

The Early Church Fathers on Peter's Presence in Rome

Some contend that Peter could not have been the bishop of Rome because he was never in Rome. This of course runs counter to the testimony of the Early Fathers and Scripture. In 1 Peter 5:12-13 Peter says: "I write you this briefly through Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful brother, exhorting you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Remain firm in it. The chosen one at Babylon sends you greeting, as does Mark, my son." Babylon is a code word for Rome and is used elsewhere in Scripture to mean the same thing. Examples can be found in Revelation 18:2, 18:10 and 18:21. Further evidence can be found in Rome itself as Peter's tomb is located under ST Peter's Basilica.

Dionysius of Corinth

You have also, by your very admonition, brought together the planting that was made by Peter and Paul at Rome and at Corinth; for both of them alike planted in our Corinth and taught us; and both alike, teaching similarly in Italy, suffered martyrdom at the same time (*Letter to Soter of Rome* [inter A.D. 166 -174] as recorded by Eusebius).

Irenaeus

Matthew also issued among the Hebrews a written Gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were evangelizing in Rome and laying the foundation of the Church. (*Against Heresies* 3:1:1 [A.D. 189]).

Caius

It is recorded that Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and Peter, likewise, was crucified, during the reign [of the Emperor Nero]. The account is confirmed by the names of Peter and Paul over the cemeteries there, which remain to the present time. And it is confirmed also by a stalwart man of the Church, Gaius by name, who lived in the time of Zephyrinus, bishop of Rome. This Gaius, in a written disputation with Proclus, the leader of the sect of Cataphrygians, says this of the places in which the remains of the aforementioned apostles were deposited: "I can point out the trophies of the apostles. For if you are willing to go to the Vatican or to the Ostian Way, you will find the trophies of those who founded this Church" (*Disputation with Proclus* [A.D. 198] in Eusebius, *Church History* 2:25:5).

Clement of Alexandria

When Peter preached the Word publicly at Rome, and declared the Gospel by the Spirit, many who were present requested that Mark, who had been for a long time his follower and who remembered his sayings, should write down what had been proclaimed. Having composed the Gospel, he gave it to those who had requested it (Fragment in Eusebius, *Church History* 6:14:1 [circa A.D. 200]).

Tertullian

Rome, where authority is at hand for us too. What a happy church that is, on which the apostles poured out their whole doctrine with their blood; where Peter had a passion like that of the Lord, where Paul was crowned with the death of John [the Baptist, by being beheaded] (*The Prescription Against the Heretics* 36 [A.D. 200]).

Cyprian of Carthage

After such things as these, moreover, they still dare — a false bishop having been appointed for them by, heretics— to set sail and to bear letters from schismatic and profane persons to the throne of Peter, and to the chief church whence priestly unity takes its source; and not to consider that these were the Romans whose faith was praised in the preaching of the apostle, to whom faithlessness could have no access (Letter 54:14 [A.D. 252]).

Eusebius

The Apostle Peter, after he has established the Church in Antioch, is sent to Rome, where he remains bishop of that city, preaching the Gospel for twenty-five years (*The Chronicle*, Ad An. Dom. 42 [A.D. 303]).

Peter of Alexandria

Peter, the first chosen of the Apostles, having been apprehended often and thrown into prison and treated with ignominy, at last was crucified in Rome (*Canonical Letter*, canon 9 [A.D. 306]).

Lactantius

When Nero was already reigning Peter came to Rome, where, in virtue of the performance of certain miracles which he worked by that power of God ... he converted many to righteousness and established a firm and steadfast temple to God. When this fact was reported to Nero, he noticed that not only at Rome, but everywhere great multitudes were daily abandoning the worship of idols, and, condemning their old ways, were going over to the new religion. Being that he was a detestable and pernicious tyrant, he sprang to the task of tearing down the heavenly temple and of destroying righteousness. It was he that first persecuted the servants of God. Peter, he fixed to a cross; and Paul, he slew (*The Deaths of the Persecutors* 2:5 [inter A.D. 316-320]).

Council of Sardica

But if judgment have gone against a bishop in any cause, and he think that he has a good case, in order that the question may be reopened, let us, if it be your pleasure, honor the memory of St. Peter the Apostle, and let those who tried the case write to Julius, the bishop of Rome, and if he shall judge that the case should be retried, let that be done, and let him appoint judges; but if he shall find that the case is of such a sort that the former decision need not be disturbed, what he has decreed shall be confirmed (canon 3 [A.D. 344]).

Cyril of Jerusalem

[Simon Magus] so deceived the City of Rome that Claudius erected a statue of him and wrote beneath it in the language of the Romans *Simoni Deo Sancto*, which is translated To the Holy God Simon. While the error was extending itself Peter and Paul arrived, a noble pair and the rulers of the Church; and they set the error aright... for Peter was there, he that carries about the keys of heaven (*Catechetical Lectures* 6:14 [A.D. 350]).

Optatus

You cannot deny that you are aware that in the city of Rome the episcopal chair was given first to Peter; the chair in which Peter sat, the same who was head—that is why he is also called Cephas ['Rock']—of all the apostles; the one chair in which unity is maintained by all (*The Schism of the Donatists* 2:2 [A.D. 367]).

Epiphanius of Salamis

At Rome the first apostles and bishops were Peter and Paul, then Linus, then Cletus, then Clement, the contemporary of Peter and Paul (*Medicine Chest Against All Heresies* 27:6 [A.D. 375]).

Damasus

The first see, therefore, is that of Peter the Apostle, that of the Roman Church, which has neither stain nor blemish nor anything like it. The second see, however, is that at Alexandria, consecrated in behalf of blessed Peter by Mark, his disciple and an evangelist, who was sent to Egypt by the Apostle Peter, where he preached the word of truth and finished his glorious martyrdom. The third honorable see, indeed, is that at Antioch, which belonged to the most blessed Apostle Peter, where first he dwelt before he came to Rome, and where the name Christians was first applied, as to a new people (*The Decree of Damasus* 3 [A.D. 382]).