

I have received some push-back from readers who object to my view that Simon Peter, Jesus' disciple, a fisherman from rural Galilee whose native language was Aramaic, living among lower-class people who spoke Aramaic, almost certainly could not have written a highly stylized and sophisticated Greek treatise such as we find in the book of 1 Peter. My sense is that I will never convince anyone who thinks that it is simply "common sense" that of course he could learn to write Greek if he wanted to and did so at the end of his life. But I'm bound and determined to try! (It used to be "common sense" that the sun revolved around the earth, after all.... Just because it's something we've always heard and thought doesn't make it true!)

I've dealt with literacy issues on the blog before, but I think I need to give a fuller explanation of my views. The fullest is in my book Forgery and Counterforgery, but I've decided not to go there, since it is not really written with a general audience in mind. But I do have a fuller discussion of the matter in my book Forged, and so I will give my comments from there. This will take two or three posts. It's obviously an important matter, not only for 1 Peter but for lots of the books of the NT (Matthew, Mark, John, James, Jude, the Johannine epistles, etc!)

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### Simon Peter, Ancient Palestine, and Literacy

What do we know about literacy and the ability to write in the ancient world, especially in rural Palestine where Simon Peter was born and raised? Scholars of antiquity have been diligent over the past twenty-five years or so in trying to understand every aspect of ancient literacy and education. In what is now the classic study, the 1989 book, Ancient Literacy, William Harris, professor of ancient history at Columbia University, showed that modern assumptions about literacy simply are not applicable to ancient times.<sup>[1]</sup> Today, in modern America, we ....

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