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*The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity.*  
George E. Demacopoulos. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.  
Pp. 262.

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Co-director of the Orthodox Christian Studies Center at Fordham University, George E. Demacopoulos has produced a very interesting and innovative study on the development of the Roman papacy in late antiquity, challenging the standard view that papal power experienced an “inevitable and unbroken rise” up to the Middle Ages (p. 2). In this way, Demacopoulos joins the critics of Erich Caspar (1930–1933) and Walter Ullmann (1970) whose landmark works have been critiqued for anachronistically reading the strong late medieval papacy back into late antiquity (pp. 7–8). In particular, Demacopoulos places his work among more recent revisionist approaches, viz., Charles Pietri’s linking of texts, rituals, and objects to the production of the “Petrine idea” in the fourth and fifth centuries (1976), and Kristina Sessa’s assessment (2012) that late antique papal interventions in private space produced an irregular success rate (pp. 9–10). While building on some of their themes, *The Invention of Peter* goes further, provocatively seeking to identify how “papal actors” bolstered claims to authority by linking themselves to the Apostle Peter, efforts that involved shaping and using “Petrine discourse”—the figure of Peter as found in “texts, ideas, rhetoric, practices, institutions, etc.” (p. 5). One of this work’s major theses, moreover, is that this discourse usually peaked not when papal authority was strong, *contra* the standard view, but when papal authority was being challenged (pp. 2, 11; e.g., pp. 41, 46, 74, 80–82, 89, 124). Since this discourse was utilized by many persons under multiple mediums, it underwent considerable transformations in antiquity, the most significant of which occurred between the pontificates of Leo I (440–461) and Gregory I (590–604). The foci of this study, therefore, are newly translated papal sermons, letters, treatises, and biographies from the vast corpus of this period (chs. 2–5).

Demacopoulos’ methodology includes the use of discourse analysis alongside other historical methods. Citing Elizabeth Clark as an example, he notes that scholarly analyses of early Christian history have progressively embraced the “linguistic turn” of literary and cultural theorists (p. 3). In his analysis, Demacopoulos specifically notes his reliance on the approaches of Michel Foucault (p. 3), and helpfully explains his use thereof, as well as technical terms and concepts (pp. 3–7). This is particularly helpful for those unfamiliar with Foucault. As part of this methodology, the author notes his intention to preclude assessment of the truth of historical claims: “whether or not the bishops of Rome were ‘right’ or ‘honest’ or ‘true’ to interpret the Petrine legacy” as they did (p. 5). This goal is fitting given the use of Foucauldian discourse analysis; however, references to such clearly proved difficult to avoid.

After the introduction, this work is divided into five chapters, followed by a postscript, conclusion, and two appendices. Chapter one provides historical backdrop by showing how various “legends, rituals, and material representations of Peter” took shape in connection with the Roman bishop up to the fourth century CE. While Demacopoulos includes many “standard” texts in early papal history (e.g., *1 Clement*, book 3 of Irenaeus’ *Adversus haereses*, Cyprian’s *De Unitate*), he also provides interesting discussion of less common apocryphal and pseudonymous works, such as the *Martyrdom of Peter* and the extant *Acts of Peter* (pp. 16–21). Significantly, as Demacopoulos argues, parts of these narratives, especially relating to the Apostle’s death, become “fixtures of the subsequent Petrine legends” (p. 17).

Chapter two opens the focus of this study with the complicated ways that Pope Leo shaped the Petrine discourse. Through select homilies given in Rome, and correspondence to persons across Christendom, Demacopoulos demonstrates that Leo’s use of the “Petrine topos” corresponded directly to his given audience and historical context. For instance, in his homilies, strong Petrine discourse was used mainly when other bishops were present, and especially during his early papacy (441–43); “something akin to a rhetorical marking of his ecclesiastical territory” (p. 45). Later, Demacopoulos discusses Leo’s use of Petrine discourse during the Christological controversies surrounding the Synod of Ephesus (449 CE) and Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) (pp. 59–72). When addressing Chalcedon’s reception of Leo’s *Tome*, the author provides surprisingly little analysis of the conciliar fathers’ famous line, “Peter has spoken through Leo” (p. 70). He convincingly argues that the fathers’ use of the Petrine topos in this way helped legitimize the *Tome*’s Christology. However, while he sees in this passage “an appropriation of Roman self-aggrandizement” (p. 70), he does not seem to accept in it even an implicit (however disingenuous) recognition of Roman authority. This is surprising, especially since the acclamation mirrors Leo’s own claims that Peter continued to work through him as his successor (cf. *Sermo 2*).

In chapter three, Demacopoulos focuses on the pontificate of Gelasius I (ca. 492–496) who famously asserted the pope’s ultimate supremacy: as heir of Peter, he ruled over all bishops and as the chief priestly authority, he ruled over all secular rulers (cf. *Ad Anastasium*). Opposing the standard historical interpretation (e.g., Caspar, Ullmann), Demacopoulos reasserts his thesis that Gelasius’s bold assertions did not reflect a strong papacy, but, rather, were “born of frustration” at a time when he “enjoyed little tangible authority either at home, or abroad” (p. 74; cf. pp. 89–95). Through this analysis of numerous Gelasian texts, mainly epistles, which he historically contextualizes, Demacopoulos provides an important contribution to scholarship. As he observes, they are “shockingly understudied,” and aside from *The Invention of Peter*, “only a few paragraphs” have ever been translated into English (pp. 73–74). Particularly valuable, therefore, are two works in the appendices,

*Epistle 12* and *Tractate 6*, translated for the first time into English by Matthew Briel (pp. 173–89).

Chapter four approaches the Petrine discourse from two sixth century vantage points, beginning with the Laurentian schism (498–506/7 CE): a conflict between rival papal claimants, Symmachus and Laurentius, following the 498 papal election. After providing a synopsis of the schism and related historiography (pp. 103–7), Demacopoulos focuses on how the rivals molded the Petrine discourse by producing polemical revisionist histories of popes and Rome. In some tracts, for instance, Symmachus’s credentials are bolstered with associations with Saint Peter and past holy popes (p. 107). Interestingly, it was in this context—perhaps soon after Symmachus’s death in 514 CE—that papal biography was born with the first tracts of the famous *Liber Pontificalis* (p. 108).

In the second part of chapter four, the focus shifts to the legislative corpora of Emperor Justinian (527–565), especially the 134 laws known as *Novellae*. Within them, Demacopoulos argues, Justinian manipulated Petrine discourse; he accepted some papal claims to authority but ignored most in order to advance his imperial ends. For example, the *Codex Justinianus* contains a letter from Pope John II who strongly asserts papal supremacy. As Demacopoulos shows, though, the letter was not included in the codex to help bolster this papal agenda. Rather, it was a concession to John, who in the same letter affirms the *Theopaschite Formula* (i.e., “one of the Trinity suffered on the Cross”). Justinian had sought consensus on this issue and its affirmation in John’s letter was the main reason it was included (p. 125; cf. 123–24).

In chapter five, Demacopoulos analyzes Pope Gregory I’s (r. 590–604) theological works, correspondence, and use of holy space (e.g., relics, shrines), situating him among his predecessors. While his theological corpus is vast, Gregory “surprisingly” does not make any “extended theological justification of Peter’s authority” (p. 135). Rather, his major interest is pastoral, and he often uses the Apostle as an example of holiness, humility, good leadership, and teaching (cf. pp. 136–39). For example, instead of glossing over Peter’s mistakes (e.g., denial of Christ), Gregory discusses them to stress for pastors the importance of compassion and mercy (pp. 137–38). In the context of correspondence, Gregory, like Leo and Gelasius, developed and asserted Petrine discourse most strongly when his authority was in question, but his approach was less confrontational. For instance, he typically invoked or alluded to Petrine authority only after diplomatic efforts had failed (p. 135), and often as part of a “soft power” approach. For instance, in an effort to stop simoniacal practices and theft from Roman estates in the Gallic Church, Gregory, in a letter to Childebert II (*Ep.* 6.6), appealed to the Merovingian king’s “love . . . for St. Peter” in defending the Apostle’s (i.e., Gregory’s) property (pp. 149–50).

While Gregory’s use of rhetorical Petrine devices to bolster his authority was limited, he more frequently used holy objects and space associated with the Apostle

to achieve the same goal. According to Demacopoulos, this approach was based in Gregory's belief that Peter continued to act in the Church, and that he performed miracles through his relics and tomb. Therefore, Gregory distributed more than a dozen relics of Peter to patrons, and regularly had oaths sworn on the Apostle's tomb (pp. 140, 150–52). In this novel way, he used the Petrine topos to his own ends.

*The Invention of Peter* is well written, the methodology and approach are very interesting, and chapters are clearly organized. However, in defending the book's provocative theses, some examples purportedly showing Roman claims to authority being rejected are not altogether convincing. For instance, Marcian's choice of Chalcedon for the council rather than Italy (*contra* Leo's request) need not be interpreted as an "implied rejection of Roman authority" (p. 68); summoning the council was at Marcian's discretion, and the location was a pragmatic choice. This is a minor critique, though. Overall, Demacopoulos has provided an important contribution to scholarship on the turbulent history of the late-antique papacy that is accessible for the educated lay reader.