

Peter in the New Testament

The Gospels assign a special position among the Twelve to Peter. Explicit commissions are given to him in Matt. 16 (18-19), Lk. 22 (31-32) and John 21 (15-17). There is also evidence that his leadership is recognized in such texts as Mark 16 (7) and John 6 (68); and it appears to have been a concern of the final editors of the Gospels to emphasize the position of Peter among the Apostles.

Concentration on Peter must not, however, obscure the fact that responsibility for the Church's oversight was entrusted to the apostolic body as a whole. Matt. 18 (18). c.p. Matt. 16 (19). Moreover Peter was not the only prominent member of the Twelve. e.g. Matt. 17(1), Luke 8 (51) [James and John], and John 21 (20) [The Beloved Disciple].

Paul, too, was conspicuous for the leadership which he exercised, and claimed to share with Peter equal and parallel responsibilities. Gal. 2 (7). At the close of the Apostolic Age it was at Rome that both these apostles were martyred. Consequently the church in that city was recognized as possessing among the other churches special prerogatives, and its bishop came to exercise among his fellow-bishops functions analogous to those ascribed in the New Testament to Peter.

The scriptural foundation of universal primacy, as well as of collegiality and conciliarity, is found not in isolated texts but in the New Testament as a whole.