

= Peter of Bruys =

Peter of Bruys (also known as Pierre De Bruys or Peter de Buis ; fl . 1117 ? c.1131) was a popular French religious teacher , who is called a heresiarch (leader of a heretical movement) by the Roman Catholic Church because he criticized infant baptism , opposed the erecting of churches and the veneration of crosses , opposed the doctrine of transubstantiation , and denied the efficacy of prayers for the dead . An angry mob killed him in or around the year 1131 . Information concerning Peter of Bruys is derived from two extant sources , the treatise of Peter the Venerable against his followers and from a passage written by Peter Abelard .

= = Life and teachings = =

Sources suggest that Peter was born at Bruis in southeastern France . The history of his early life is unknown , but it is certain that he was a Roman Catholic priest who had been deprived of his office by the Church hierarchy for teaching unorthodox doctrine . He began his preaching in Dauphiné and Provence probably between 1117 and 1120 . The local bishops , who oversaw the dioceses of Embrun , Die , and Gap , suppressed his teachings within their jurisdictions . In spite of the official repression , Peter 's teachings gained adherents at Narbonne , Toulouse , and in Gascony .

Peter of Bruys admitted the doctrinal authority of the Gospels in their literal interpretation ; the other New Testament writings he seems to have considered valueless , as he doubted their apostolic origin . He questioned the Old Testament and rejected the authority of the Church Fathers and that of the Roman Catholic Church itself . Petrobrusians also opposed clerical celibacy , infant baptism , prayers for the dead , and organ music .

= = = Treatise of Peter the Venerable = = =

In the preface to his treatise that attacked Peter of Bruys , Peter the Venerable summed up the five teachings he saw as the errors of the Petrobrusians . Peter the Venerable , also known as Peter of Montboissier , was an abbot and an important religious writer who became a popular figure in the church , an internationally known scholar , and an associate of many national and religious leaders of his day .

The first " error " was their denial " that children , before the age of understanding , can be saved by the baptism ... According to the Petrobrusians not another ? s , but one ? s own faith , together with baptism , saves , as the Lord says , ' He who will believe and be baptised will be saved , but he who will not believe will be condemned . ' " This idea ran counter to the medieval Church 's teaching , particularly in the Latin West where , following the theology of Augustine , the baptism of infants and children played an essential role in their salvation from the ancestral guilt of original sin .

The second error charged (with some exaggeration) was that the Petrobrusians said , ' Edifices for temples and churches should not be erected ... The Petrobrusians are quoted as saying , ' It is unnecessary to build temples , since the church of God does not consist in a multitude of stones joined together , but in the unity of the believers assembled . ' ? On the other hand , the medieval Church taught that cathedrals and churches were created to glorify God , and believed it appropriate that those buildings should be as grand and beautiful as wealth and skill could make them .

The third error enumerated by Peter the Venerable was that the Petrobrusians ? command the sacred crosses to be broken in pieces and burned , because that form or instrument by which Christ was so dreadfully tortured , so cruelly slain , is not worthy of any adoration , or veneration or supplication , but for the avenging of his torments and death it should be treated with unseemly dishonor , cut in pieces with swords , burnt in fire . ? This was seen as an iconoclastic heresy and as acts of sacrilege by the medieval Church , as well as by Catholics to this day .

The fourth error , according to Peter the Venerable , was that the Petrobrusians denied sacramental grace , rejecting the rite of Communion entirely , let alone the doctrine of the real presence or the nascent Scholastic account of transubstantiation . ? They deny , not only the truth of the body and blood of the Lord , daily and constantly offered in the church through the sacrament , but declare

that it is nothing at all , and ought not to be offered to God . They say , ' Oh , people , do not believe the bishops , priests , or clergy who seduce you ; who , as in many things , so in the office of the altar , deceive you when they falsely profess to make the body of Christ , and give it to you for the salvation of your souls . ' " The term " transubstantiation " , used to describe the transformation of the consecrated bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ , was first used by Hildebert de Lavardin in about 1079 . This theory had long been widely accepted as orthodox doctrine at the time of the attacks by Peter of Bruys . In less than two centuries , in 1215 , the Fourth Lateran Council officially declared transubstantiation the necessary , orthodox Catholic explanation of the Eucharist .

The fifth error was that ? they deride sacrifices , prayers , alms , and other good works by the faithful living for the faithful dead , and say that these things cannot aid any of the dead even in the least ... The good deeds of the living cannot profit the dead , because transferred from this life their merits cannot be increased or diminished , because beyond this life there is no longer place for merits , only for retribution . Nor can a dead man hope to gain from anybody that which he did not obtain while alive in the world . Therefore those things are pointless that are done by the living for the dead , because they are mortal and have passed by death beyond the way for all flesh , into the state of the future world , and took with them all their merit , to which nothing can be added . ?

= = Death and legacy = =

As Peter the Venerable recorded , crosses were singled out for special iconoclasm . Peter of Bruys felt that crosses should not deserve veneration . Crosses became for the Petrobrusians objects of desecration and were destroyed in bonfires . In or around the year 1126 , Peter was publicly burning crosses in St Gilles near Nîmes . The local Roman Catholic populace , angered by Peter 's destruction of the crosses , cast him into the flames of his own bonfire .

Henry of Lausanne , a former Cluniac monk , adopted the Petrobrusians ' teachings about 1135 and spread them in a modified form after Peter 's death . The teachings of Peter of Bruys continued to be frequently condemned by the Roman Catholic Church , meriting mention at the Second Lateran Council in 1139 .

Henry of Lausanne 's followers became known as Henricians . Both the Henrician and the Petrobrusian sects began to die out in 1145 , the year St Bernard of Clairvaux began preaching for a return to Roman orthodoxy in southern France . In a letter to the people of Toulouse , undoubtedly written at the end of 1146 , Bernard calls upon them to extirpate the last remnants of the heresy . As late as 1151 , however , some Henricians still remained active in Languedoc . In that year , the Benedictine monk and English chronicler Matthew Paris related that a young girl who claimed to be miraculously inspired by the Virgin Mary was reputed to have converted a great number of the disciples of Henry of Lausanne . The sects both disappear from the historical record after this reference .

There is no evidence that Peter Waldo or any other later religious figures were directly influenced by Peter of Bruys . His low view of the Old Testament and the New Testament epistles was not shared by later Protestant figures such as Martin Luther or John Smyth . In spite of this , Peter of Bruys is considered a prophet of the Reformation by some evangelical Protestants and Anabaptists .