

BOOK REVIEW

Hengel, Martin, *Der unterschätzte Petrus: Zwei Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006). Pbk. x + 261 pp. €24.00.

This volume, *The Underrated Peter*, is a unique contribution to studies on early Christianity. Martin Hengel, the late professor of New Testament and Ancient Judaism at Tübingen, sought to present in this two-part study the importance of the person of Peter within the early Christian community, since, according to him the historical and theological importance of Peter has often been neglected by both evangelical and Catholic exegetes. The first part of this study, 'Peter the Rock, Paul and the Gospel Tradition', originated from his lecture at the joint meeting of the *Collegium Germanicum et Hungaricum und des Melanchton-Zentrums* in Rome in November 2005. The second part appeared with the title 'Apostolischen Ehen und Familien' in *INTAMS* 3 (1997), pp. 62-74. Both works were supplemental studies to his work (then in progress) on the 'history of Jesus and the early church' (pp. vii-viii). This short volume ends with a chronology of events, indices of ancient works, modern authors, subjects and a list of Greek terms.

Hengel's perspective is a significant departure from Baur and the Tübingen School's thesis-antithesis framework that distinguishes between a Petrine (Jewish) Christianity and a (Diaspora) law-free Christianity within the early Christian community. His study also presents an alternative view that sees Peter, instead of Stephen and the Hellenists, as the 'bridge' between the Jewish and Gentile missions narrated in the book of Acts. As Hengel states, Peter serves as an 'inimitable bridge between the ministry of Jesus and the Gentile mission of Paul' (p. 129). Thus, this volume serves as an invaluable resource for both students and scholars of church history, classical antiquity and the New Testament.

The first part of this volume consists of seven sections that attempt to demonstrate the significance of Peter as the 'Rock' upon which Christ would build his church. The first section begins with three

questions on Mt. 16.17-19: (1) Who wrote this textual unit? (2) When was it written? and (3) Why did the evangelist include it as a 'special unit' in his writing? Arguing that Matthew was reworking an older tradition that does not trace back to Jesus himself, but a tradition that is an artful redaction by the evangelist, Hengel points out that Jesus' pronouncement of Peter as the 'Man of Rock' is not only the climax of Matthew's narrative, but is also a unique expression in the entire New Testament. In fact, these three verses apply exclusively to Peter, emphasizing his lasting authority as the 'foundation stone' of Christ's church.

In the second section, the author provides some reasons why Matthew's Gospel communicates more clearly than the other Gospels on the topic of Peter's role as the carrier of the Jesus tradition based on the authority vested in him by Jesus. He notes first of all that Peter's messianic confession shows his unique position as the one who received a revelation from God. Secondly, he points out that the 'foundation stone' metaphor is a motif that can be found both in Qumran, and in the most important and earliest Pauline text, 1 Cor. 3.10-15, which portrays Christ as the foundation stone. Finally, he argues that the nickname Πέτρος not only describes the apostle's function, but also his entire ministry from his call to his martyrdom.

The third section explores the idea of Peter as being the 'Apostolic Founder-Pioneer of the Church' (p. 45) in the time before Matthew. Hengel asserts that, although Peter is mentioned numerous times in the Gospels, it is not enough to simply depict him as an authoritative figure and a spokesperson for the other apostles. Rather, 'we have to look into Peter's ministerial effectiveness as a whole and explain it, and why he was the only one given this role' (p. 47, cf. p. 49). That Peter's foundational role for the church was a result of his connection to Jesus, as Ulrich Luz has suggested, is too simplistic according to Hengel. Assuredly, Peter must have participated in giving shape to the development of pre-Pauline Christology and soteriology, especially since he was the first witness to the resurrection.

In the fourth section, Hengel discusses the significance of Peter in the Gospel of Mark. Arguing against Udo Schnelle's theory that a Petrine theology cannot be found in Mark, he points out that Peter's name appears twenty-five times in Mark, which is more than the number of times it occurs in both Matthew and Luke; and therefore, the latter two evangelists must have used Mark as their 'starting point' in

their reconstructions of the Petrine tradition. He further points out that Peter is central at three theological peaks in Mark's Gospel: (1) his calling at the beginning; (2) his confession that Jesus is the Messiah in the middle; and (3) his denial of Jesus at the end. The author concludes by stating that Peter not only had a powerful influence in the Synoptic Gospels, but also in Acts and the Pauline letters.

The fifth section presents the later role of Peter and his conflict with Paul. This section is divided into three sub-sections. The first sub-section recounts Peter's ministry outside of Judea. Along with the three reasons he provides to show the apostle's great effectiveness as a minister of Christ in the early church, Hengel claims that because Peter was concerned both with the expansion of the church to the Gentiles, and at the same time, with the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem, 'he stood between the two extreme positions marked by Paul and James' (p. 84). The second sub-section discusses the conflict with Paul in Antioch (Gal. 2.11-21). Hengel observes that the depiction of this conflict in Antioch is one-sided and overstated, since only the Pauline side of the story is reported in Galatians 2. Therefore, the crucial question is, was it really the intention of Peter, Barnabas and the other Jewish Christians to impose circumcision and the entire ritual law on the Gentile Christians? Regardless, the incident of Paul accusing Peter of cowardly hypocrisy before the entire community signaled a deep division between the two groups, although it is not mentioned in Galatians how Peter and Barnabas might have responded to defend their case. According to Hengel, this division is clearly depicted in the two letters to the Corinthians (also in Galatians, Romans and Philippians). Thus, he argues in the third sub-section that the 'Cephas party' in Corinth arose out of Peter's increasing popularity as a missionary both to the Jews and the Gentiles. As such, Hengel believes that 'Peter was Paul's missionary opponent in these tension-filled years that affected both of them after their conflict in Antioch' (p. 120).

In the sixth section, the author discusses the unknown years of Peter and his theological and missionary importance. He believes that Peter was both a powerful theologian and preacher of the gospel based on his speeches in Acts 1-5, although he also admits the limitation of the available sources for evaluating Peter's theology. Nevertheless, Hengel asks whether the pre-Pauline community's foundational insights concerning their faith would have been possible without the significant participation of Peter as the first witness to the resurrection and as the

leader of the earliest church in Jerusalem. This point is further supported by Peter's role as a 'competent organizer and mission strategist' in his 'worldwide mission' task already mentioned in the earliest Gospel of Mark (p. 155). The seventh and final section concludes the first part of this volume with a ten-point summary of the first six sections.

In part two of this volume, Hengel discusses the families of Peter and the other apostles, in order to assess the roles marriage and family played in Jesus' call for his disciples to follow him, as well as to highlight the contrast between Peter (who was married) and Paul (who was unmarried) in this respect. He first shows from the mention of Peter's mother-in-law by Mark and the other evangelists that Peter was married (Mk 1.29-31; Lk. 4.38-39; Mt. 8.14-15), and goes on to show that 'the Jesus movement was also a women's movement' (p. 178), since 'it is possible that the wives of the disciples were part of the larger crowd that accompanied Jesus on his way to Jerusalem' (p. 176). The author then contrasts this scenario with the marital situation of Paul and Barnabas, both of whom were unmarried. This explains the fact that from the very start, there were already two opposing forces at work. On the one hand, Paul had often implied, especially in his letter to the Corinthians, a negative or low view of marriage (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.7-9; 9.3-12), in order to emphasize the nearness of the end of time and its implications for service to God. On the other hand, there is also the necessity of the existence of an ongoing 'house community' to carry the gospel through the end of time (p. 219). The last three sections give information about later apostolic families, including Clement of Alexandria and Encratism, before the author's concluding remarks.

Hengel's volume certainly sheds much light on the way we have typically understood the apostle Peter as Paul's rival, particularly in the context of the earliest Christian community. However, the connection between Peter serving as a 'bridge' from Jesus to Paul and Peter being the 'foundation stone' upon whom Jesus would build his church is not clearly presented by Hengel. I think that these two theories are mutually exclusive. Clearly, Peter was the resurrected Christ's successor after his ascension, and through him, the earliest church began her ministry and mission to the world. Thus, Peter in this sense is the foundation stone. But if one is to suggest that he also serves as the natural link between Jesus and Paul, one has to reckon first with the role of Stephen and the Hellenists (Acts 7-8) in the early church's historical account.

In other words, while Peter may have been concerned with the Gentile mission, it is still more plausible to think it was Philip who bridged the gospel proclamation to the Gentiles, who carried the gospel to Samaria and Paul to the ends of the world (see Acts 1.8). Moreover, it is clear in Gal. 2.9 that the church should be engaged in missions to both the Gentiles and the Jews but under separate leadership. That Peter knew and accepted this fact is beyond doubt, especially after the Cornelius encounter in Acts 10. Along this line, if Hengel believes that Peter and Paul were rivals during the ‘tension-filled’ years, how can the former serve as a ‘bridge’ to the latter?

Secondly, the connection between the two major parts of this volume is not very clear. I think that the second part of Hengel’s study regarding the family of Peter and other apostolic fathers contributes nothing to his objective of highlighting the central function of Peter in the earliest Christian community. Peter’s and Paul’s contrasting marital circumstances may have led to their apparently differing views on marriage. If there is more, the second part of his study might serve to underscore the complexity of following Christ in the midst of one’s personal circumstances, and that neither the Synoptic Gospels nor Paul’s letters were more concerned with an individual’s family circumstances than the saving work of Christ, which Hengel himself has already acknowledged.

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