-21)

Joel, like the other prophets, had spoken of what was going to take place 'in the last days.' Peter's use of his prophecy announces that these days--the days of fulfillment--have arrived. In another place Peter himself tells how the prophets who foretold the coming manifestation of the grace of God 'searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory' (I Pet. 1:10f., RSV). But now that Christ has been 'manifested at the end of the times' (I Pet. 1:20), His apostles have no further need to search and inquire (as the prophets did) what person or time the prophetic Spirit pointed forward to; they know that the person is Jesus of Nazareth and that the time is that upon which they themselves have entered. The 'last days' began with Christ's first advent and will end with His second advent; they are the days during which the age to come overlaps the present age.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, in these "last days" every one is given a chance to receive forgiveness. It is the time of divine

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<sup>29</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments, (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p.21.

<sup>30</sup>Bruce, pp. 67-68.

judgment and divine grace. (Acts 2:38, 3:22-23, 10:43, 5:31, 4:12) Every one who believes in Jesus as the Messiah and in everything taught about him by the disciples is given the promise of forgiveness of sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, "every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people." (Acts 3:23)

He is the prophet prophesied by Moses at the end of his life. This prophet was not to be just any prophet, but he was to be one like Moses who shall be the mediator between God and man. Listening to him and obeying his words is listening to and obeying God. Thus, Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecy of all the prophets. He is the longed for Messiah, the hope of Israel.

### CHAPTER III

#### PETER'S USE OF CHRISTOLOGICAL TITLES

##### A. Introduction

In his speeches as well as in his Epistle Peter used many titles in speaking of Jesus. Since no one title was sufficient to say all that Peter and the disciples knew about their Lord, they used many titles. Each shows but a facet of the person of Christ. A study of these is necessary to supplement the theological exposition in Peter's brief speeches.

It is in keeping with Peter's emphasis on Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies that these titles are deeply rooted in Old Testament concepts and history. Even though these prophecies had been known to Peter and the whole Jewish nation, their fulfillment in Jesus was not seen until after the Resurrection. Therefore, one needs to look at Peter's post-resurrection usage of these titles to understand what he meant by them.

## B. Servant of God

The title "servant of God" or ebed Yahweh occurs only four times in the Acts of the Apostles. Cullmann pointed out the significance of this:

We find this title four times in Acts. It is significant that all four occur in the same section, chs. 3 and 4, and that Jesus is designated  $\kappa\alpha\iota\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  in no other book of the New Testament. . . . It is probably not venturing too much to draw the conclusion that the author [ of Acts ] may have preserved the precise memory that it was the Apostle Peter who by preference designated Jesus the 'Suffering Servant of God'.<sup>1</sup>

Two of these references are from Peter's speech at Solomon's portico (Acts 3:13, 26) and the other two were uttered in prayers of the church while Peter was present, (Acts 4:27, 30) which do not concern here. Moule, however, feels that the "servant" in chapter 4 refers not to the idea of the suffering servant of God in Isaiah but to "the royal Davidic Servant in Jewish liturgy."<sup>2</sup> This claim is based on the fact that Acts 4:25 expressly speaks of David as "thy servant!"

But irregardless of the use of this title servant of God in Acts 4 Peter's use of it in Acts 3 refers to the suffering servant of God in Isaiah (Isa. 42:1-4, 49:1-7, 50:4-11, and especially 52:13-53:12). These Isaiah passages are "at the same time precise and enigmatic"<sup>3</sup> about the ebed Yahweh. The nature of his work and his fate are made

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Cullmann, Christology of the New Testament, Rev. ed., (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), pp.73-74.

<sup>2</sup>C. F. D. Moule, "The Christology of Acts," Studies in Luke-Acts, ed. by L. E. Keck & J. L. Martyn, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 169.

<sup>3</sup>Cullmann, Christology, p. 53.

known but it is unclear as to when and under what circumstances he will appear.

It is difficult to say whether in the Old Testament the ebed Yahweh refers to (1) an individual, (2) the whole nation of Israel, or (3) the 'remnant'. Cullmann thinks that

the identification of collective and individual representatives is quite common in Semitic thinking. It is thus actually characteristic of the central theological idea of the ebed Yahweh hymns (that is, the idea of representation) that a plurality is progressively reduced as an always decreasing minority takes over the task which was originally that of the totality.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, he points out that this is the way the biblical Heilsgeschichte unfolds: from the whole creation to humanity to the people of Israel to the remnant and finally to a single man, Jesus. Likewise the ebed Yahweh figure develops. "He is at the same time the whole people, the 'remnant', and the One. He is so to speak the personification of the complexity which is definitive for the idea of the representation central in these hymns."<sup>5</sup>

The essential characteristics of the ebed Yahweh are his vicarious suffering and death in the place of many, and that he re-establishes the covenant which God had made with his people.<sup>6</sup> At the time of Jesus this idea of vicarious suffering was not transferred to the Messiah. Though

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<sup>4</sup>Cullmann, Christology, pp.54-55.

<sup>5</sup>Cullmann, Christology, p. 55.

<sup>6</sup>Cullmann, Christology, p. 55.

official messianism of the Jews had not accepted the atoning suffering as a necessary part of the Messiah's mission. Though Jesus did not specifically refer to himself as the "suffering servant" he did apply to himself the notion of vicarious suffering and death. Jesus' own disciples as well as the Jews could not understand the necessity for his suffering until after the Resurrection. Therefore, the speech of Peter in Acts 3 was intended to explain

how it is that glorious and daring claims are now being made for a recently crucified criminal; and the method is to identify him with the Suffering Servant who was indeed, according to Isa. 53, treated like a criminal, and whose vindication also has the authority of Scripture.<sup>7</sup>

In this speech, however, Jesus is called the "servant" of God without elaboration or direct reference to the servant hymns of Isaiah. Peter believed elaboration unnecessary because

there existed an explanation of the person and work of Jesus which we could characterize somewhat inaccurately as an ebed Yahweh Christology--or more exactly as a 'Paidology'.<sup>8</sup>

The First Epistle of Peter, however, quotes Isaiah fifty-three extensively in speaking of the redemptive death of Jesus.

But he was wounded for our transgressions,  
 he was bruised for our iniquities;  
 upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,  
 and with his stripes we are healed.  
 All we like sheep have gone astray;

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<sup>7</sup>Moule, pp. 169-170.

<sup>8</sup>Cullmann, Christology, p. 73.

we have turned every one to his own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:5-6; cf. I Pet. 2:24-25)

although he had done no violence,  
and there was no deceit in his mouth.  
(Isaiah 53:9b; cf. I Pet. 2:22)

yet he bore the sins of many,  
and made intercession for the transgressors.  
(Isaiah 53:12b; cf. I Pet. 2:24)

Even though the title is not specifically used the theme is abundantly clear. The identification is complete between the servant in Isaiah and Jesus the Christ. This is in contrast with Acts, which employs the title without direct reference to Isaiah. In summary, the ebed Yahweh concept is quite dominant in Peter's Christology.

Peter, who during Jesus' lifetime had refused to hear of his coming suffering and death, and who during Jesus' trial and humiliation had denied him, now after the Resurrection made the necessity of Jesus' suffering and death the very center of his understanding of Jesus' earthly ministry.

### C. Prophet

In his sermon at Solomon's portico Peter referred to Jesus as the prophet foretold by Moses:

Moses said, 'The Lord will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. and it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' (Acts 3:22-23;  
cf. Deut. 18:15-19)

Since Peter did not explicate this he must have assumed a great deal of prior knowledge on the part of his hearers.

The original setting of this promise of God declared to Moses is recorded in Exodus 20:18-19. When Moses received the Ten Commandments from God the people of Israel

perceived the thunderings and the lightnings and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, [they] were afraid and trembled; and they stood afar off, and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die.'

The promise of a prophet was given to Moses at this time, but he did not tell the people of Israel until the end of his life.

It is uncertain whether Moses had the Messiah in mind for the essence of his speech in Deuteronomy concerned a prophet of the Lord who will speak that which God puts in his mouth, as against false prophets using pagan techniques of divination and necromancy.<sup>9</sup> But Peter and Stephen quote it as an acknowledged prophecy of the Messiah. The promise to the people was that a prophet would come to them who would speak the will of God as Moses did for many years.

The primary reference of these words of Moses is to the institution of prophets in Israel, as a way appointed by God for making His will known to His people. But even before apostolic times this prophecy seems to have been interpreted as pointing to one particular prophet, a second Moses, who would exercise the prophet's full mediatorial function as Moses had done. . . . We see that from the earliest days of the apostolic preaching this passage from Deuteronomy was invoked as a Mosaic prediction of Jesus, and it appears to have been regularly included in the 'testimony' compilations which circulated in the early church.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Moule, p. 162.

<sup>10</sup>Bruce, pp. 92-93.

This concept of the Messiah coming as the eschatological prophet is specifically Jewish. It was a very common notion among Jews of the first century A.D. that in the last days the prophetic gift would once again become a reality. The prophetic profession had long disappeared, but a prophet was expected to come at the last days to fulfill all earlier prophecies.<sup>11</sup>

There were many speculations as to the identity of this eschatological prophet. It was once thought that since each prophet proclaimed one and the same truth it was the same prophet who was incarnated in each successively. Others thought that one of the Old Testament prophets would return. Moses and Elijah were the most likely candidates. At first, some thought only one prophet would return; later they began to think of two returning together, in combinations such as Enoch and Elijah or Moses and Elijah.<sup>12</sup> Even the Samaritans and the Essenes shared the same expectancy, although their specific ideas differed. The function of the prophet, however, was generally thought to be thus:

He preaches, reveals the final mysteries, and above all restores revelation as God had given it in the law of Moses. But he does not simply preach as did the earlier prophets; his proclamation announces the end of this age. His call to repentance is God's very last offer. Thus his coming and his preaching as such constitute an eschatological act which is a part of the drama of the end.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Cullmann, Christology, pp. 13-15.

<sup>12</sup>Cullmann, Christology, pp. 17-22.

<sup>13</sup>Cullmann, Christology, p. 22.

In short, the expectation that a prophet would come was widespread at the time of Jesus. The Transfiguration suggests this expectation.

Without an expressed citation of Deut. 18:15, a subtle hint appears to be intended in the story of the transfiguration (in all three Synoptics). The two figures of Moses and Elijah are, no doubt, themselves significant as pointing to him who is to succeed and supercede them. But there is the further phrase (Luke 9:35 and parallels 'listen to him', which is exactly like the  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\delta\omicron\kappa\omicron\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota\theta\epsilon$  of Deut. 18:15 as quoted in Acts 3:22. If this is an intended hint in the transfiguration narrative, then it will mean: 'This is the Moses-prophet, and more than a prophet--one who is a Son.' But even so, it is uttered not by a man but by the divine voice.<sup>14</sup>

Although Peter was a witness of the Transfiguration, the first clear evidence of his full understanding that Jesus is the subject of Moses' speech appears in Acts 3.

This notion of the Messiah returning as the prophet, particularly the "prophet like Moses" was especially strong among Jewish Christians.<sup>15</sup> Containing Jewish Christian traditions, the first part of Acts mentions twice that Jesus is the prophet foretold by Moses (Acts 3:22, 7:37), but in the second part of Acts, dealing mainly with Paul's missionary journeys, this concept of Jesus as the prophet is absent. The same is true of the epistles of the New Testament, but it is mentioned once in John 6:14.

A close examination of the passage Peter quoted from Deuteronomy 18:15-19 shows that there are significant

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<sup>14</sup>Moule, p. 162.

<sup>15</sup>Cullmann, Christology, pp. 37ff.

parallels between Jesus and Moses as prophets of God standing apart from the other Old Testament prophets.

First, Moses said that this prophet would be from among the men of Israel, like himself. Second, this prophet would, like Moses, be a mediator between God and the people. He would speak to them the words God puts in his mouth. Moses was the only prophet before Christ to whom God spoke face to face "as a man speaks to his friend." (Exodus 33:11; cf. Deuteronomy 34:10-12) God himself specifically contrasted the mode in which he spoke to other prophets as against the directness with which he spoke to Moses:

Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream, Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the Lord. (Numbers 12:6-8a)

Furthermore, Moses and Jesus were the only mediators of covenants between God and man. Moses was the mediator of the old covenant whereas Christ is the mediator of the new. In addition, Moses and Jesus share largely the same authority as prophets. He who does not listen to these prophets shall be destroyed because these prophets speak the word of God. Moses was for a time the ruler over God's people, but Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father. "Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ was faithful over God's house as a son." (Hebrews 3:5-6)

The obvious fact that there are great differences between Moses and Jesus does not negate the parallels between them. To the argument that the covenant Jesus established is greater than the one Moses mediated Barrows replies, "This is as it should be, for the antetype must always surpass the type, as the substance does its image."<sup>16</sup>

#### D. Lord

The use of the title "Lord" (Κύριος) by human observers is mainly a post-resurrection phenomenon.

"This designation expresses as does no other the thought that Christ is exalted to God's right hand, glorified, and now intercedes for man before the Father."<sup>17</sup> Its associations in the speeches of Peter and in his Epistle are definitely transcendental. It stresses that Jesus indeed still lives and continues his work on earth of salvation and healing.

In Hellenistic thought the name "Kyrios" had developed from a general meaning, "lord", to an absolute meaning, "the Lord." In Hebrew thought the name Adon underwent the same development. The Jews replaced the name of God, JHVH, with Adonai in their worship. The same progression is most likely true of the Aramaic term Mari, which was originally used to express the relation of Jesus

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<sup>16</sup>E. D. Barrow, Jr., "The Prophet Like Unto Moses," The Biblical Repository, Series 3, vol. 3, (1847), p. 652.

<sup>17</sup>Cullmann, Christology, p. 195.

to his disciples, but later took the same specific meaning as its Hebrew and Greek equivalents.<sup>18</sup>

After the Resurrection the disciples freely applied the title "Lord" to Jesus. In fact, in some instances it is difficult to be certain whether their use of Kyrios meant Jehovah or Jesus, "especially in the application of Old Testament testimonia."<sup>19</sup> They did not hesitate to apply to Jesus Old Testament passages referring to Jehovah. When Peter quoted Joel 2:32 (Acts 2:21) he probably saw the promise "that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" being fulfilled in those who would "repentantly invoke Jesus as Lord."<sup>20</sup> In I Peter, he also told his readers to "reverence Christ as Lord." (I Peter 3:15)

The context of Peter's speech in Acts 2: 14-39 suggests that Peter interpreted the Lordship of Jesus as a consequence of his obedience as the ebed Yahweh. After his suffering and death, God not only exalted him but also "made him both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36)

Christ's exaltation to equality with God manifests itself in the fact that God now gives him the name above every name, the name Kyrios. Why is this a name which cannot be surpassed? It is the name of God himself; Kyrios is the translation of the Hebrew Adonai. . . . The bestowal of the divine name, however, does not refer only to the name itself. In Judaism, as in all ancient religions, a name represents also a power. To say that God confers upon Jesus his own

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<sup>18</sup>Cullmann, Christology, pp. 200-202. Scholars do not agree on the development of the Aramaic term, however.

<sup>19</sup>Moule, p. 161.

<sup>20</sup>Bruce, p. 74.

name is to say that he confers upon him his whole lordship.<sup>21</sup>

#### E. The Holy and Righteous One

Peter ascribed the two-fold title "the Holy and Righteous One" to Jesus particularly to contrast him with Barabas the murderer. (Acts 3:14) He reminded the Jews that they had crucified the righteous person and released the unrighteous. Even though perhaps he had meant nothing more than this contrast there are Old Testament referents.

One such is the title "suffering servant of God" in Isaiah 53:11. The servant is mentioned here as "the righteous one"; he is the innocent who suffered undeservedly. Peter stresses the same idea in Acts 3:14 as well as in I Peter 3:18; Jesus the righteous had suffered. The Righteous One is the anointed of God. This is the Old Testament insistence on the character of the anointed of God. He embodies God's righteousness and he is the righteous Branch (Jeremiah 23:5) who will establish righteousness on earth. (Jeremiah 23:5; Isaiah 11:4-5)

The Holy One is consecrated to the service of God. The emphasis of this title is on dedication.<sup>22</sup> Israel was once Jehovah's holy nation, but what used to apply to the nation now applies only to an individual, Jesus the Holy

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<sup>21</sup>Cullmann, Christology, pp. 217-218.

<sup>22</sup>W. Lock, "The Christology of the Earlier Chapters of the Acts of the Apostles," The Expositor, Series 4, vol. 4 (1891), pp. 185. See also Rackham, p. 52.

One. The principle is the same as that applied to the development of the ebed Yahweh.<sup>23</sup>

#### F. Saviour

The title "Saviour" (σωτήρ) was used by Peter only once. (Acts 5:31) According to Oscar Cullmann, this is not one of the major titles in the early church, but "occurs almost exclusively in the later early Christian writings which originated in the Hellenistic environment."<sup>24</sup> That is because the name Jesus has a natural connection with the Old Testament title "Saviour" used of God.

It is also clear that 'Saviour' could not possibly become a special title of honour for Jesus in Palestine because one would simply have had to repeat the proper name 'Jesus'. 'Jesus Soter' would have been 'Jeshua Jeshua'. For this reason Jesus could only be called Saviour where Greek was spoken. But this certainly happened very early, especially since the idea was surely already present in the earliest Church that Jesus is not only named but is Saviour.<sup>25</sup>

This title, however, was never used of Jesus during his lifetime either by himself or by anyone else.

The use of the title in Acts 5:31 clearly shows that the title Soter is connected with the forgiveness of sins. Jesus had already accomplished his work of atonement and had been vindicated by his resurrection and exaltation. (Acts 2:36) Because he shares with God the title Lord he also shares with him the attribute of being the Saviour.

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<sup>23</sup>See above, p. 48. See also Cullmann, Christology, p. 55.

<sup>24</sup>Cullmann, Christology, p. 241.

<sup>25</sup>Cullmann, Christology, p. 244-245.

## G. Christ

Christ ( $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ ) is the Greek word for Messiah. It is derived from the word  $\chi\rho\acute{\iota}\omega$  meaning "to anoint", a translation of the Hebrew mashiach, the "anointed one". The term "anointed" was first applied to anyone who was anointed with oil for the consecration to a holy office, for example to priests (Lev. 4:3, 5:16, 6:22); to kings (I Sam. 2:10, 2:35, 16:6; II Sam. 19:21; II Chron. 6:42); and to prophets (I Kings 19:16).<sup>26</sup> In later Judaism the term mashiach came to designate the king of Israel, who was "considered the representative of God in a special sense."<sup>27</sup>

II Samuel 7:12ff records God's promise to David that his kingdom would last forever. This was never fulfilled, however, in the way the Jews expected: in the earthly historical sense.

But the Jewish eschatological hope held fast all the more energetically to this unfulfilled expectation so that 'the anointed one of Yahweh', the 'Messiah' gradually became an eschatological figure (although strangely enough the expression mashiach does not appear in the Old Testament itself as an eschatological designation).<sup>28</sup>

The Jews took it for granted that God would fulfill his promise to David in a purely earthly framework. This Messiah was understood in the context of Psalm 110 to be a warrior who would conquer all Israel's enemies. Since

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<sup>27</sup>William O. McClung, "The Christological Implications of Acts 1-7 as Seen in the Names used for Jesus Christ," unpublished Th. D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1953, p. 32.

<sup>28</sup>Cullmann, Christology, p. 114.

he is a descendent of David restoring his kingdom the Messiah also bears the title "Son of David."

At the time of Jesus the dominant expectation was for a political Messiah. This was particularly true for the Pharisees. There were two views concerning the "end times." The earlier view was that the Messiah would introduce an interim period but God himself would bring in the permanent kingdom. The other was that the Messiah himself would bring in the end times.<sup>29</sup> On different occasions Peter seems to support each view. Once he indicated that the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled: the last days have dawned with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit caused by the ascension of Jesus. (Acts 2:16-21) On another occasion he said that Christ would come again "at the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old." (Acts 3:21)

These views are really not inconsistent when understood in the light of Peter's Christology. The ascended Christ now shares the attributes of God; he is called Lord and Saviour. So also he is the Messiah and God bringing in the last days.

Oscar Cullmann warns that

it would be quite a mistake to conclude that the specific ideas which Judaism connected with the title Christ had especially great significance for the writers who applied it to Jesus. . . . The fact is, however, that the Christians took over only certain

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<sup>29</sup>Cullmann, Christology, p. 116.

important elements of the predominating picture of the Messiah, and did not apply to Jesus other quite essential aspects of the Jewish Messiah.<sup>30</sup>

In time the title Christ came to be used as a proper name for Jesus, but in Acts it seems that Peter was using it not as a proper name but as a title, preserving the original Christian sense of "the Christ". In his speeches he used it with the article (Acts 2:31, 3:20) and coupled with the name Jesus (Acts 2:38, 4:10, 10:36). The first two instances of coupling with the name Jesus are used in connection with the expression "the name of." Even though the title Lord is never coupled with the title Christ, in his speeches Peter closely associates these two: for example, "God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36); and "Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)" (Acts 10:36). In I Peter, on the other hand, he did use the combined title "Lord Jesus Christ". (I Peter 1:3)

Before the Resurrection Peter and the other disciples had understood Messiahship in the common Jewish sense: that the Christ is an earthly king who would restore the kingdom of David and overthrow all the enemies of Israel. But after the Resurrection of his Lord Peter understood the meaning of Messiahship as Jesus himself had. The Messiah is not an earthly king but one who must suffer and bear the sins of many. (Matthew 26:63-64; Mark 14:61-62)

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<sup>30</sup>Cullmann, Christology, p.112.

Hence, in I Peter almost every time the title Christ is used it is specifically in reference to the suffering and death of Jesus. (I Peter 1:11, 1:19, 2:21, 3:18, 4:1, 4:13, 5:1) The idea of the suffering servant of God is definitely and intricately linked with the concept of the Messiah. This is also true of one instance in Acts (3:18) when Peter mentioned that all the prophets had prophesied about the suffering of the Christ. It is significant that it is after Peter's fuller comprehension of the meaning and significance of Jesus' death he set the title Christ concomitant with his suffering.

#### H. Stone

Jesus had applied to himself the words about the "stone" in Psalm 118:22, which Peter also used to refer to Jesus in one of his speeches in Acts as well as in the Epistle. (Acts 4:11; I Peter 2:4-7) Jesus is "the stone which the builders rejected," but he "has become the head of the corner." (Psalm 118:22) He is also the precious and chosen cornerstone laid for a sure foundation. (Isa. 28:16)

F. F. Bruce claims that the quotation from Psalm 118:22 is "one of the earliest messianic testimonies. It was so used (by implication) by Jesus Himself as the conclusion of the Parable of the Vineyard (Mark 12:10)."<sup>31</sup> In the parallel passage in Luke 20:18 the stone which the

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<sup>31</sup>Bruce, p. 99.

builders rejected is also associated with the stone on which many will stumble and fall, recorded in Isaiah 8:14f.

In its original Old Testament context the rejected stone referred to the nation of Israel, rejected by other nations but chosen by God and made as important among the nations as a cornerstone is to a building. (Psalm 118:22, Isaiah 28:16) In the New Testament context, on the other hand, the rejected stone is the Messiah who had been laid for a foundation in Zion but rejected by the religious rulers of Israel, who were thought of as the builders of the house of God. The stone the builders had cast out God lifted up and made it the head of the corner. (Acts 4:11) "In the idea of the cornerstone, there is the possibility that the cornerstone was the stone that tied the walls together. This was to make it strong because a tower was built over it for defense."<sup>32</sup> Therefore, strength for support and defense is the main characteristic of the cornerstone. Many implications can be made from these passages.<sup>33</sup> Peter, however, used this idea of the rejected stone mainly to explain the temporary humiliation and rejection of Jesus by man, and the exaltation of this same Jesus by God. The stone which they had rejected, God has raised and made it the head-stone of the corner; Jesus whom they denied and crucified God has raised and glorified

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<sup>32</sup>McClung, p. 74.

<sup>33</sup>See Rackham, pp. 58-59.

by enthroning him at his right hand.

Furthermore, in I Peter, Peter had in mind also the relation of Jesus as the cornerstone to the other stones in the spiritual house of God, the Christian Church. (I Pet. 2:4-5) The Christ is the living stone. He is alive and gives life to all those who are in him. Therefore, believers as living stones also participate in this ongoing building of the spiritual house of God.

#### I. Author of Life

The titles "Leader" (Prince) and "Author of Life" are grouped together because in the Greek these are the same word ἀρχηγός. Studied in their contexts, both stress the life-giving power of Jesus.<sup>34</sup> In Acts 3:15 the Author of Life is particularly used to contrast the murderer who takes away life. This murderer was released and given life while the Author of Life was killed. Yet it is the latter who had been raised from the dead and now not only continues to live but also gives life to all those who believe in him, For example, the lame man healed by Peter in the name of Jesus was made healthy and strong. (Acts 3:1-8)

The same idea is clear in 5:31 where Peter spoke of the one who was killed but now exalted by God to give "repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:31)

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<sup>34</sup>Henry J. Cadbury, "Note 29. The Titles of Jesus in Acts," Beginnings of Christianity. Part I: The Acts of the Apostles, edited by F. J. Foakes-Jackson & Kirsopp Lake, (London: Macmillan, 1920-33), vol. 5, p. 371.

Being forgiven of one's sins is "to die to sin and live to righteousness." (I Peter 2:24)

#### J. Conclusion

In his use of Christological titles Peter is mainly interested in showing that Jesus fits all that the prophets have prophesied about the Messiah who is to come at the end times. These titles, therefore, have their roots in the Old Testament. Peter sees all of Jesus' life (including his death, resurrection, and exaltation) as the fulfillment of prophecy. Hence he can freely ascribe to Jesus these titles which were reserved for the Messiah. By giving Jesus titles originally ascribed to God Peter indicates that he is coming to realize the astounding fact that Jesus is God. This itself is a deeper and fuller understanding of the concept of the Christ.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE SHAPE OF PETER'S CHRISTOLOGY

It is pointless to look for a highly developed or sophisticated Christology in Peter, but his Christology is by no means inadequate or incomplete, taken in its own terms. Peter's theology is primitive only in the sense that it is early and simple. Peter was not a theologian; he was a fisherman who responded to the call of Jesus and became a disciple. He was not an elegant preacher, but empowered by the Holy Spirit he preached all that God had revealed to him. He was interested in promulgating the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not in analyzing it. Therefore, he had not worked out many implications of his preaching before he spoke, nor had he carefully thought out many of the details involved in understanding the person of Christ. So in comparison to Paul and theologians following, Peter's Christology seems skeletal.

Peter and the other disciples of Christ witnessed all they have to proclaim. They were not interested in philosophizing about a historical event. They wanted to tell what they knew. They felt an urgency for their fellow men to accept their witness that Jesus is the Messiah prophesied by the prophets, and that the last days have

dawned. It is time to make available God's last offer to repent.

For an examination of Peter's Christology the omissions from his speeches and Epistle are as important as their contents. The most obvious omissions are the concept that the death of Jesus was necessary to appease an angry God, and any discussion or attempt to explain the two natures of Christ.

Throughout his speeches and Epistle Peter gave great attention to the suffering and death of Jesus. But it was only in the Epistle that he openly showed an understanding of the vicarious suffering of Jesus. Nevertheless, in Acts his use of the title "servant" of God for Jesus at least suggests, if it does not prove, that he understood it there also. But the death of Jesus is never seen as the appeasement of an angry God. On the contrary, God is seen as the one who delivered Jesus and exalted him to glory and power. There is not a single mention of a God who demanded a price to be paid, and that price the blood of Jesus. When Peter spoke of Jesus having ransomed man, he did not mean ransoming man from the wrath of God but from a futile way of life. (I Peter 1:18)

Even though it cannot be said that Peter did not believe that Jesus Christ was human and divine, it is clear that he did not see any need to struggle with the explanation of the dual natures of Christ.

Therefore, it was also not important for Peter to stress the Virgin Birth of Jesus. In fact, he did not once mention the birth of Jesus. To him, Jesus is unique and he need not labour to illustrate it. He also took for granted the pre-existence of Christ, except for a brief hint in I Peter 1:20.

Of the contents of his speeches and Epistle three characteristics are particularly prominent. First, he repeatedly emphasized that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecy of all the prophets. His stress on the unity between the Old Testament and Jesus Christ is dominant throughout. He saw every major event of Jesus' history as a fulfillment of a prophecy. Jesus was not an ordinary man. Everything about him had been foretold by prophets centuries earlier. This emphasis is particularly striking in light of its relative absence now. This stress on fulfilling Old Testament prophecy has degenerated over the centuries.

Second, Peter saw the death, resurrection, and ascension as parts of one event. They are the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the Christ and they are also parts of the same scheme of his glorification. God raised Jesus from death that he might exalt him to his right hand to share his glory and dominion. No one of these is stressed by itself. Peter does not emphasize Jesus' death, for example, to the exclusion of the other

two. Jesus' death by itself meant little, but Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension meant the salvation of man. Jesus is Lord and Saviour because he died, is risen and ascended.

Third, it is obvious that the suffering servant theme is emphasized in I Peter. Peter felt compelled to explain Jesus' death over and over again, using Old Testament prophecies to show that it was a necessary part of the Messiah's mission. This perhaps suggests that Peter himself was still struggling with this new understanding of the suffering of Christ. The concept of the Messiah and the concept of suffering seemed irreconcilable and contradictory to him and every one else during Jesus' lifetime. But now Peter saw that they must go hand in hand. The Messiah's suffering is inherent in his mission. This was difficult for Peter to grasp, yet he did accept it. He felt a need for others to come to see this relationship also, therefore he laid stress on the ebed Yahweh and the "stone rejected by the builders."

Because of the simplicity of his Christology, in his language there are tendencies to potential errors such as Adoptionism. Some examples are:

Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. (Acts 2:36)

God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. (Acts 5:31)

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. (Acts 10:38)

But it is difficult to see how Peter could have expressed these thoughts without using such language. Theologians even today have difficulty explaining clearly and lucidly the relation between Jesus and the Father in the Resurrection and exaltation without using the same language. Furthermore, in I Peter 1:20 Peter spoke of the pre-existence of Christ. This itself safeguards him from seeming Adoptionism.

Another interesting way to view the Christology of Peter, and one worthy of a study of its own, is to compare it with the second article of the Apostles' Creed, for the Church has taught that the Apostles' Creed contains the fullness of Apostolic teaching. In spite of differences of detail, in omissions and emphases, in major outline they are strikingly similar. Therefore, although Peter's Christology has not been much studied by scholars, it remains very much a part of the Church today.

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