

Text: 2 Pt 1.1

Tonight, we turn the page from 1 Peter to 2 Peter.

Monday I was working on some notes in preparation for our message, then had a computer crash, and it ate all my notes. I had to start over this morning.

Our recent work in the *Orthodoxy* series and our work on Sunday, beginning to introduce Hebrews, have brought up the issues of canonicity and authority of the Bible. Some books in the NT face challenges to their authenticity, and from that to their authority.

2 Peter is one of the most severely challenged books in the NT. Critics attack it vehemently. I am not sure if that has to do with the content (possibly) or simply it is one of the easiest books to attack.

I don't mean that it is easy to attack because I have doubts about it, it is easy to attack because of its place in biblical history. Perhaps I should say, "*easier* to attack," rather than "*easy* to attack." The attacks are reasonably explained.

"Unbelievers gonna unbelieve..." to paraphrase a modern line...

Constable says, "The writings of the church fathers contain fewer references to the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter than to the authorship of any other New Testament book."¹

Today, our study will focus on authorship. We will be dealing with just the first phrase of 2 Pt 1.1:

2 Pt 1.1 ¶ **Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:**

The subject of authorship is one of importance to our spiritual life, even though the matters we discuss might be academic and dry. The subject goes directly to the question, "Can we trust our Bible?" (The answer is, "Yes!!" in case you were wondering!)

Proposition: Despite critical attacks, the Bible stands firm as the foundation of our faith and witness of the apostles.

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 2 Pt, Introduction, Authorship.

I. Understanding the attack on Peter's authorship

- A. The book is little attested in the ancient church writers
 1. Some church writers expressed doubts about its authorship
 2. This resulted in some delay for a universal acceptance in the canon (some accepted it early on, but not all)
- B. The modern attack claims it is a *pseudopigrapha* — a *pseudo* or “false” letter
 1. Someone wrote it in the name of Peter
 2. That someone wrote some time later than the rest of the NT, in the 2nd c.
- C. A compromise position that some conservatives embrace
 1. First mentioned by Jerome, accepted by Calvin, and others
 2. A disciple of Peter wrote using notes from Peter
 3. The biggest problem for this compromise is 2 Pt 1.1

Notes: I am summarizing the positions, and perhaps oversimplifying. There are lengthy discussions in good commentaries on 2 Peter and if you are interested, I recommend your study of these books, look in the Introduction sections.

Recommended commentaries:

- Tom Constable; David Wheaton in the New Bible Commentary; Robert Picirilli in the Randall House Bible Commentary
- D. Edmond Hiebert, published by BJU Press; Tom Schreiner, New American Commentary

II. The internal evidence stating or assuming the author is Peter

- A. The clear and definite salutation: 2 Pt 1.1
 1. An attack is made on the “double name” as if the pseudonymous author is “playing up” his false role (1Pt starts simply, “Peter”)
 2. The double name only occurs in Mt 16.16, Lk 5.8, and then 17 times in John’s gosp., written *later*

3. The Gk has Simon as *Sumeōn*, the Hebrew form of the name, only found elsewhere in Acts 15.14, in the speech of James
- B. The expectation of his upcoming death and reference to the Lord's prophecy: 2 Pt 1.14
1. Attackers say this refers to the prophecy in Jn 21.18, note again, written *later*
 2. None of the vocabulary of Jn 21.18 is quoted in 2 Pt
 3. Peter himself would well remember the occasion
- C. The reference to the Mount of Transfiguration: 2 Pt 1.16-18
1. Critics hold that this is just the work of the pseudipigraphist
 2. But why would someone writing falsely pick this event? Why not some event more prominent in the life of Christ?
 "the transfiguration played no prominent part in the early apostolic preaching"²
 3. The wording of the heavenly voice is not in the exact wording of the gospel accounts, so it forms another witness (Peter's) to the event
- D. The reference to a previous letter 2 Pt 3.1
- E. The author's familiarity with the recipients: 2 Pt 3.1, 8, 14, 17
- F. The reference to Paul as "our dear brother": 2 Pt 3.15
1. Critics say Peter couldn't have been aware of a body of Paul's epistles, and that the description echoes 2nd c. descriptions of Paul
 2. The first argument does not follow, as Peter need not know *all* of Paul's letters to know some of them
 3. The 2nd c. writers had more extravagant designations for Paul
 "such as 'the blessed and glorious Paul,' 'the blessed Paul,' and 'the sanctified Paul ... right blessed.'"³

² D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude: An Expository Commentary* (Greenville, S.C: Bob Jones University Press, 1989), 9.

³ Hiebert, 11.

G. Hiebert's statement regarding the number of personal references in 2 Peter:

"The claim to Petrine authorship in 2 Peter is stronger than in the first epistle."⁴

III. A summary of the arguments over external "evidence" against Peter's authorship

A. Language and style

1. Critics say language and style are different from 1 Peter
2. First, they are both short works, an argument from style is quite thin
3. There are nevertheless strong resemblances between the two letters

- a. Some words and phrases unique to 1 & 2 Peter, not found elsewhere

"'goodness' used of God (2 Pet. 1:3; 1 Pet. 2:9 [tr. 'praises']); 'putting aside' (2 Pet. 1:14; 1 Pet. 3:21 [tr. 'removal']); 'never stop sinning' (2 Pet. 2:14; 1 Pet. 4:1 [tr. 'is done with sin'])"⁵

- b. Other words not common elsewhere:

"'brotherly kindness' (2 Pet. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:22), the root of 'eye-witnesses' (2 Pet. 1:16; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:2) and 'add' (2 Pet. 1:5; 1 Pet. 4:11)."⁶

- c. Similarity in theological statements: 1 Pt 1.10-12, 2 Pt 1.20-21; 1 Pt 2.16, 2 Pt 2.19; 1 Pt 1.5, 2 Pt 3.3, 10

4. Peter's sermons in Acts bear similar use of language

"'godliness' (2 Pet. 1:6; Acts 3:12); 'lawless' (2 Pet. 2:8; Acts 2:23 [tr. 'wicked']); 'received' (2 Pet. 1:1; Acts 1:17 [tr. 'shared']). Identical phrases can be found in 2 Pet. 2:13, 15 ('paid back with harm for the harm they have done', 'the wages of wickedness') and Acts 1:18 ('the reward he got for his wickedness')"⁷

⁴ Hiebert, 7.

⁵ David H. Wheaton, "2 Peter," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1386.

⁶ Wheaton, 1386.

⁷ Wheaton, 1386.

- B. The seeming hesitancy of some in the early church to accept 2 Peter
1. This is true (probably strongest argument against) but the church ultimately did accept 2 Peter
 2. This acceptance came in when Gnostic writers “were circulating definitely bogus writings claiming Peter’s authorship”⁸
- C. Some critics claim Peter couldn’t have written material so obviously dependent on Jude (2 Pt 2), which is assumed to have come first
1. Peter, they say, wouldn’t depend on the work of a writer who didn’t believe until after the resurrection: not a conclusive argument
 2. It is more likely that Jude writes dependent on Peter, submitting a “digest” to Christians who didn’t have access to 2 Peter
- D. The strong attacks on false teachers in 2 Peter is said to point to a later date when false teaching was a real issue in the church (2nd c.)
1. False teaching mentioned in other, earlier NT books: Col 2.18, 1 Cor 5, 6.12-20
 2. Teaching of 2 Pt on Christ’s return reflects the universal expectation of the early church

Conclusion:

The last thing we should mention is the whole notion of Christians being willing to accept a writing purportedly by Peter but which only magically “appeared” in the 2nd c.

- Paul criticizes false writings in his name 2 Thess 2.2 (this is one of the earliest NT books)
- A bishop was defrocked for writing a pseudonymous book, the Acts of Paul and Theda

⁸ Wheaton, 1386.

- Bishop Serapion, quoted in Eusebius, 6.12.1-6:

“For we, brethren, receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ; but we reject intelligently the writings falsely ascribed to them, knowing that such were not handed down to us.”⁹

Proposition: Despite critical attacks, the Bible stands firm as the foundation of our faith and witness of the apostles.

⁹ Eusebius, “Church History,” in *The Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, electronic ed., vol. 1 (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software, 2000).