

TIMOTHY WIARDA

Peter in the Gospels

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

127

Mohr Siebeck

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Herausgegeben von
Martin Hengel und Otfried Hofius

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Timothy Wiarda

Peter in the Gospels

Pattern, Personality and
Relationship

Mohr Siebeck

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*To Gracia, Paul and Lisa
with love and appreciation*

Preface

This book is a slightly revised version of a PhD thesis completed at Brunel University/London Bible College in 1999.

It is appropriate that I take the opportunity here to thank some of the many people whose assistance made my doctoral study possible. It was a pleasure to work with and learn from the lecturers, staff and students of London Bible College. I am particularly indebted to my supervisor, Dr Conrad Gempf, who consistently combined insightful criticism with encouragement and humour and in various ways eased me through the whole challenging project. I also greatly appreciate the kindness of the Warden and staff at Tyndale House and Library during three short but profitable visits.

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Singapore, September 2000

Timothy Wiarda

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Abbreviations

<i>b.</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i> (The tractates are abbreviated in the customary manner.)
<i>BAGD</i>	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. Danker, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i> , 2 nd edn. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979)
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>BI</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>BibSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>DownRev</i>	<i>Downside Review</i>
<i>Deut. Rab.</i>	<i>Midrash Rabbah Deuteronomy</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>ExpT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal for Theological Studies</i>
<i>KD</i>	<i>Kerygma und Dogma</i>
<i>LCL</i>	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i>
<i>Lev. Rab.</i>	<i>Midrash Rabbah Leviticus</i>
<i>LouvStud</i>	<i>Louvain Studies</i>
<i>Midr. Ps.</i>	<i>Midrash on the Psalms</i>
<i>m.</i>	<i>Mishna</i> (The tractates are abbreviated in the customary manner.)
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>Pesiq. R.</i>	<i>Pesiqa Rabbati</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>RevScRel</i>	<i>Revue des sciences religieuses</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>t.</i>	<i>Tosefta</i>
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>

y.

ZNW

ZTK

*Jerusalem Talmud**Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft**Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

Chapter 1

Introduction

This book presents the results of research into the portrayal of Peter in the canonical Gospels. The desire to take up such a study was originally sparked by the observation of what appeared to be a repeated pattern, occurring in many episodes in all four Gospels, in which Peter makes an apparently well intentioned move only to meet with rebuke or correction or failure. The thought that there might be a distinctive pattern of this kind seemed to invite further enquiry in two directions. First a historically oriented question arose: if a truly distinctive and widespread pattern centring on Peter appeared in diverse gospel traditions, how was this to be explained? Secondly, since the observed pattern was so intimately connected to the portrayal of Peter's interaction with Jesus, might a closer look reveal aspects of the Jesus-disciple relationship which would carry significant implications for a theological or pastoral reading of the Gospels?

As investigation of this pattern got underway the importance of an additional aspect of the portrayal of Peter became increasingly apparent. Peter's personal characterization seemed closely linked to the pattern of reversal, with certain traits recurring in several episodes. Attention therefore turned to the question of whether it was possible to speak of a consistent and distinctive cluster of traits associated with Peter in the gospel narratives, and even to the possibility that within individual Gospels the threads of narratively connected and progressing Peter stories might be discerned.

Narrative critical perspectives have played an important role in this investigation. Narrative work on the Gospels, however, has typically concerned itself with wholistic readings of single Gospels and has held questions pertaining to history, sources and didactic intention at arm's length. The research undertaken here, by contrast, focuses on a feature spread out across four Gospels which manifests itself primarily at the pericope level. Further, both historical and theological issues are actively pursued. This has meant that a number of methodological questions have had to be thought through and, where possible, tested: Can narrative

critical insights lead on to historical conclusions? How do story and rhetoric relate within the gospel narratives? Are the Gospels indeed unified stories, or is the pericope the more significant unit for narrative analysis? Does gospel characterization include the depiction of individual motives and feelings?

The outline of this book reflects the general methodological trajectory followed in the research. Following a survey of literature highlighting the varying methodologies used by scholars writing about Peter (chapter 2), the study begins with the gospel texts as they stand, asking literary questions. These relate first to the particular formal element noted above, the pattern or motif in which some well intended word or act of Peter meets with reversal. Chapter 3 seeks in a preliminary way to identify occurrences of this pattern and to define its features; chapter 4 examines the extent to which such a motif is connected with Peter in a distinctive way in the Gospels. Narrative critical insights then come into play in the next two chapters, where the presentation of Peter within the story world of the Gospels is given attention. Chapter 5 seeks to analyze the characterization of Peter in the identified pattern episodes (as well as confirm the preliminary conclusions of chapter 3) and chapter 6 examines the dynamics of the Peter-Jesus relationship. The essential questions here are whether it is possible to discern a literary portrayal of a personal Peter and whether a certain kind of relationship between Peter and Jesus is portrayed. In chapter 7 the study moves beyond the boundaries of the stories themselves to ask questions of a rhetorical critical nature: What is the function of the portrayal of Peter in a given narrative unit? Is it to throw light on Jesus? Does it serve a polemical interest? Provide an example? Or do the rhetorical dynamics of the narrative suggest simple interest in Peter as a person? Chapter 8 then seeks to provide additional perspective on the gospel presentation of Peter through examining the portrayal of comparable figures and relationships in a sampling of ancient literary works. Next, on the basis of what has been discovered in the course of literary and rhetorical investigation, chapter 9 takes up questions of a tradition and historical critical nature – though only in a limited way. Finally, in chapter 10, theological/pastoral implications emerging from the preceding study are considered and suggestions are offered concerning the reading of the Gospels' Peter stories.

I. Preliminary Perspectives on Narrative Criticism

At the present time there is a degree of ferment among New Testament scholars with regard to the relationship between the newer literary

approaches to the gospel texts and the more historically or theologically oriented approaches of traditional scholarship. Some champion one orientation over against the other, some urge that both are valid but not to be mixed, while still others seek integration. In view of this plurality of perspectives it is necessary to explain one's theoretical and methodological starting points, particularly in a study such as this which attempts to employ insights from both literary and historical criticism in a coherent manner.

Those who have applied narrative criticism to the Gospels in recent years have usually chosen to set aside questions of historical reference and underlying sources. The issue of the evangelist's original rhetorical/theological intent has often been marginalized as well. In many cases such choices have been accompanied by the conviction that historically oriented matters are irrelevant to or incompatible with a focus on the story itself and the reader's response to it. At one level this conviction originates under the influence of theoretical pre-commitments.¹ Two major movements in twentieth century literary criticism, New Critical formalism and reader-centred theories, have supplied a pool of ideas which, in varying combinations, have significantly influenced New Testament narrative critics. The former insists that interpretation must centre only on the text and its story world, the latter locate meaning in the reader's reaction to the text; both deny the importance of author's intention, referentiality and other historically related factors for interpretation.

While no interpreter of the Gospels can avoid the responsibility of wrestling through the issues raised by formalism and reader-centred theories of interpretation, many of these are of such a fundamental nature that in a study such as this it is best to not even begin a philosophically oriented defence of a particular position. What can be done is simply to

¹ The heavy influence of philosophical considerations is often reflected when narrative critics of the Bible explain their methodological choices. See, e.g., D. Gunn and D Fewell: 'we find ourselves participating in a major epistemological shift which is, in the larger picture, but a phase in a long-standing Western debate' (*Narrative and the Hebrew Bible* [Oxford: OUP, 1993] 10); and F. Segovia, 'My proposed reading of the Gospel ultimately says as much about me as about the Gospel, if not more' ('The Tradition History of the Fourth Gospel', in R. Culpepper and C. Black [eds.], *Explaining the Gospel of John* [Louisville: WJKP, 1996] 186). Sometimes more specifically theological claims enter in; e.g., P. Joyce: 'original meaning can only be given this power [of excluding alternative readings] at the cost of the very functioning of Scripture' ('First Among Equals? The Historical Critical Approach in the Marketplace of Methods', in S. Porter, P. Joyce and D. Orton [eds.], *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994] 22–25).

make explicit the approach to textual interpretation I have followed. Though a threefold categorization of theoretical options is often proposed – meaning seen as either author centred, text centred or reader centred – I prefer to think of the writing (telling) and reading (hearing) of a narrative as an act of communication involving two poles. At one end stands the author producing a text, at the other end a reader receiving that text. The present study concerns itself largely with the author-text end of the communication process which occurs through the gospel narratives.² Author and text are viewed in close connection. The text we have before us is the central object of interest, but this is understood to reflect the intentions of an author,³ intentions which are influenced by the world in which the author lives. The primary goal of interpretation, it is then assumed, is to understand what the author seeks to communicate through the text. At the level of theory and philosophy, then, the commitments of neither formalism nor reader-centered criticism are here adopted. Instead, a view more in harmony with that of traditional New Testament

² If in the following chapters occasional reference is made to how readers would understand or be impacted by the text, it is the original audience which is in view, and always in close connection with an attempt to better understand the intentions of the author. When a story-teller shapes a narrative in a particular way to achieve a particular effect, then to speak about that effect is simply part of analyzing the poetics of the narrative.

M. A. Powell, writing from a text-centred perspective, describes the goal of narrative criticism as determining the effects that the implied author intends the story should have upon the implied readers ('Narrative Criticism', in J. Green [ed.], *Hearing the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995] 239–41). Those who prefer to think of the Gospels as real communication between actual people will be all the more ready to give consideration to the question of expected narrative impact. This kind of 'reader-response' focus is compatible with exegesis which seeks to be sensitive to what the original author wished to convey; it is not to be confused with 'reader-centred' perspectives which do not concern themselves with original intentions or objective interpretation.

³ Though the term 'author' is used here, this is not always a satisfactory word for general reference to the original composer of a gospel narrative. While it might serve well to refer to either the evangelist or to the author of an underlying tradition, it would exclude reference to an oral storyteller. At some points in this thesis, when there is no desire to specify a particular view concerning a narrative's origin, the more inclusive terms 'narrator' or 'original narrator' are therefore used. The word 'narrator', too, could prove confusing, since it is employed by many narrative critics in a more limited sense. In the present thesis, however, no use is made of the technical distinctions between 'narrator', 'implied author' and 'real author'; 'original narrator' simply refers to the storyteller or writer who composed the story (leaving unanswered the question of whether there may have been stages of composition).

scholarship is taken with respect to the relation between author, text and interpretation.⁴

Given this basic theoretical position, questions about the gospel narratives at a more empirical level must still be answered. Do the narratives themselves, together with the historical context from which they emerged, provide evidence which would lead the interpreter to expect that the authors had intentions with respect to each of the three elements of story, rhetoric and history? Here again, only a brief statement of starting point assumptions can be made. At first glance, an intention to communicate historical information about Jesus seems to predominate in the Gospels. Closer inspection, however, suggests that theological concerns are of great importance; this has been one of the central insights, for example, of both form and redaction criticism. More recently, though, narrative critics have made a strong case through their analyses of the texts that the Gospels have been written as stories.⁵ At each stage in the history of criticism, as new insights have gained acceptance, debate has taken place whether new views concerning the nature of the Gospels negate the old. With the advent of redaction criticism the relationship between theology and history was debated: should these be viewed as either-or choices or as complementary parts of the evangelists' purpose?⁶ In a similar way today, the positive claims of narrative criticism raise the question of whether perception of the Gospels as story means that they can no longer be viewed as rhetorical documents designed to impart specific theological teaching.⁷ The present study proceeds with the assumption that narrative critics have offered valid insights concerning the story aspects of the Gospels; at the same time, in agreement with the vast majority of New Testament critics, the rhetorical nature of the gospel narratives is also

⁴ For a strong theological critique of positions which discount the importance of authorial intention see F. Watson, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997) 95–126).

⁵ See, e.g., D. Rhoads and D. Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); R. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); J. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988 [2nd edn.]); *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989).

⁶ This discussion is reflected in works such as I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970) and R. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1972).

⁷ See the occasional statements by certain narrative critics: R. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 55ff.; S. H. Smith, *A Lion With Wings: A Narrative-Critical Approach to Mark's Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 48–49.

affirmed.⁸ Furthermore, historical claims are viewed as yet another important part of the evangelists' intention.⁹

I hope that the results of the ensuing analysis of texts concerning Peter, undertaken within the general framework of interpretation outlined above, will justify the wisdom of an integrating approach. With respect to direct interpretation of the narratives, I believe that fruitful insights can result when attention is given to the interplay between story and rhetorical elements in the texts. The additional consideration that will be given to the origin of the traditions underlying the Peter narratives is, of course, a matter secondary to the actual interpretation of the texts. If it is correct to hold that the texts make historical claims concerning Peter, however, this issue is not irrelevant to a total understanding of the Gospels. If in the course of this study narrative analysis of Peter's characterization can contribute to an investigation of tradition history, this will again demonstrate the value of an integrating approach.

II. Episodes and Whole Gospels

The narrative criticism employed in the present study is atypical in a further way in that primary attention is given to individual pericopae rather than to whole Gospels, and Peter episodes from all four Gospels are analyzed. This runs counter to the emphasis on wholistic readings which prevails among narrative critics of the Gospels, as it did among redaction critics before them. While focus on episodes is to a large extent a natural result of investigating the particular feature which provided the original impetus for this study, the relationship between episodes (or pericopae)¹⁰ and whole Gospels is an issue which demands attention in any literary

⁸ For a recent discussion of the rhetorical nature of the Gospels, in interaction with narrative criticism, see W. T. Shiner, *Follow Me! Disciples in Markan Rhetoric* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995) 3ff.

⁹ Cf., e.g., C. Tuckett, *Reading the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 177; D. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987) 64; J. Dunn, 'A Word in Time: Understanding the Bible Today', *Epworth Review* 19 (1992), 31ff.; J. Gnilka, *Jesus of Nazareth: Message and History* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997) 12.

¹⁰ F. Martin defines a pericope as a free-standing narrative unit that functions independently of any particular context, and an episode as a unit of narrative which achieves its meaning as part of a larger whole. He considers the Gospels, apart from the passion narratives, to consist largely of pericopae, integrated into an overall narrative statement but joined together 'without tightening the bond between them in such a way that the pericopes become episodes' (*Narrative Parallels to the New Testament* [Atlanta: Scholars, 1988] 18).

analysis of the Gospels. Does each Gospel tell a unified story, or is each instead made up of many stories which have little continuity, but which cumulatively, perhaps, make a unified impact? The position taken here is that the narrative unity of the Gospels, i.e., their unity as story, should not be an *a priori* assumption;¹¹ rather, the extent to which narrative unity exists must be demonstrated through a close reading of the text. The episodic nature of the Gospels is a feature which has long been recognized; wholistic interpretation must begin with a careful reading of the parts.

Among those who have directly addressed the question of episodes and narrative unity are some who argue that narrative continuity and characterization occur only at the level of the pericopae; if there is unity at the macro-level, this is more a rhetorical or theological unity. On this view, the evangelists construct their narratives ‘from free standing narrative episodes that create their collective meanings.’¹² Others, however, while acknowledging that many gospel episodes form individual narratives in their own right, side with the more typical narrative critical perspective by also affirming the presence of overarching plot and characterization elements.¹³ Both sides in this discussion, however, would seem to agree that there is a case for considering the pericope the natural unit of text for initial narrative critical analysis. I do agree with those who argue that at least some macro-level story elements are evident in the Gospels. While in the ensuing study texts are analyzed primarily at the episode level, in reviewing each Gospel an eye has also been kept open for elements of a trans-episodic, unified Peter story.¹⁴

¹¹ Contra, e.g., M. A. Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 92.

¹² Shiner, with reference to the Gospel of Mark (*Follow*, 16–17). According to Shiner, ‘Narrative continuity did not play the same role in the expectations of ancient audiences as it does in those of modern readers’ (7). J. Dewey argues that there is a lack of linear narrative development in Mark which is a legacy of orality (‘Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark’, *Interpretation* 43 [1989] 33–38). Martin speaks of a juxtaposition procedure with respect to the Gospels in general (*Narrative*, 18–19).

¹³ See C. Breytenbach (“The Gospel of Mark as Episodical Narrative: Reflections on the ‘composition’ of the second gospel”, *Scriptura*, special issue [1989] 1–26). Breytenbach argues that in Mark a series of distinct episodes sometimes contributes to a larger narrative scene (e.g., the conflict episodes of chapters 11–12) and details embedded within several individual pericopae can function as part of the global story (e.g., instances of the disciples’ misunderstanding).

¹⁴ It may be noted that many narrative critics of the Hebrew Bible work with short sections of text rather than with whole works; see R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); S. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: The

Finally, two other issues relating to narrative perspective may be briefly mentioned here. First, narrative examination of the Peter episodes forces the interpreter to confront the question of whether qualities of individual human experience – feelings and motivations – enter into the presentation of gospel characters. Second, particularly in connection with certain episodes in Matthew and John, the reader must decide whether to treat the text as surface level story or as allegory. Narrative critics of the Gospels, perhaps influenced by traditions of gospel criticism before them, have tended to offer non-individualized and non-psychological readings of gospel figures and, at some points, have favoured theologically or ecclesiastically oriented symbolic interpretations over straight story-readings. These issues will be discussed further in chapters 5 and 7.¹⁵

Almond Press, 1989); M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). S. Moore points out that the same is typically the case in the works of non-biblical narratologists ('Are the Gospels Unified Narrative?' in K. Richards [ed.], *SBL 1987 Seminar Papers* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987] 453.).

15 Perhaps a word of apology and explanation is due with respect to matters which are *not* included in the present investigation. Important redaction-critical questions, for instance, such as the delimitation of editorial influence upon tradition and the identification of each evangelist's background, have not been taken up in the exegesis of individual texts. This particular omission is primarily due to the need to set limits: our investigation centres on a motif and related narrative features which appear in a large number of gospel episodes; it has not been possible to analyze each episode employing a full range of critical methodologies. Through the pursuit of its own limited objectives, however, the present study does seek in part to contribute to a better understanding of some of the same issues that concern redaction criticism.

Narrative critics will notice another omission: analysis which distinguishes between 'author', 'implied author' and 'narrator'. Making these distinctions does indeed give added precision and, in the case of some narratives, can contribute to a better understanding of the work. I have not found such analysis significantly helpful for explicating the Peter narratives of the Gospels, however.

Chapter 2

A Survey of Scholarship

The present survey aims to highlight varying approaches and strategies scholars have adopted for interpreting the portrayal of Peter in the Gospels. Given the multiplicity of methodological and interpretative positions evidenced in the literature concerning Peter, no simple system of categorization will be fully adequate. For the purposes of this survey, representative scholars and types of approach will be grouped according to the scholar's perception of how the original narrator intended the narrative to be read or, in the case of interpreters who consider the intentions of the original narrator to be of secondary importance, according to the interpreter's own preferred way of reading the narrative. Three basic categories emerge: (I) approaches which understand or evaluate the gospel narratives concerning Peter as if they were accounts referring to historical persons and events (whether the accounts are considered reliable or not); (II) approaches which understand the narratives as symbolic presentations of theological/ecclesiological points or veiled portrayals of ecclesiastical situations; (III) approaches which understand or evaluate the narratives primarily as story worlds. To identify the work of a scholar with one of these approaches is not to imply that everything in that work is characterized by just that one approach; rather it is to make an observation concerning a leading tendency in that scholar's interpretative posture which is worth noting. Very often, of course, a scholar will blend approaches or will treat certain texts or text elements one way and others another.

In addition to or in conjunction with the three broad approaches outlined above, a number of further questions also confront scholars and mark out significant lines of division among them. Some of these relate to methodology, while others concern historical issues or crucial points of interpretation. It will be helpful to list the most important of these here, as several enter the discussion to follow.

Methodological questions include:

1. In which time period(s) will the scholar take significant interest, that of Peter himself, that of the original narrator¹ (traditioner and/or evangelist), or that of any reader? (A scholar may choose to focus on more than one of these times.)
2. Will the scholar try to reconstruct the circumstances behind the events recorded in the text ('historicizing') or make judgements concerning Peter's feelings and motivations ('psychologizing'), either through making deductions which go beyond what the text itself indicates or through bringing to bear extra-textual information regarding the time of the narrated events?
3. Will the scholar's method involve an attempt to discern the text's prehistory or will it depend entirely on the final form of the text?
4. Is the scholar's tendency to draw together material relating to Peter from all the Gospels, or to focus attention on the portrayal of Peter in a single whole Gospel, or to concentrate on small units within the Gospels?
5. Is the pastoral value of the text (either now or in its original setting) to be seen as emerging from its account of the past concerning Peter or as standing independent of claims concerning actual past events?
6. Will the scholar treat the intentions of the narrator (traditioner or evangelist) and the original situation as important factors in interpreting the text?

Historical and interpretative questions include:

1. Were specific elements within gospel narratives concerning Peter originally intended to refer to realities outside the text or to make rhetorical points, or do they rather function simply as part of a narrative story world?
2. To what extent are the gospel accounts concerning Peter historically reliable?
3. In any particular gospel narrative in which Peter appears, is there significant focus on the figure of Peter himself, or does his presence function merely as a foil subservient to some other focus of attention within the text?
4. Where there is significant focus on Peter, is he presented primarily as a typical disciple or model for Christians, or is he portrayed as a unique figure?

¹ I.e., the person or community which produced the narrative in question. The advantage of using the general term 'narrator' is that it can refer to the agent behind any of the various levels or stages of narrative (small units of tradition whether oral or written, longer pre-Gospel narrative units, whole Gospels) which can be the focus of attention when scholars deal with the Gospel narratives.

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