

(An apology must be offered at this point. I am forced to change typewriters due to my schedule this spring and am now working with an old electric portable...hence the typeface is different, the spacing is different and who knows what else will be different! I regret it but it is a necessary step if I am going to complete the syllabus...and if I don't complete it, I can't charge for it. What a pickle)

3. First Peter

a. An overview

The first Epistle of Peter was probably quoted by several members of the "sub apostolic generation"---those men who knew the apostles or at least their contemporaries. There are possible allusions to it in some of the writings of Clement of Rome (c. AD 90-100), Hermas (in the early second century AD). It was definitely quoted by Polycarp, a disciple of the apostle John. There is no indication moreover, that the traditional authorship was ever questioned by the early church.

Despite this massive and uniform tradition, however, scholarship since the early 19th century has sought to deny Petrine authorship. Three arguments have been used: 1) language and style, 2) historical circumstances, and 3) doctrine.

The language is said to be too good for a Galilean peasant. It is written in fairly polished Greek heavily influenced by the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). In some respects Peter's language is better than Paul's, a highly educated man (cf. Acts 4:13 where Peter is called "unschooled"). Peter did not, however, write this letter immediately after leaving the fishing boat. At least 30 years had passed, during which Peter had been in cosmopolitan centers (Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome) where Greek would have been the common language of trade and business. Another consideration is that Peter may have used an amanuensis (secretary) who may have polished up Peter's dictation (5:12). Although this theory is not without problems (e.g. the lack of greeting from Silvanus (cf. Romans 16:22); Would a scribe write 5:1? Verse 12 may refer to either a writer or carrier of the letter). There is no reason to conclude that Peter could not have written in the style of this letter.

The second main argument against Petrine authorship is historical. First Peter was written to Christians facing persecution (see 1:6; 2:12, 15; 4:12, 14-16; 5:8-9). Christians in the provinces listed in 1:1 were not persecuted by the Roman Empire until the time of Domitian (AD 90-100) and Trajan (AD 111). Since Peter was martyred by Nero (AD 64-68), he could not have written 1 Peter. This assumes two points, however: 1) that 1 Peter's readers were being persecuted by the Roman Empire and 2) that we know all about the persecutions and history of the early church. The first cannot be proven and the second is not true.

Another historical argument is that these churches were in Paul's territory--the Gentile Church. It is usually assumed, however, that Paul was dead by the time this letter was written so there is