Letters from the Big Fisherman - 1 and 2 Peter

by
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Peter, The Disciple, Apostle and Martyr

The New Testament uses four names to refer to Peter. His Hebrew name, Symeon (or Simeon), appears only twice (Ac. 15:14; 2 Pe. 1:1). The Greek name Simon is more familiar, and especially in the Fourth Gospel, it is frequently used in the double name Simon Peter.[1] The other two names, Kephas and Peter, are actually nicknames given to Simon by Jesus, and respectively they are Aramaic and Greek words meaning "rock." It is the latter of these that is most familiar in the New Testament.

Peter's original home was in Bethsaida (Jn. 1:44), a village on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee and bordering Gaulanitis, a region under the tetrarchy of Herod Philip. Later, the family apparently moved down the coast to Capernaum (cf. Mk. 1:21, 29). Peter's father was John (Jonah), hence the added surname Simon bar-John (Mt. 16:17; Jn. 1:42). Though thoroughly Jewish, the fact that Peter lived in a bilingual setting is evidenced not only by the Grecianized form of his name from Symeon to Simon, but also by the fact that his brother, Andrew, carried a Greek name, along with Philip, a close friend from the same home town. Peter had married prior to his acquaintance with Jesus (Mt. 8:14//Mk. 1:30//Lk. 4:38; cf. 1 Co. 9:5). He and Andrew lived together as partners and operated a fishing concern, along with James and John, the sons of Zebedee (Mk. 1:16, 29; Lk. 5:1-3, 10). Physically, we know little about Peter except that he was extraordinarily strong (Jn. 21:6-11).

Early on, both Andrew and Peter were followers of John the Baptist (Jn. 1:40-42). Peter's first encounter with Jesus occurred in Judea, near the place where John had been baptizing. His brother Andrew found him and announced that he had discovered the Messiah, whereupon Peter was introduced to Jesus. Jesus promptly dubbed him Kephas, or Peter (= the Rock). Later, back in Galilee, Jesus called him to be his disciple while Peter and his fishing partners were working with their nets (Mt. 4:18-20//Mk. 1:16-18//Lk. 5:1-11). From the day of his call, Peter left everything behind in order to follow Jesus (Mk. 10:38). After following Jesus for some time along with various other disciples, Peter was especially chosen for inclusion in the inner group of the Twelve, called apostles (Mt. 10:1-4//Mk. 3:14-19//Lk. 6:13-16; 9:1-2). As an apostle, Peter was endowed with special spiritual powers for preaching, healing and exorcism. Among the Twelve, Peter was always named first (cf. Mt. 10:2; Mk. 3:16;Lk. 6:14; Ac. 1:13). Beyond his role among the Twelve, Peter, along with James and John, was also included in the inner circle of three apostles who were with Jesus at some of his most critical moments (Mk. 5:37//Lk. 8:51; Mt. 17:1//Mk. 9:2//Lk. 9:28; 13:3; Mt. 26:37//Mk. 14:33).

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[1]The fact that Peter had both a Greek as well as a Hebrew name suggests that in his pre-Christian life he had ongoing contact with Hellenistic culture in Galilee. Probably, Peter was a bilingual Jew, cf. F. Filson, *IDB* (1962) III.749.

In his role as a leader among the Twelve, Peter's profile was both positive and negative. On the positive side, Peter acted with initiative and courage. He volunteered to walk on the water to Jesus (Mt. 14:28), and he made the great confession about Jesus being the Messiah, a bedrock recognition central to the faith of the church (Mt. 16:13-16//Mk. 8:29//Lk. 9:20).[2] When other disciples were deserting Jesus, Peter stood his ground (Jn. 6:66-69). He often served as a spokesman for the other apostles (Lk. 12:41; Mt. 19:27//Mk. 10:28//Lk. 18:28), and sometimes a question ascribed to the group in one gospel is ascribed simply to Peter in another (cf. Mk. 7:17//Mt. 5:15; Mt. 21:20//Mk. 11:21; Mk. 5:31//Lk. 8:45). Peter's prominence among the Twelve is evident in such expressions as "Peter and his companions" (Mk. 1:36; Lk. 9:32) and the "disciples and Peter" (Mk. 16:7). When outsiders wanted an opinion about Jesus, they sometimes called upon Peter (Mt. 17:24-25a). On Easter, Peter was bold to enter the tomb to verify that Jesus' corpse was not there (Jn. 20:3-7).

On the other hand, Peter had a talent for blunders. His remonstrance over Jesus' announcement concerning the upcoming passion earned him the nickname "Satan" (Mt. 16:21-23//Mk. 8:31-33).[3] Sometimes Peter felt obliged to speak out, even when he had nothing of substance on his mind (Mk. 9:5-6). When the disciples all slept in Gethsemane on the night of Jesus' betrayal and arrest, it is Peter who was confronted as the leader in this lapse (Mt. 26:40//Mk. 14:37). When the arrest was made, it was Peter, wild-eyed and desperate, who took a vicious swipe at one of the arresting party, severing his ear (Jn. 18:10-11), an action that earned another rebuke from Jesus. Peter's denial of the Lord, which had been accurately predicted (Mt. 26:33-35//Mk. 14:29-31//Lk. 22:31-34//Jn. 13:36-38), is famous for its incongruity with Peter's status among the apostles (Mt. 26:69-75//Mk. 14:66-72//Lk. 22:54-62//Jn. 18:25-27), and in Luke's account, it is apparent that Jesus heard every blistering oath of denial (Lk. 22:60-61). In the end, however, Peter was singled out to be told the wonderful news of the resurrection (Mk. 16:7), and Jesus made a personal appearance to Peter on resurrection day (Lk. 24:34; 1 Co. 15:5). Before he ascended to the Father, Jesus provided Peter the opportunity for a final confession of his loyalty, even

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[2]There has been a plethora of analyses regarding Jesus' statement, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (Mt. 16:18). The Roman Catholic Church, of course, holds unequivocally that Peter was himself the rock, and his successors hold the keys of authority over the whole church. Protestants often counter by suggesting that it was merely Peter's confession that was the rock upon which the church would be built. The Roman Catholic interpretation, with its extension concerning papal succession, is surely a gross overstatement. Nothing in the passage says anything about either the need or the right to convey such authority to successors. The Protestant response, on the other hand, is probably an overreaction, and the interpretation of making Peter's confession to be the rock does not fit the grammar of the passage nearly as well making the rock Peter himself. There is no reason why Jesus could not have called Peter the "rock," since he was surely the leader among the Twelve. If so, it would be similar to a contemporary rabbinical saying which reports that when God saw Abraham, he said that he had found a rock on which he could build the world (*Yalkuth* 1.766), cf. F. Filson, *IDB* (1962) III.752.

[3]Some interpreters understand this nickname to be only humorous banter, cf. E. Trueblood, *The Humor of Christ* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1964) 87, 127, though the seriousness of the subject matter causes one to suspect that there was something more here than just a funny line.

predicting that Peter would die as a Christian martyr (Jn. 21:15-22). In this final personal confrontation, Jesus issued to him the same call as at the first, "Follow me!"

When one reads Luke's history of the post-Easter community, Peter clearly stands out in a leading role. He oversaw the instatement of a replacement for Judas Iscariot (Ac. 1:15-22), and for the first twelve chapters of Acts, Peter is the dominant leader in the church. He preached the first sermon at Pentecost (Ac. 2:14ff.), he was the spokesman in the healing of the lame man at the temple (Ac. 3:1ff.), and he followed up this miracle with a sermon to the crowds (Ac. 3:12ff.). Peter was imprisoned along with John (Ac. 4:3), probably because he was perceived by the Sanhedrin as being one of the most prominent Christian leaders, and the next day he delivered the apologetic defending the followers of Jesus (Ac. 4:8ff.). When Ananias and his wife deceived the church, it was Peter who sentenced them with divine judgment (Ac. 5:3, 9). Later, when further opposition arose, it was Peter who served as spokesman for the Twelve (Ac. 5:29). Peter was sent by the Jerusalem church to investigate Philip's Samaritan mission (Ac. 8:14), and he was used by God in the opening of the Christian mission to Gentiles (Ac. 10). When the Jerusalem church was reluctant to accept these new non-Jewish believers, it was Peter's testimony which was decisive (Ac. 11:2ff.; cf. 15:7-11). The miracles associated with Peter's ministry were extraordinary, including the healing of Aeneas (Ac. 9:32-35), the raising of Dorcas from the dead (Ac. 9:36-43), and the release of Peter from prison by an angel (Ac. 12:3-17). Peter's excursion to the home of the Gentile Cornelius notwithstanding, his primary ministry seems to have been among the Jews (Ga. 2:7-9). Though he was an important figure in initiating the non-Jewish outreach of the Christian church, he was also heavily influenced by his Jewish compatriots. On one occasion, when he had been intimidated into a stance of segregation, Paul publicly rebuked Peter for his hypocrisy (Ga. 2:11-14).

The later ministry of Peter is not well-attested. Luke simply says that after his imprisonment by Herod and miraculous release, he "went to another place" (Ac. 12:17). This statement probably means he left Jerusalem due to the rise to prominence of James in the Jerusalem church. We know that Peter went to Antioch, Syria, of course (Ga. 2:11). Paul indicates that Peter traveled throughout the various Christian churches, taking his wife with him (1 Co. 9:5), and he presumably traveled through Corinth (1 Co. 1:12; 3:22). Early Christian tradition strongly indicates that at some point he arrived in Rome, where he was martyred.[4]

[4]For more information on the early Christian traditions, see Filson, *IDB* (1962) III.754-755; R. Martin, *ISBE* (1986) III. 806.

Letter of Hope - The Book of 1 Peter

Introduction

The letter of 1 Peter was a highly valued and widely used Christian document in early Christianity. It was probably alluded to in 1 Clement (c.A.D. 95-96),[5] and certainly was quoted by Polycarp (c.A.D. 117).[6] Ignatius shows knowledge of the letter in his correspondence to the Ephesians[7] and the Philadelphians,[8] also in the early second century. It is probably more than incidental that such Christian leaders as Polycarp and Ignatius would turn to a letter like 1 Peter, since the epistle was originally composed for a suffering church, and both Polycarp and Ignatius were condemned to death for their faith in Christ. If it was relevant for them, as they faced an alien and antagonistic culture, it is equally relevant for contemporary Christians--those who live in a post-Christian era of advancing secularism. Still, it must not be assumed that the letter is gloomy simply because it addresses the painful subject of Christian suffering. To the contrary, it is a letter bright with hope, a powerful incentive to trust the God who bends all history to his own sovereign purposes.

The Readers

1 Peter falls into an early categorization, going back at least as far as Eusebius (5th century A.D.), who spoke of the seven catholic (universal) epistles.[9] This label has largely been replaced among Protestants by the term "general epistles," probably because they wished to avoid the implications of the word "catholic." Either title suggests that these letters were written to Christians at large or to the Christian church as a whole rather than to specific individuals and/or congregations. Though the categorization has some merit in that the letters belonging to it are less specific than the Pauline literature, it still is not completely satisfactory, particularly in the case of 1 Peter. 1 Peter is specifically directed to a definite geographical area (1:1). The first readers lived at the northeast extremity of the Roman world, on or near the coast of the Black Sea in the central and northern regions of modern Turkey. It is not unlikely that the order of the provincial listing may reflect the itinerary of the courier.[10]

At first glance, we might suppose that the first readers were Jewish, since they

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[5]*1 Clement* 2 and 30//1 Pe. 5:5; *1 Clement* 49//1 Pe. 4:8.

[6]*Polycarp* 1//1 Pe. 1:8; *Polycarp* 2//1 Pe. 1:13, 21; 3:9; *Polycarp* 5//1 Pe. 2:11; *Polycarp* 7//1 Pe. 4:7; *Polycarp* 8//1 Pe. 2:24, 22, 21; 4:16; *Polycarp* 10//1 Pe. 2:17; 5:5.

[7]*Ephesians* 5//1 Pe. 5:5; *Ephesians* 9//1 Pe. 2:9; *Ephesians* 10//1 Pe. 2:23; 4:7.

[8]*Philadelphians* 3//1 Pe. 2:9.

[9]*Ecclesiastical History*, II.23.25. These seven are James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, and Jude, cf. R. Fuller, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament* (London: Duckworth, 1971) 151.

[10]D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1970) 793.

are addressed as the *diaspora* (= the dispersion),[11] a term commonly used to refer to Jews who lived outside Palestine. The internal evidence of the letter, however, argues strongly that they were largely non-Jewish peoples converted to Christianity out of raw paganism. Peter speaks of "the evil desires" they had when they "lived in ignorance" (1:14) and their "empty way of life handed down" to them by their forefathers (1:8), remarks that do not seem appropriate for those who had been observers of the Torah. The frank admission, "You have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do" (4:3), seems ill-fitted to a Jewish constituency. Converts from Judaism would hardly need the reminder that they should avoid murder, theft, criminality, and meddling (4:15). Peter even says that formerly they could not have been described as "the people of God" (2:10), though of course, due to their conversion, this circumstance had changed. This is not to say, of course, that there may not have been Jews present in their congregations. Many Jews of the dispersion also became Christians along with Gentiles. However, the groups addressed here seem to be predominantly Gentile.

Literary Character

1 Peter is acknowledged by all scholars to be written in very excellent Greek. The language is polished and very possibly influenced by the Septuagint with which the author was certainly well acquainted. The vocabulary is extensive, and a number of *hapax legomena* appear.[12] Translators generally agree that 1 Peter is one of the more difficult documents in the New Testament to translate because of its complicated syntax, comparable only to Luke and Hebrews in its formal style.[13]

The document has the appearance of a real letter. The greeting is classic (1:1-2), including both the sender and the readers.[14] Since it is generally addressed to Christians in five provinces, we should not expect to learn from it specific details about local circumstances. There is a blessing formula (1:3-9), again a standard element in Greco-Roman letters. After the body of the letter, the author closes with a brief notation as to his own circumstances along with greetings from the congregation with whom he is presently residing (5:12-14).

In spite of these standard letter-writing formulae, there are further elements that have led some scholars to question the traditional assumption that 1 Peter is a straightforward correspondence. In particular, it has been pointed out that there seems to be a clear break in 4:11, a passage that, because it contains a doxology and

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[11]Quite literally, they are described as "sojourners of the *diaspora*" (1:1).

[12]*Hapax legomena* is a technical term for Greek words that appear only once in the New Testament.

[13]D. Arichea and E. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the First Epistle from Peter* (New York, London, Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1980) 2.

[14]For the classical form of letters in the Greco-Roman world, see W. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973).

even an "Amen," may be read as a conclusion to the foregoing section. Various internal arguments have been marshalled to support this hypothesis. Accordingly, some scholars have concluded that the document was composed of two pre-existing parts, the first section being a piece that served either as a baptismal sermon or a baptismal liturgy, possibly composed for use as an Easter celebration.[15] The second section, then, was added as a letter to comfort Christians during their time of persecution. While this theory is to some degree plausible, given the wealth of allusions that are appropriate for baptismal candidates (cf. 1:3, 18, 22-23; 2:2, 10, 21; 3:21), other scholars have pointed out equally plausible explanations that support the unity of the letter.[16] It is probably better to conclude that the division of the letter into two parts is unnecessary unless more compelling reasons are forthcoming.[17]

While the unity of the letter should be maintained, it is also possible that the letter contains some fragments of traditional materials that have been incorporated into it, such as, "fragments of hymns, creeds, or confessions, or even snatches of sermons."[18] This would not necessarily be unusual, for most scholars agree that such previously existing fragments also were used and adapted by Paul for hortative and illustrative purposes.[19] However, establishing just what sections are hymnic, their extent, and their structure has not received any scholarly unanimity.[20]

It is generally agreed that there are literary affinities between 1 Peter and the writings of Paul and James. The Greek text of the blessing in 1 Peter 1:3a, for instance, parallels exactly the blessing in Ephesians 1:3a. 1 Peter 2:4-10 exegetes the same Old Testament texts as Romans 9:25-33, and it does so in much the same way. Various other similarities of language between 1 Peter and Paul are also apparent (cf. 2:24//Ro. 6:2, 11; 3:18//Ro. 6:10//Ep. 2:18; 3:22//Phil. 2:10-11//Col. 2:15//Ep. 1:20-21; 4:10-11//Ro. 12:3-8). Similarly, the concept of faith tested by trials appears in both 1 Peter and James (1:6-8//Ja. 1:2-4). There is a very close correspondence between 1 Peter 5:5-9 and James 4:6-10, including an identical citation of Proverbs 3:34 in both cases. Accordingly, some scholars feel that the author of 1 Peter must have had access to the writings of both Paul and James. While the similarities cannot be denied, a more likely hypothesis than literary dependency is that the biblical writers drew from a common tradition of familiar Christian exhortation and

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[15]The lines of argumentation for these theories may be followed in R. Martin, *New Testament Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) II.338-344.

[16]E. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 398-401; Guthrie, 797-798; A. Hunter, *Introducing the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973) 176-177.

[17]W. van Unnik, *IDB* (1962) III.760.

[18]Martin, 336, 343.

[19]G. Cannon, *The Use of Traditional Materials in Colossians* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1983).

[20]W. Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. H. Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975) 421.

interpretation.[21]

Authorship

The authorship of 1 Peter was never questioned in the early church, and the document was received as the authentic writing of the big fisherman turned apostle. Critical viewpoints have arisen in modern times, however, and it is not uncommon for scholars, particularly those who do not assume the veracity of the biblical text, to question or deny Peter's authorship. Two alternatives are generally offered. Either it was written by Silas, or it was written by an anonymous Christian and attributed to Peter.

In addressing the merits of these alternatives, it is appropriate to look first at the objections to the traditional explanation.[22] The first objection is that the document is so polished in its Greek style, syntax and vocabulary, it seems questionable whether a Galilean fisherman, who appears in the Gospels and Acts as decidedly provincial (Mt. 26:73; Ac. 4:13), could have produced such a document. Further, if a literary dependency is admitted with regard to the Pauline literature and/or Pauline theology, then it follows that 1 Peter must have been written later than this corpus. Furthermore, 1 Peter does not describe any details of the earthly life of Jesus, something that might be expected from the great apostle. Also, the situation of persecution described in 1 Peter fits well with what is known of the state persecutions in the time of the Roman Emperors Domitian and Trajan, more than two decades after Peter's martyrdom.[23]

Due to these difficulties, two alternative explanations have been developed. The linchpin of the first is the reference to Silvanus (a form of the name Silas) in 5:12. The author claims to have written "through Silvanus," meaning either that Silas was the courier of the letter, that he served as the writer's amanuensis, or both. If Silas was used as an amanuensis, the Greek style of the letter might be attributed to him. As a delegate of the Jerusalem church (Ac. 15:22-24) and a later missionary companion to Paul (Ac. 15:40), he certainly was well-respected. Silas' relationship to Paul might also account for the theological and literary affinities between 1 Peter and the Pauline literature. Since Silas co-sponsored the Thessalonian letters with Paul (1 Th. 1:1; 2 Th. 1:1), might he not have done the same for Peter?[24] In this way, the assertion in 1:1 that Peter was the author would not preclude his use of a secretary in

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[21]L. Johnson, The Writings of the New Testament: An Introduction (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 432.

[22]For a thorough summary of these objections, see Kummel, 423-424; Guthrie, 774-778.

[23]There is, in fact, a correspondence between Pliny, the Governor of Bithynia, and the Emperor Trajan concerning state persecution in one of the very provinces mentioned in 1:1 in about 112 A.D. For a full translation of the correspondence, see F. Bruce, *The Spreading Flame* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958) 169-171.

[24]A strong case for this alternative is made in E. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (1947 rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 9-17.

composing the details of the letter, and in fact, such secretaries were sometimes granted extensive freedom in composition so long as they were persons who could be trusted implicitly.[25]

Those who reject Peter as the traditional author as well as the hypothesis concerning Silas usually do so on the grounds that the historical situation is later than either of them. Thus, they are left with identifying the author as some unknown Christian around the turn of the century. Some argue that the letter was written under the name Peter as a pseudonym, so as to invest it with the authority of an apostle. It is maintained that such a practice was well recognized and would be perceived as a harmless device. However, it is highly questionable as to whether pseudonymity would ever have been accepted by the early Christians.[26] However common pseudonymity may have been, it still calls into question the integrity of the document. Others suggest that the document was written by an unknown Christian, circulated anonymously, and later mistakenly attributed to Peter. However, would not such an anonymous document have created at least some minimal suspicion among the churches?

It remains to be said that the arguments against Peter's authorship are not nearly so strong as they might appear. The issue of literary style is not decisive. Peter, as a small time entrepreneur, must have known Greek in order to do business, and who is to say that he may not have improved over the years? Archaeological excavations indicate that Capernaum, where Peter lived during the ministry of Jesus, was inhabited by both Jews and non-Jews, while other Roman cities, such as Sepphoris, Tiberias and Beth Shan were nearby. There are explanations for the similarities between 1 Peter and the Pauline literature other than that Peter freely borrowed (see earlier discussion under literary character). That Peter does not give any details about the earthly life of Jesus says nothing except that he was not writing a gospel, and in any case, the author claims to be able to testify to the sufferings of Christ (5:1). With regard to the historical situation of persecution, nothing in 1 Peter demands a state persecution *per se*, but rather, the writer's depiction of Christian suffering points more to a context of social ostracism, while his attitude of submission toward civil authority (2:13-14, 17), so unlike the apocalyptic antagonism in Revelation (Rv. 13), seems incompatible with a situation of state persecution.[27] In conclusion, then, 1 Peter should be considered as genuine. How much Silas may have figured in its composition is unclear, but Peter, the apostle, is to be regarded as its true author.

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[25]J. Lown, *ISBE* (1982) II.123-124.

[26]Guthrie, 786-789. We know, for instance, that other pseudonymous writings under Peter's name were never accepted as canonical, e.g., *The Gospel of Peter* and *The Apocalypse of Peter*.

[27]Johnson, 434.

Place of Writing

Peter indicates that he wrote this letter from Babylon (5:13). Though his words are literally, "She, the one co-chosen in Babylon...greets you," it is unlikely that Peter refers to his wife, even though we know him to have been married (cf. Mk. 1:30; 1 Co. 9:5). It is a scholarly consensus that he speaks of the Christian community from which he wrote. Three possible locations by that name existed in the ancient world, one in Egypt, though it was hardly more than a military fort, one in Mesopotamia, the site of the ancient empire of Nebuchadnezzar, and Rome, which was cryptically called Babylon in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature (cf. 2 Esdras 3:1, 28; Baruch 11:1; 67:7; Sibylline Oracles 5:143, 157; Rv. 17:6, 9, 18; 18:2; 19:2). It is the latter that has won the majority of scholarly opinion. Virtually all the ancient traditions associate Peter with Rome, and since none of them put him in either Mesopotamia or Egypt, any hypothesis in that direction would require special pleading.

Argument

After identifying himself to his readers (1:1-2), Peter immediately launches into an extended doxology (1:3-12), praising God for the wonderful benefits of being a Christian. This glowing description of future glory and triumph (1:5) seems intended to soften the effect of the present temporary circumstance of suffering that the readers were enduring (1:6). Such suffering only served to heighten the Christian's intense anticipation for what was surely to come (1:9).

In the midst of such opposing forces, the Christian is called to live the Christian life (1:13--2:3). He/she must respond with a lifestyle of holiness (1:15) and love (1:22) and the desire for spiritual nourishment (2:2). Such a lifestyle was only appropriate for those who had been called by God to be his people (2:4-10), a new chosen people who spiritually correspond to the ancient people of God in the kingdom of Israel (2:9-10).

Since they are the new people of God, they must behave appropriately within all the structures of society (2:11--3:7), even though that society stands against them. They must show proper respect to the civil government (2:13-17), submission to their superiors (2:18-25), and appropriate behavior toward their spouses (3:7). To be sure, since society is at odds with God's ways, there is bound to be conflict and opposition. However, if such opposition arises, Christians must make certain that it is undeserved (3:8-4:19). In God's eyes, it is praiseworthy to suffer for what is right (3:14, 17), just as Christ suffered (4:1). Certainly they must not lapse into sinful patterns of behavior (4:3), but rather, they must continue to live a life full of Christian grace (4:10). In any case, suffering in an unjust world is only to be expected (4:12).

Just as behavior in an alien society is important, so also is behavior within the community of Christians (5:1-7). Church leaders must take care to fulfil their charge

out of godly motives (5:12), and younger members in the congregations should demonstrate humility by deferring to those who are more mature (5:5).

Finally, all Christians must be on their guard against the devil who instigates undeserved suffering (5:8-11). They must remember that suffering is only temporary (5:10).

The letter closes with final greetings and a word of peace (5:12-14).

Opening

Sender and Addressees (1:1)

The opening line defines the form of the letter as an encyclical document addressed to the diaspora. The address is typical of letters in the Greco-Roman world, which had become stereotyped by the first century and generally consisted of the following main sections:[28]

Opening (sender, addressee, greeting)

Thanksgiving/Blessing (often with intercession to the gods)

Body (the content to be communicated)

Conclusion (greetings, wishes, final greeting, prayer sentence)

The opening line identifies the author as an apostle of Jesus Christ. We know, of course, that Peter's apostleship was derived from his personal appointment by Jesus during the great Galilean ministry (Mt. 10:1-2//Mk. 3:14-16)//Lk. 6:13-14).

Special attention should be given to the expression "resident aliens of the diaspora," since it was normally a term applied to the Jewish communities scattered throughout the Roman world. At first glance, Peter might be supposed to have been writing to Jewish Christians, though as mentioned in the introduction, he probably uses the term to refer to Christians who, though widely scattered, maintained a solidarity in faith and suffering as they awaited the return of the Lord.

In addition to the sociological nuance of the term diaspora, there is also a theological one. This nuance becomes more apparent later as the reader regularly encounters other Jewish terms which are adapted for Christian contexts. As such, Peter seems to be implying, sometimes subtly and sometimes overtly, that the true Jews--the true people of God--are those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ. This idea was popular in Paul's writings (cf. Ro. 2:28-29; 4:11-12, 16-17, 22-24; 9:6-8, 22-26; Ga. 3:7, 29; 4:23, 31; 6:16), and it was also used by the writer of the Apocalypse (Rv. 2:9; 3:9).[29] The transfer of the Jewish term diaspora into a Christian context

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[28]W. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973) 11-19.

[29]For a concise treatment of this theme in the New Testament writings, see the chapter "What About Israel?" in G. Ladd, *The Last Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 19-28.

theologically suggests that the true scattered people of God are those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ. In a similar manner, the background of the term "chosen" lies in the Old Testament and other Jewish literature as a designation for God's people Israel (cf. 1 Chr. 16:13; Ps. 105:6; Is. 65:9, 15, 22; Wisdom of Solomon 3:9; 1 Enoch 1:1, 8; 39:6-7; 48:1; 58:1-3). Here, as in many other places in the New Testament, it is used of Christians.

The order in which the provinces are named might well represent the route of the projected courier who was to bring the encyclical to the various churches.[30]

The Elect (1:1-2)

Peter uses three phrases to describe the Christians to whom he writes. They had become God's chosen people by the action of the Three-in-One God, that is, by the Father's foreknowledge, the Spirit's work of sanctification, and the Son's sacrifice.

The first of the descriptive phrases has to do with the fact that believers were chosen according to the foreknowledge of the Father. In the great Calvinist-Arminian debate, which owes considerable debt to Renaissance individualism and Enlightenment rationalism, passages such as this one were invariably treated in individualistic terms, resulting in a tremendous tension between the ideas of divine sovereignty and human freedom. Calvinists attributed to God's sovereign grace alone the choice of individuals to be saved. Arminians believed that God's election was based on his foreknowledge of who would believe and persevere. The debate was never resolved, and it continues to be about as lively as ever.[31]

There is much to be said, however, for the view that what Peter has in mind is not so much individual election to salvation (and its corollary, election to damnation), but rather, the corporate election to salvation of a people. Certainly it is well-known that in ancient Near Eastern thought, corporate solidarity was a common perspective.[32] As such, God's election may be viewed in terms of corporate solidarity rather than as a bundle of individuals who were eternally singled out and only incidentally make up the church. More in harmony with the first century Hebrew world view, it is the church itself which has been elected.[33]

The verb "to sanctify" means either to set apart or to make pure. Given the order in which Peter lists his prepositional phrases, it may be that the former meaning

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[30]J. Michaels, *1 Peter [WBC]* (Waco, TX: Word, 1988) 9-10.

[31]One can follow a recent exploration of the issue in D. and R. Basinger, eds., *Predestination & Free Will* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1986).

[32]H. Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*, rev. ed. (rpt. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).

[33]A recent exposition of this view is W. Klein, *The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election* (Grand Rapids: Academie/Zondervan, 1990). See especially his comments on 1 Pe. 1:1-2, pp. 237-241.

is the one which he intended.[34] If so, then the work of the Spirit in setting apart those whom God has foreknown consists of his convicting and drawing power, somewhat after the manner indicated in the Fourth Gospel (cf. Jn. 6:44).

God the Father's foreknowledge, along with the Holy Spirit's action to draw women and men to Christ, culminates in their obedience to the message and their cleansing by the blood of Jesus. Obedience, in this context, means the willing acceptance of the gospel, much like the Pauline phrase "the obedience of faith" (Ro. 1:5; cf. 16:26). The synecdoche which describes Jesus' death as the sprinkling of his blood recalls the Jewish sacrificial offerings (Ex. 24:6-8; Lv. 16:17-19; cf. He. 9:18-21; 10:22; 12:24). Some interpreters have found justification in this passage for the baptismal method of aspersion. Such a connection between the death of Jesus and the symbolism of baptism is not inappropriate so long as one does not assume that Peter was directly intending such a point. There is no evidence of aspersion as a baptismal method at this early period, since early Christian baptisms were probably all immersions, pouring and sprinkling being developed somewhat later.[35]

Peter rounds off his address with the familiar words "grace" and "peace." The term grace is a typical Christian salutation, found repeatedly in the letters of Paul. The term peace, drawn from the traditional Jewish *shalom*, also carried a strong Christianized meaning of peace with God.

Doxology

The Blessing of Salvation (1:3-5)

Doxologies derive from the Hebrew culture of the Old Testament and are as old as the Pentateuch, where God's deeds are "blessed" (cf. Ge. 24:27; Ex. 18:10, etc.). In the Jewish service, such blessings were recited at the beginning of prayer (1 Chr. 29:10; Da. 2:20), at the end of hymns (1 Chr. 16:36; Ps. 41:13; 72:18), at the close of single benedictions, and even at the mention of God's name.[36] In the Greco-Roman style of letter writing, it was customary to issue a blessing in the opening of the letter which stated that the writer "gives thanks to the gods" or "makes continual mention of you before the gods."[37] Here, Peter combines the two traditions, drawing from the ancient pattern of doxology and inserting it into the format of the Greco-Roman letter.

Typical of the doxologies in the New Testament is the word of praise toward

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[34]The other place where Peter uses a cognate expression is in 3:15, where he says "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts," a command that means to set apart rather than to make pure.

[35]For evidence of immersion as the primary form of early Christian baptism, see W. LaSor, "Discovering What Jewish Miqva'ot Can Tell Us About Christian Baptism," *BAR* (Jan-Feb. 1987 Vol. XIII, No. 1) 52-59.

[36]J. Hempel, *IDB* (1962) I.867.

[37]Doty, 31.

God, who is identified as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian gospel was essentially a "Father movement," and God's Fatherhood was understood in relation to Jesus, his Son,[38] particularly in prayer. While on rare occasions Christ is addressed directly in prayer (cf. Ac. 7:59; 9:13-17),[39] by far the usual pattern is to address the Father in the name of the Son. Doxologies are constructed in much the same way. They are praises to God for his redemptive work through Jesus.

This particular doxology is directed toward the salvation that God has effected in Christ. Peter's metaphor for salvation, the metaphor of being "born again," is familiar from the Fourth Gospel (Jn. 3:1-15).[40] The concept of new birth was used in non-Christian Greek and Jewish circles of the first century to signify any decisively new stage in nature, history or personal life.[41] In the writings of the post-apostolic fathers, the same metaphor was used to refer to Christian baptism,[42] and some have urged that it should be taken in the same sense here. However, there is nothing in the context that necessarily indicates a connection with Christian baptism, and it is probably better to leave the metaphor as a general description of the transformation from unbelief to faith.

The hope of the Christian is a living hope. In contrast to the hopelessness of paganism, the Christian hope of resurrection, which is based on Christ's resurrection, takes the sting from death and gives assurance for the future. Two epitaphs in Rome (c. 165) epitomize this contrast. The pagan inscription reads, "Live for the present hour, since we are sure of nothing else." The Christian inscription reads, "Victorious in peace and in Christ."

This new birth and living hope, which implies entrance into a new family, anticipates a new inheritance, the inheritance of eternal salvation in Christ Jesus. The concept of inheritance is a particularly Jewish idea, first referring to the gift of the land of Canaan (cf. Ge. 15:7-8; 28:4; Ex. 15:17; Dt. 2:31; 16:20), but eventually extending to a spiritual condition of blessing (Ps. 16:5-6; 73:26). The Christian inheritance, unlike the Jewish land grant, is imperishable, undefiled and unfading. The hope of the ancient Israelite citizens, of course, was that the land would never be taken from them (Ps. 46:1-7; 48:4-14; 125:1-2; 133:3; 146:10). Unfortunately, their hope did not properly assess the implications of the Deuteronomic cursings for covenant-breaking (cf. Dt. 28:15-68), and their inheritance of land was ravaged

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[38]In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis upon Jesus and the Holy Spirit in ways that seem either to deemphasize or neglect the Father. This trend should be reversed, cf. T. Smail, *The Forgotten Father* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).

[39]These are the only two clear references in the New Testament.

[40]However, the verb *anagennao* (= to cause to be born again) appears only here and in 1:23 in the New Testament and not at all in the LXX.

[41]Selwyn, 122.

[42]Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, I.lxi and *Dialogue with Trypho*, cxxxiii; Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, IV.xxv.

during the exile. Hope perished (La. 3:16-18), the sanctuary was defiled (Ps. 79:1), and the inheritance faded in the successive dominions of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans. Peter's use of the word inheritance, along with the several other Jewish words, such as, elect, aliens, diaspora, and sprinkling, seem to suggest that Christians are, in fact, the true people of God; they are the true Jews in the world.

The living hope of believers is guarded in heaven. Because it is a spiritual, heavenly entity, this hope cannot be polluted or destroyed by earthly forces. Christians have strong assurance that they will actually possess what has been promised, because they are protected by God's power, which is effective through their faith. Of course, their inheritance is future. It is the salvation that will be disclosed at the end of history. Still, inasmuch as that salvation is so closely associated with the apocalypse of Christ (1:7, 13), which is always impending, Peter can speak of it as "ready to be disclosed."

Christian Testing and Reward (1:6-7)

While God's salvation provided through Christ contains a wonderful future, it also involves present trials. In the New Testament, salvation is described in three tenses, past, present and future.[43] Peter has been speaking of salvation as a future reality (cf. 1:5, 9). Later, he will make a connection between the historical sufferings of the messiah and the eschatological glories of the future, tying them together with this term salvation (1:10-11). Nevertheless, while God's salvation is assured, it does not exempt the believer from the distress of the present difficulties, though Peter is careful to point out that, in contrast to the future, such trials will only last for "a little while." As such, he echoes the sentiments of the ancient poet, "Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" (Ps. 30:5).

Present trials are not meaningless suffering, however. They serve to test the Christian's fidelity to Christ.[44] Genuine fidelity to Christ is more valuable than earthly treasure, such as gold, because earthly treasure can be ruined. Even gold, which can be smelted, is perishable (cf. 1:18), since it belongs to the perishable creation (cf. 2 Pe. 3:10). The perishable nature of earthly treasure may deliberately recall the sayings of the Lord about laying up for oneself treasure in heaven (Mt. 6:19-21//Lk. 12:33-34). Still, while Peter intends a contrast between enduring faith and the perishable nature of gold, he also implies a similarity. Just as gold is purified and cleansed by fire, so the Christian's faith is tested and refined in trials. This figure of speech is a familiar Old Testament metaphor (Ps. 66:10; Pro. 17:3; 27:21; Je. 9:7;

[43]Paul, especially, uses the three tenses of salvation, cf. A. Hunter, *The Gospel According to St. Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966) 14-57.

[44]It is probably correct to understand the term "faith" here as referring to constancy and fidelity rather than a body of doctrine, cf. J. Fitzmyer, "The First Epistle of Peter," *JBC* (1968) II.364.

Mal. 3:3). When the Christian's faith has been tested in the crucible of life, it will shine forth in praise, glory and honor at the apocalypse of Jesus Christ.[45] Peter's use of the term apocalypse or "revelation" may very well be intended to suggest that, while Christ is always present with them, at the end of the age his presence will become visible.[46]

The Invisible Savior (1:8-9)

Peter's reference to the apocalypse, when the Lord will be revealed to his people (1:7), leads him to comment on the fact that Christ is now invisible to those who love him. His statements are similar to those in the Fourth Gospel, where Jesus explained to his disciples, "I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer" (Jn. 16:10; cf. 20:29b). From the time of the ascension of the Lord until his apocalypse at the close of the age, he will continue to remain invisible to his people, as Peter once preached to the crowds in Jerusalem (Ac. 3:19-21).

Though Peter had known Jesus personally, his readers had not. They, like the generations of Christians since, have been obliged to depend upon the witness of the apostles. This witness by those who had personally known Jesus was a critical factor in the preaching of the gospel from the very beginning (Ac. 2:32; 3:15b; 10:39-42; 13:30-31). Such a personal knowledge of Jesus during his public ministry was, by definition, essential for inclusion in the body of the Twelve (Mk. 3:14; Ac. 1:21-22).

Christ, then, is the object of the faith of which Peter has spoken (1:5, 7). It is clear that faith, however firmly held, is not truly Christian unless it is directed toward Christ Jesus. Out of this faith, a faith which anticipates the return of the Lord, Christians can express a joy beyond words.

The outcome of Christian faith is salvation. Peter here speaks of the salvation of "souls," but this word is probably not to be taken in the sense of Greek metaphysics. For the Greeks, humans were dualistic, and the soul was a special component of the human structure different than the body. The soul was an internal divine spark or a higher nature which had as its true destiny the escape from the transitory world of materialism to the invisible world of eternal reality. Peter's use of the word "soul," similar to the other New Testament writers, is grounded in a Hebrew anthropology that reflected no such dualism. In Hebrew thought, the "soul" referred to the whole person.[47]

Thus, what Peter promises is that Christians will be saved as whole persons,

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[45]Peter's favorite word for the appearance of Christ at the end of the age is *apocalypsis* (= revelation), cf. 1:13; 4:13. Here he does not use the other Pauline terms *epiphaneia* (= epiphany, appearing) and *parousia* (= coming, presence); however, see 2 Pe. 1:16; 3:4, 12.

[46]E. Best, *I Peter [NCBC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 78.

[47]G. Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) 97-101; H. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) 10-25.

and this salvation, of course, assumes resurrection. Possibly, Peter uses the term "souls" to emphasize that the salvation of which he speaks will only be consummated at the end. He certainly does not suggest that they will be saved from present suffering.[48]

The Prophets and Salvation (1:10-12)

The prophets, here referring to the prophets in the Old Testament,[49] carefully examined their oracles predicting eschatological salvation. Though Peter does not specify any prophets in particular, there are many possibilities ranging from Abraham (Ge. 20:7) to Moses (Dt. 18:18) to David (Ac. 2:30) to the classical writing prophets of the divided monarchy.[50] Important in the oracles of all these prophetic figures was the hope for future grace. Their investigations were especially concerned with the timing and circumstances of God's saving event. Daniel, especially, comes to mind as an example of one searching for an answer with regard to timing (Da. 9:24-27; 12:5-13).

It is significant that Peter describes the prophetic Spirit as the Spirit of Christ, and it was typical of the early Christians to see Christ actively at work in the Old Testament era.[51] An important part of the prophetic anticipation was the sufferings of Christ and his glorious triumph, a subject explained most fully to the disciples by Jesus in his post-resurrection appearances (cf. Lk. 24:25-27, 45-47). Again, Peter cites no particular passages, but he surely has in mind such oracles as those concerning the suffering Servant of Yahweh (Is. 49:7; 50:6; 52:13--53:12). In his teaching to the disciples, Jesus insisted that his suffering was the subject of the Scriptures (Mk. 9:12; 14:;49; cf. Jn. 1:45; 5:39, 46).[52]

Peter says that the ancient prophetic oracles anticipating the coming of Christ were offered in service to the Christian church. Such a statement stands against any

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[48]Michaels, 35.

[49]Selwyn argues that the reference is to the whole prophetic tradition embracing both Old and New Testaments, and that Peter particularly has in view the Christian prophets, cf. 134. This viewpoint is unlikely in the context of 1:11-12, which seems to refer to the time prior to Christ's first advent. For a more complete rebuttal, see J. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 58-59.

[50]The Jewish concept of the prophetic tradition was very wide, and the early church was not loath to embrace the entirety of it as anticipating the coming of Jesus. Jesus himself could say, "Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day" (Jn. 8:56), and the writer of Hebrews described Abraham as looking for a city whose architect was God (He. 11:10). Moses could even be described as enduring disgrace for the sake of Christ (He. 11:26). It is perhaps significant that in the Hebrew Bible even the documents of Deuteronomic history (Joshua--2 Kings) are called the "Former Prophets." As such, the prophetic tradition embraces far more than simply the figures commonly identified as prophets by modern English readers.

[51]Ignatius (early 2nd century), for instance, speaks of the prophets as living for Jesus Christ and being inspired by his grace. He also says that the prophets were Jesus' advance disciples, anticipating him as their teacher through the Spirit, cf. *Magnesians* 8; 9.

[52]See the insightful essay in F. Bruce, *New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) 83-99.

latent tendency toward Marcionite thinking, and it surely affirms the close association between the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament church. It was revealed to the prophets that the fulfillment of these salvation events in Jesus Christ was not to be realized in their own era. Instead, they were reserved for a later generation, which is why, of course, the prophets were so intent upon searching their oracles with respect to timing (1:11a). Finally, the fulfillment of these salvation events had been announced by Spirit-endowed missionaries who had evangelized the five provinces to which Peter writes (cf. 1:1b). Paul, Silas, Barnabas, Epaphras and Timothy were among them, though no doubt there were others as well.

In emphasizing the magnitude of these salvation events, Peter says that even angels study them with longing. It is not entirely clear what interest angels have in the salvation events of humans, but several other New Testament passages may shed some light. Jesus indicated that angels rejoice over sinners who repent (Lk. 15:10), and Paul said that through the church God displays his wisdom to the creatures of the heavenly realms (Ep. 3:10-11). Angels serve as spirits who minister to those who are the object of God's salvation (He. 1:4), and in the end, authority over the future world belongs not to angels but to redeemed women and men (He. 2:5-8, 16). While in one sense angels are the fellow-servants of Christians (Rv. 19:10; 22:9), in another they are inferior to humans due to their lack of experience in God's gracious saving action.

Challenge to Live the Christian Life

Holy Christian Behavior (1:13-17)

Since in Christ Jesus God has inaugurated the fulfillment of his salvation promises, the response for Christians is to live in light of this fact. Like a runner who prepares himself for a race, the believer must mentally prepare himself so as to endure to the finish line.[53] The Christian race had begun when Peter's readers came to faith. It would not be completed until God's salvation would at last be consummated at the revelation of Jesus Christ (cf. 1:5, 7).

If they were to finish the race, they must be sober and keep their wits about them. The expression "be sober" normally would mean to avoid drunkenness, but as in the modern idiom, metaphorically it refers to temperate, steady, disciplined and clear-thinking character, hence the NIV "self-controlled."

The hope of the Christian must be resolutely toward the end, when Christ will be revealed as he consummates his gracious salvation. If Christians become

[53]The metaphor of the race is familiar from other New Testament writings also (cf. 1 Co. 9:24-26; Ga. 2:2; 5:7; Phil. 2:16; 2 Ti. 2:5; He. 12:1-1). The most important races in the 1st century were the Olympic at Olympia, the Pythian at Delphi, the Nemean at Argos, and the Isthmian on the Isthmus of Corinth. Foot races were prominent, and the competitors went through long and severe training under rigid rules. Though the winners only received a wreath of leaves, they were held in high honor by their fellow citizens, cf. S. Cartledge, *IDB* (1962) II.353-354.

preoccupied with intermediate things, they will be hindered in running a good race (cf. Mt. 13:22). Once again, it is important to notice that the concept of grace is futuristic as well as retrospective. God's grace, which was demonstrated by the gift of his Son, still awaits completion in the apocalypse of the Lord (cf. He. 12:14-15).[54]

Since this consummation is still ahead, the Christian, like an obedient child,[55] must not succumb to the pressures of worldly culture and its preoccupation with the material present. Such preoccupation was surely part of their lives before coming to Christ, as they were driven by the impulses of their paganism.[56] Now, their lives must be different. Rather than patterning them after the surrounding culture, they ought to pattern them after the Holy One who called them.[57] Once more, Peter draws from the ancient passages about Israel and transfers them over to the Christian church (see discussion under 1:4). The levitical command, "Be holy for I am holy" (Lv. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7), now becomes an imperative for Christians. They are to be separated from worldly values--marked off for service to God. The idea of holiness carries both the connotation of being "separated from" and "devoted to," i.e., separated from worldly culture and devoted to God.

Since believers now pray to God, the Father, who will also be their judge at the great tribunal,[58] their lives should be characterized by a healthy fear. Such fear is not horror, but rather, a deep respect toward God as the impartial judge who sees their lives for what they truly are. Their lives here are only temporary, for their home is elsewhere, just as the old spiritual says, "This world is not my home, I'm just a'passing through..." (cf. He. 11:9-10). Like Israel in Egypt, Christians are on the threshold of a new residency.

Redemption Through Christ's Death (1:18-20)

What Peter has called "previous ignorance" (1:14b) he now terms their "worthless behavior inherited from their ancestors." Again, such language fits better as a description of paganism rather than Jewishness. Yet from this futile, pagan lifestyle they had been redeemed.

The concept of redemption was familiar for both Greco-Roman and Hebrew cultures, and it involved the paying of a ransom price in order to secure liberation.

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[54]Pre-tribulationists usually reserve the word group associated with the apocalypse to refer to the coming of Christ at the end of the tribulation period, long after (they suppose) the church has been in heaven. However, such a schematic fits awkwardly with this passage, cf. G. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) 61-70.

[55]Lit., "children of obedience," a Hebraism referring to what characterizes behavior, cf. A. Stibbs, *The First Epistle General of Peter [TNTC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) 86.

[56]This is the first direct indication that Peter's readers were Gentiles and not Jews, cf. Michaels, 58.

[57]The expression "Holy One" is common from the LXX and Hebrew Bible.

[58]In many places, Christ is described as the final judge (Jn. 5:27; Ac. 10:42). In other places, final judgment is issued by God (Ro. 3:6; 1 Co. 5:13). Paul assists us in understanding this when he says that God will judge the world through Christ (Ac. 17:31; Ro. 2:16).

For Gentiles, redemption was the technical term for buying back a prisoner-of-war or emancipating a slave. For Jews, it was the divine action by which God ransomed his people from Egypt. The term also served to describe quite a number of other transactions by payment that were regulated by Torah.[59] Here Peter uses the term to describe the action by which Christ bought back his people from their paganism by paying the price of his own life (cf. Mk. 10:45; Lk. 24:21; Tit. 2:14). Peter does not extend the metaphor by identifying the one to whom the price was paid, and such an idea was probably not within his view. Some have built elaborate speculations about Christ paying the devil, but the New Testament is silent on such matters.

The ransom price paid by Christ was not money, but his own life given up in death. Peter recalls the experience of ancient Israel, and as before, he transfers the imagery over to the church. At the original passover, with its final plague of death, only those protected by the blood of a lamb were saved from death (Ex. 12). In a Christian sense, Christ has become the passover lamb who by his death saves people from their sinful lives and exempts them from the judgment that would have fallen upon them (cf. Jn. 1:29; 1 Co. 5:7).[60] In keeping with the levitical regulations for sacrificial lambs, Christ is described as "unblemished and unspotted" (cf. Ex. 12:5; Lv. 22:19-20; Dt. 15:21), a description that refers to his perfect life (2:22-23).

As the sacrificial lamb, Christ was part of God's redemptive plan from the beginning. The early church strongly affirmed the belief that the Christ event was part of an eternal plan that had been designed before the creation (Mt. 13:35; 25:34; Jn. 17:24; Ro. 16:25-26; 1 Co. 2:7; Ep. 3:8-11; Col. 1:26; Tit. 1:2; Rv. 13:8). Though Christ was foreknown by God before creation as the Christian passover lamb, he was revealed only in the end of time. The eschatological era had begun with the appearance of Jesus (He. 1:2; 9:26); cf. Ac. 2:16-17; 1 Co. 10:11).[61] It is because Christians now live in the eschatological era that Peter can confidently assert that the final consummation of salvation is "ready to be disclosed" (cf. 1:5).

The Christian Graces, Faith, Hope and Love (1:21-22)

Because Christ has been "revealed for their sake at the end of time" (1:20), Peter declares that his readers have become believers in the God who both raised Jesus from the dead and glorified him. The consistent testimony of the early church was not of a self-generation of Jesus, but rather, that the Father raised him from the dead (Ac. 2:24, 32; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 34, 37; Ro. 4:24; 6:4;

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[59]For a full discussion, see L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 3rd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 11-64.

[60]While some scholars understand the word "blood" to be a synecdoche for life, the evidence firmly suggests that it is primarily a synecdoche for death, cf. Morris, *Apostolic*, 112-128.

[61]For the change from the Jewish concept of the present and the future ages to that of Christianity, see O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, trans. F. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964).

8:11; 10:9; 1 Co. 6:14; 15:15; 2 Co. 4:14; Ga. 1:1; Ep. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Th. 1:10). The many passive voices with regard to Jesus' resurrection (i.e., "to be raised") imply the same thing (cf. Mt. 16:21; 17:9, 23; 20:19; 27:64; etc.).

Peter's expression that God "gave to him [Jesus] glory" is similar to Luke's record of Jesus' post-resurrection words, "Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (Lk. 24:26). The glory of which Peter speaks is probably Jesus' resurrection life to be revealed at the end (cf. 1:7b). Because the readers of the letter had come to faith in God through the message of Christ, their faith and hope in God should remain steady.

There is a close connection between faith and hope in 1 Peter. Christian faith is oriented toward the future, just as is hope (cf. 1:3, 5, 7, 13). If faith and hope are tied to the impending revelation of Jesus Christ at the end, then the behavior of Christians in the interim should be an expression of mutual affection. Since they had come to faith and had purified themselves[62] by committing their lives to the message of Jesus' death and resurrection, fervent love proceeding from a holy heart and directed toward the community of Christian brothers and sisters[63] was the appropriate response.

Some comment is in order regarding Peter's phrase "obedience to the truth." The expression is similar to Paul's "believe and obey him [God]" (Ro. 16:26). What Peter has in mind is unlikely to be the performance of a Christian ritual, such as baptism, though some interpreters have suggested as much. What is in view is obedience to "the truth," that is, obedience to the full message about Jesus, who was sent from the Father to redeem estranged humans through his sacrificial death on the cross. Nothing in the passage implies obedience to some particular ritual. Of course, baptism is the natural response to such faith, but one must guard against any inclination to see salvation as dependent upon the completion of any number of given steps or rituals, however legitimate they may be. One is not born again by rituals, even appropriate ones. The theme all along has been faith (cf. 1:5, 7, 8, 9, 21), and obedience is simply another way of describing the act of committing oneself to this faith. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's statement is apropos, "Only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes."[64]

New Birth Through the Gospel (1:23-25)

The command to love one another fervently from a pure heart proceeds from the fact that Peter's readers were now part of a new creation. They shared in a fellowship of new life that was exclusive to those who had come to faith. Once again, Peter returns to his metaphor of the new birth (cf. 1:3). This birth derived from an

[62]As in 1:9, "souls" here refers to whole persons.

[63]As is well-known, the term *philadelphia* (= brotherly love) is not exclusive of women.

[64]*The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. Fuller (rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1963) 69.

imperishable seed. It was a birth produced by the Word of God (cf. Ro. 1:16). It is difficult to know precisely how Peter intends his readers to take the term *spora* (= seed). The word may refer to sperm as a metaphor of human procreation or as a seed in the sense of plants. The former harmonizes best with the metaphor of birth, but the latter fits well with the following quotation about grass and wild flowers. In either case, the emphasis is upon the imperishable nature of this seed.[65]

It is common for modern readers to assume that the "living and enduring Word of God" is simply a reference to the Bible, though this can hardly be the case. The incomplete state of the New Testament canon notwithstanding, there is scant evidence that the early Christians believed that their conversion was mediated through the reading of a document. Rather, the "Word of God" depicts the preached gospel about Jesus Christ (Ac. 4:29; 13:46; 1 Co. 14:36; 2 Co. 2:17; Col. 1:5, 25-28; Ja. 1:18). To be sure, the early preachers of the gospel appealed to the Scriptures, but they were not bound to the canon of the Hebrew Bible. Instead, they preached about Jesus by drawing from the testimony of the apostles who had known and heard him. It is this proclaimed word, the gospel of Jesus Christ, that Peter has in view, as is apparent later in 1:25.

To support his assertion concerning the living and enduring Word of God, Peter quotes an abridged version of Isaiah 40:6-8, which describes the fragility of human existence. Physical life, which belongs to natural birth, is transitory, and it sharply contrasts with the enduring life that proceeds from the new birth. Like grass and flowers, natural life ends in death. The dynamic and creative word of the Lord, on the other hand--the word that causes men and women to be born again--endures forever!

It is not incidental that Peter concludes his remarks concerning the living and enduring Word of God by using a participial form of the verb *euangelizo* (= to proclaim the good news).[66] Once again, he takes words spoken to the ancient people of God and transfers them over to the new people of God. The enduring Word of God in Isaiah 40:8, which Peter has just cited, leads naturally into Isaiah 40:9, which describes the good news of restoration preached to the Jewish captives in Babylon. The good news of this ancient message of liberation foreshadows the good news of Jesus Christ. That this passage was part of the standard matrix of Old Testament references employed to describe Jesus of Nazareth is clear in that Paul also cites the same passage in much the same way (Ro. 10:14-15). Of course, Peter does not directly quote Isaiah 40:9, but he surely has it in mind when he speaks of "the word which was preached unto you."

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[65]S. Schultz, *TDNT* (1971) VII.537, 544.

[66]The same verb in participial form is used twice in the LXX rendering of Is. 40:9.

Challenge Toward Maturity (2:1-3)

Since the Christians in the provinces to which Peter writes have been born again into a new creation, they must take care not to lapse into a lifestyle belonging to the old patterns. The Christian imperative is to remove all behaviors and attitudes that conflict with the new life in Jesus Christ. Once more, Peter uses the metaphor of clothing. Previously, he called upon his readers to gird their minds for action (1:13a). Now he tells them to strip themselves from vice, deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy and slander.[67]

Though relatively short, this vice list is comparable to others in the New Testament (cf. Ro. 1:29-31; 13:12-13; 1 Co. 6:9-10; 2 Co. 12:20; Ga. 5:19-21; Ep. 4:25-31; 5:3-5; Col. 3:5-9; Ja. 1:19-21, etc.). Every vice that Peter lists is also to be found elsewhere in the other New Testament vice lists.

Returning again to the metaphor of new birth (cf. 1:3, 23), Peter now compares his readers to newborn infants. Paul and the author of Hebrews both use the vocabulary of newborn infants in a pejorative way, setting the immaturity of Christians who were not properly developing over against the Christian maturity to which they were called (cf. 1 Co. 3:1-3; He. 5:11-14). There is no hint of that here, since Peter employs the image along more positive lines. If Peter's words arise out of a baptismal setting, as some interpreters suggest, then the reference to newborn infants would be self-explanatory. However, it may only be that Peter is comparing the eagerness of newborn infants for milk with the eagerness of Christians toward spiritual growth. If so, then the metaphor says nothing about how long Peter's readers had been believers. In any case, it is clear that Peter urges them on toward Christian maturity.

The goal of the Christian is to "grow up toward salvation." The Christian is to continue to mature until God's salvation has been consummated at the revelation of Jesus Christ (cf. 1:5, 13). The means of this growth is intelligible and unadulterated milk, the spiritual food of the believer who has been born again. In describing Christian food by the adjectives *logikon* (= reasonable, rational, intelligible) and *adolon* (= guileless, unadulterated, the opposite of hypocritical, cf. 2:1), Peter intentionally shapes the character of Christian sustenance. Christian food is for the mind, not for the stomach; it is plain and understandable, not pretentious and misleading. Such spiritual food enables the Christian to strip off the vices of the world.

The metaphor of receiving spiritual sustenance moves Peter to add one more allusion to taste, this time taken from Psalm 34:8. As is common in the New Testament, the apostles did not hesitate to read Old Testament passages about Yahweh and apply them directly to Jesus. Peter does so here. As the psalmist urges

[67]Peter is apparently fond of clothing metaphors, for he resorts to them again in 5:5.

his listeners, "Taste and see that Yahweh is good," Peter asserts that his readers already have done so in coming to faith. Since they have "tasted" of the Lord, they ought to desire spiritual milk all the more!

There may be a play on words in the Greek text of 2:3, where the word *chrestos* (= kindness) is only one letter removed from *Christos* (= Christ).[68] Justin Martyr (c.A.D. 140) makes a similar pun by playing on the words *chrestian* (= excellent) and *Christian*. He says, "...for we are accused of being Christians, and to hate what is excellent (*chrestian*) is unjust."[69] Peter says, *Ho Kyrios Chrestos* (= the Lord is kind), only one letter removed from *Ho Kyrios Christos* (= the Lord is Christ).

The New People of God

God's Spiritual House of Worship (2:4-5)

From this discussion of Christian behavior within the Christian community, Peter now turns to the theological character of that community. In this shift, he also changes metaphors. From the birth and nurturing metaphor, he now employs the temple metaphor.

Christians are those who have come to Christ, the "living stone." The stone imagery was used from New Testament times to explain how the Jewish nation rejected their own messiah. Jesus himself employed this image by citing Psalm 118:22-23 at the conclusion of the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mk. 12:10//Mt. 21:42//Lk. 20:17). Later, Peter appealed to the same passage when he confronted the Sanhedrin with their guilt in crucifying Jesus (Ac. 4:11). The Jewish religious leaders indeed had disclaimed Jesus, though this rejection was purposefully anticipated and used by God (Ac. 2:23). In spite of their act of rejection, God had made Jesus his valuable choice (Mk. 1:11//Mt. 3:17//Lk. 3:22//Jn. 1:32-34). In raising Jesus from the dead, the stone which was rejected by the Sanhedrin had been chosen by God, and he was indeed "living!"

There is another possible allusion in Peter's description of Jesus as the "living stone." The ark of the covenant no longer rested in the Most Holy Place during the second temple period, having disappeared after the Jewish exile in the 6th century B.C. Instead, there was a large stone on which the high priest sprinkled the sacrificial blood of *Yom Kippur*. The expression, "While you are coming to him, a living stone...," might suggest that the ancient approach to God through temple worship, in which the high priest approached an inanimate slab, was now defunct. The proper approach to God was through the living Christ.[70]

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[68]Best, 99.

[69]First Apology, I.vi.

[70]A. Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 58.

Just as Christ was the living cornerstone (Ps. 118:22), so those who had come to faith in him were also living stones. The metaphor of Christ as the cornerstone leads Peter to extend the imagery to include Christian believers as the other stones which, when joined to the cornerstone, create the walls of the temple edifice. This living temple was quite different from the massive blocks of marble laid by Herod the Great in the reconstruction of the second temple. Instead, it was a temple of believers who had been joined together into a spiritual house.

The eschatological expectation of a new temple begins in the classical writing prophets as they addressed the tragedy of the exile. Though the first temple was doomed, in God's time Zion would be restored (Is. 51:3, 11; 52:1-3, 7-10; 62:1-5, 11-12; Je. 31:3-6). A new temple was envisioned with spectacular dimensions and glorious features (Eze. 40-48).[71] When the second temple was built by the post-exilic community, it was received with mixed feelings (cf. Ezr. 3:10-13). The expectation of a new temple, greater than the second temple, resurfaces in intertestamental Judaism. The Qumran community, which had isolated itself from all other Jewish groups, came to regard itself as this new temple. In one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it says, "He [God] has commanded that a Sanctuary of men be built for Himself, that there they may send up, like the smoke of incense, the works of the law."[72] In a similar way, Peter understands the Christian church to be this new temple.

The members of the community of faith served not only as the living stones from which the spiritual temple was built, they also served as the unrestricted priesthood. The old priesthood was composed of a special caste, the clan of Levi and the family of Aaron. The new priesthood was made up of the entire community. The old offerings of animals and grain had been replaced by spiritual sacrifices. Precisely what Peter has in mind by such "spiritual sacrifices" is not immediately clear, but he certainly intends that they are non-material. Probably like Paul and others, Peter has in mind the non-material sacrifices of self-dedication to God (cf. Ro. 12:1; Phil. 2:17; He. 13:16), Christian worship (cf. He. 13:15) and/or the performance of good works (cf. Phil. 4:18).[73] In any case, unlike the old sacrifices, these spiritual sacrifices are

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[71]Of course, the meaning of Ezekiel's temple oracle has been a thorn of interpretation for years. Some prefer a literalist view, that is, that is was a specification for the second temple to be built by the returning exiles, though of course, the full scope was never realized. Others have preferred a thoroughgoing symbolic interpretation in which the temple spiritually symbolizes the Christian church. This view was especially popular among older interpreters. Dispensationalists have generally held to a futurist-literalist interpretation in which the temple is to be physically built in the millennial kingdom following the return of Christ (or else during the tribulation period). Still others view it as an apocalyptic symbol anticipating the messianic age, cf. J. Taylor, *Ezekiel [TOTC]* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1969) 251-254.

[72]Best, 102.

[73]Whether or not Peter had in mind the eucharist has been strenuously debated. The post-apostolic church of the early 2nd century had no hesitancy in metaphorically describing the eucharist as a "sacrifice," cf. *Didache* 14; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, cxvii. Following this usage, some argue that Peter's "spiritual sacrifices" must at least include the eucharist, though they concede that he probably refers to the other non-material sacrifices as well, cf. Kelly, 91-92; Selwyn, 294-298. Others, probably reacting to medieval abuses of the term sacrifice in connection

acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Peter, like Paul, understands Jesus to be the mediator between humans and God (cf. 1 Ti. 2:5).

The Prophecy of the Zion Stone (2:6)

Now Peter presents a collage of citations from the Old Testament that he applies to the church to define what it means for Christians to be the new people of God. He includes brief commentary on the passages he cites so as to assist his readers in understanding how they are to be applied in a contemporary sense.

There is no indication that Peter denies the original intent of the Old Testament passages. His awareness that originally they were directed toward ancient Israel and her own historical circumstances is to be assumed. However, in viewing these passages in light of the Jesus event, they take on new and greater meaning. This *sensus plenior* hermeneutic of the apostles (for it is certainly to be found in the Pauline corpus, Hebrews and elsewhere) places a maximum value on the concept of fulfillment. However, it should be clearly recognized that the apostolic concept of fulfillment is not restricted to the single model of prediction and verification. It also embraces such things as the clarification of enigmatic Old Testament passages, the fulfillment by an individual of something that was originally expressed in corporate terms, and the historical recapitulation of events that already happened in history but that, in the providence of God, are in some sense being repeated. The idea of fulfillment cannot be exhausted by a single paradigm.[74]

This being so, then the apostolic concept of fulfillment is broader for those who already believe in Christ than for those who are non-believing skeptics. For the cultured despiser of Christianity, prophetic fulfillment can appear to be quite circular and unconvincing.[75] Peter, of course, is not writing to skeptics, but to believers.

The prophecy of the Zion stone in Isaiah 28:16 appears in an oracle of the 8th century B.C. addressed to the inept leaders of Ephraim in the north (cf. 28:1, 3) and the flippant rulers of Jerusalem in the south (cf. 28:14). In this period of degradation, Yahweh declared that what he had done and was doing in Zion, his chosen home and the place of his enthroned presence (cf. Ps. 9:11; 48:1-14; 87:1-2; 99:1-3; 125:1-2; 133:3; 146:10), held the key to Israelite history. Though the nation might trust in

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with the eucharist, deny this possibility.

[74]See the brief but insightful essay, R. Longenecker, "'Who is the prophet talking about?' Some reflections on the New Testament use of the Old," *Themelios* (Oct./Nov. 1987) 4-8. For a discussion of the apostolic *sensus plenior*, see W. LaSor, "The *Sensus Plenior* and Biblical Interpretation," *Scripture, Tradition and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 260-277.

[75]The skeptic might say, "Why should I accept Jesus as the promised messiah?" A believer might respond, "Because the prophecies point to him." The skeptic counters, "But they don't seem that way to me." And the believer responds, "That's because your mind is veiled." The skeptic then asks, "How can I get it 'unveiled?'", to which the believer says, "If you accept Christ, then the Holy Spirit will open your eyes."

many other things, such as their treaty with Egypt,[76] their only hope was in the faith of Yahweh, centered in Zion. The tested Zion stone was a metaphor for the steadfastness of Yahweh himself, who alone was trustworthy. Only the one whose faith was in the Zion stone, that is, whose faith was in Yahweh himself, would be able to survive the terrible conditions of 8th century politics and social decline.

Like Paul (cf. Ro. 9:30-33), Peter finds in this passage not only an historical circumstance in the 8th century B.C. but also an application for the early Christians. If spiritually there is to be a new temple with a new priesthood, as Peter has already argued (cf. 2:4-5), then there should also be a new Zion upon which this spiritual temple stands.[77] This time it is not the ancient mountain in Jerusalem with its ancient temple, but rather, it is Jesus Christ who is the cornerstone of a new spiritual temple. If the ancient Zion stone was a metaphor for Yahweh, the new Zion stone is a metaphor for Jesus Christ. The one who believes in Jesus will certainly not be ashamed, which is the negative way of saying that the believer will certainly be vindicated by faith.

The Stone of Offense 2:7-8)

Peter asserts that the honor of experiencing this triumph rightly belongs to those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ. For those who do not believe in Christ, however, there will be no triumph of faith. In rejecting Jesus as the messiah (cf. Ps. 118:22), they have stumbled over the stumbling stone (cf. Is. 8:14). Christ has become to them an offense and a hindrance to true faith in God.

In citing yet another of the stone metaphors from Isaiah, Peter draws from what is probably a common apostolic tradition (cf. Ro. 9:33). The stone metaphor in Isaiah 8:14, like the one in Isaiah 28:16, appears in an oracle concerning 8th century B.C. politics. Here, Isaiah cautions his listeners against the general panic of the times in view of the rise of Assyrian aggression. Israel's attention must be upon Yahweh's sovereign will, not merely upon ways to cope with the frightening developments in the north. Yahweh was doing something strange and different, and his people must wait for his sovereign explanation. The real difficulty for the people lay not so much in the rise of Assyria as in the actions of Yahweh. In permitting the rise of the Mesopotamian superpower, Yahweh had become for Israel a stone of stumbling, a rock which made them fall, a trap and a snare.[78] What was happening in the

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[76]The covenant with *Mot* and *Sheol* (= death and hell, cf. 28:15) is probably a reference to Judah's treaty with Egypt, and the description is intended as a parody, cf. J. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33 [WBC]* (Waco, TX: Word, 1985) 369.

[77]This interpretation is very similar to the one by the writer of Hebrews, who says that believers in Christ have now come to a new Mt. Zion and a heavenly Jerusalem (He. 12:22). Paul, also, speaks of a "Jerusalem which is above" in contrast to the historical city of Jerusalem (Ga. 4:24-26). In the Apocalypse, John describes an assembly of the followers of the Lamb as victorious on Mt. Zion (Rv. 14:1).

[78]Watts, 120-121.

realpolitik of the ancient world was inexplicable.

In a similar way, Christ became a stone of offense and an entrapment to those who heard his word but rejected him. Whether Peter has in mind the Jewish leaders who rejected Christ in his last days in Jerusalem or the pagan skeptics of Asia Minor who refused to believe the gospel, the result is the same. In both cases, whether Jew or Gentile, they stumble over Christ (cf. 1 Co. 1:23). However, the fact that Peter says they were destined to stumble seems more appropriate for the Jewish leaders, given the general apostolic witness that the rejection of Jesus by his own people was part of God's foreordination (Ac. 2:23; 3:13-18; 4:10-11; 7:51-53; cf. Mk. 8:31).

The New Israel (2:9-10)

Unlike the skeptics and unbelievers, Peter's readers had come to genuine faith. Because of their faith in Christ, and even though they were not of Jewish descent, they had become the new people of God.

In citing Exodus 19:5-6 and applying it to the Christian community, Peter boldly draws from the declarations to Israel at Sinai and transfers them over to the church. He interweaves with Exodus 19:6 several other phrases drawn from the Old Testament.

But you are... (Ex. 19:5)

...a select house...(Is. 43:20)

...a royal house...(possibly based on 2 Sa. 7:11b-13)

...a body of priests, a holy nation... (Ex. 19:6)

...a people designed to be God's possession (Ex. 19:5; 23:22; Dt. 4:20; 7:6; 14:2).

In this collage of citations, Peter obviously intends his readers to understand that they are to consider themselves as standing in continuity with the people of God in the Old Testament. However, the new Israel is not exclusive but inclusive. It includes all who have come to faith so that, to use Paul's idiom, there is now one new person, a new entity (Ep. 2:11-22). Thus, the community of Christians has now become the chosen race. Christians may be Jewish or Gentile, but the ethnic factor is irrelevant.[79]

By this time, it is apparent that Peter's rhetoric is cumulative. The transfer of vocabulary from Old Testament Israel to the New Testament church is extensive.

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[79]To be sure, on the basis of Romans 11 dispensational commentators contend that Peter cannot here mean that the church is the new Israel, cf. E. Blum, "1 Peter," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) XII.231. It is hard to believe, however, that this contention rests on any exegetical considerations in 1 Peter itself, but rather upon the theological conclusions of dispensationalism. Whether or not there may be an eschatological future for geo-political Israel in the crisis of the end remains to be seen, but this does not prevent Peter from perceiving the church to be the obedient heirs of the promises that God gave to his ancient people, G. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 599-699.

What was once the description of the ancient, ethnic people of God has now become the description of the people who have faith in Jesus Christ, nationality notwithstanding. Christians are now:

The chosen (1:1)
The sojourners (1:1)
The diaspora (1:1)
The ones sprinkled with the blood of the covenant (1:2)
The ones brought into being by a divine act (1:3)
The heirs of an imperishable, undefiled and unfading inheritance (1:4)
The true recipients of the message of the prophets (1:12)
The ones called to be God's holy people (1:15-16)
The resident aliens (1:17)
The redeemed (1:18)
The ones who have had the good news proclaimed to them (1:25)
The ones who have tasted of the Lord (2:3)
The ones who have come to the living cornerstone (2:4)
The new temple of God (2:5)
The new priesthood of God that offers spiritual sacrifices (2:5)
The ones honored to believe in the new Zion stone (2:6-8)
God's chosen race (2:9)
God's royal house (2:9)
God's priesthood (2:9)
God's holy nation (2:9)
God's people chosen to be his special possession (2:9)
The ones reclaimed from exile and reestablished under divine mercy (2:10)

Though the kingdoms of Israel and Judah proved not to be the kingdom of God,[80] the church has now become God's royal house. Jesus, the royal Son of David, has ascended to the throne, and Peter's expression "royal house" suggests as much. If Yahweh had promised to build for David a house and a kingdom (cf. 2 Sa. 7:11b-16), the Christian community is heir to that promise. Even more explicit, the church has become the heir of Israel's priesthood to the nations. Though Israel's collective failure to become a nation of priests reached its climax in the broken covenant and exile, a remnant of exiles was promised this priestly ministry (Is. 61:6). The church is now

[80]This is the conclusion of the classical writing prophets, cf. J. Bright, *The Kingdom of God* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1953) 45-70.

that remnant!

The ancient nation that was called to be holy proved to be anything but holy. The Old Testament prophets describe the moral turpitude of Israel and Judah in the most devastating terms. By contrast, the church has been sanctified (1:2) and purified (1:22) by believing and obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ. The community of Christians is now God's holy nation. Just as ancient Israel was chosen to be God's treasured possession (Ex. 19:5), selected out of all the peoples on the earth to be his people (Dt. 7:6; 14:2), so the church was designed to be God's possession. Just as the purified remnant from exile was called to belong to Yahweh (Mal. 3:17), so the Christian community belongs to the Lord.

It is of critical importance, of course, to understand that God's choice of the ancient nation Israel was a functional one. He chose his ancient people for a purpose. That purpose was not merely that he might reveal himself to her, but that he might claim her for service.[81] The Old Testament does not vouch for the salvation of all Israelites simply because they were God's chosen. Isaiah bluntly says that though the Israelites multiply like sand, only a remnant would be saved (Is. 10:22-23; cf. Ro. 9:27-28). Rather, God brought into existence a people so that they might serve him.[82]

The functional nature of election carries over into the election of the church as well. This is the force of Peter's words, "You are...in order that you may..." (2:9). If the church is a select race, a royal house, a body of priests, a holy nation, and a people designed to be God's possession, this privilege is not merely a benefit to be enjoyed. Rather, it is a call to serve. Peter directly applies to the church Yahweh's commission to the remnant that they were to be "the people formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise" (Is. 43:21). The church exists as an evangelical body that it may announce the message of God. This is the message: in Jesus Christ the ancient prophecy has come to fulfillment that the people in darkness have seen a great light (cf. Is. 9:2). The images of darkness and light are apt metaphors for human estrangement from God, on the one hand, and restoration and salvation on the other.

By applying the motif of the remnant from Isaiah 43:20-21; 61:6 and Malachi 3:17 to the church, Peter develops an important theological theme. The remnant idea is very pronounced in the prophets. Against a popular notion of national security, based on the fact that Israel was God's chosen people, Amos preached that only a very small historical remnant would survive the Assyrian invasion (Am. 3:12; 5:3; 8:9-10; 9:1, 9). This same remnant idea is central to the theology of Isaiah, who even named his son Remnant-Will-Return (Is. 7:3; cf. 4:3; 10:20-23; 11:11-12, 16; 28:5; 37:31-32). Particularly for Isaiah, the notions of remnant and faith are inseparable.[83] The

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[81]H. Rowley, *The Biblical Doctrine of Election* (London: Lutterworth, 1950) 43.

[82]Klein, 33-35.

[83]G. Hasel, *ISBE* (1988) IV.133.

remnant motif appears in other prophets as well (cf. Mic. 2:12; 4:6-7; 5:7-8; Zeph. 3:12-13). Of course, the original force of the remnant motif concerned the survivors of the Mesopotamian invasions of Palestine by Assyria and Babylon. The post-exilic community, which eventually was allowed to return to Palestine from Babylon, understood itself to be this prophetic remnant (cf. Hag. 1:12-14; 2:2; Zech. 8:6, 11-12; Ezr. 9:8, 14-15; Ne. 1:2-3).

Peter, like others in the New Testament (cf. Ac. 15:16-18; Ro. 9:27-30; 11:5), takes this remnant motif and develops it along spiritual lines, so that the Christian community is viewed as the remnant of faith. Those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ are the ones who truly qualify as the remnant of faith. In climaxing this development, Peter appeals to passages in Hosea (Ho. 1:10; 2:23).

The illegitimate children of his prostitute wife Hosea named Lo-Ruhamah [= not loved] and Lo-Ammi [Not-My-People]. These names symbolized Yahweh's rejection of the nation Israel (Ho. 1:8-9). Nevertheless, Yahweh also promised that the very ones who had been rejected would eventually be restored (Ho. 1:10--2:1, 23). Those formerly called Lo-Ammi would be called Ammi [= My-People] and Bene-El [= Sons-of-God] (Ho. 1:9; 2:23b). Those formerly called Lo-Ruhamah [= Not-Loved] would be called Ruhamah [= Loved] (Ho. 1:6-7; 2:23a).

Though originally these prophecies were directed toward the exile and return, Peter applies them directly to the church. The church now occupies the favored status of My-People, Sons-of-God, and Loved. Inasmuch as Peter is writing to a largely Gentile Christian community, he intends the word-play from Hosea to describe the change in status from despised pagan Gentile to the new people of God. Formerly, his readers had been Gentiles who were ostracized from the favored status as the people of God (cf. Ep. 2:11-13). Now, through faith in Jesus Christ, they had themselves entered this favored status. Paul cites the same passage in Hosea in much the same way, where he says that the Lo-Ammi who had become Ammi and the Lo-Ruhamah who had become Ruhamah were, in fact, the Gentiles who had been called by God through Christ (Ro. 9:23-26).

The Social Code

Duties to the State (2:11-17)

If the Christian community has become the new people of God--sojourners in an alien society--then they must live as God's people. Earlier, Peter made the similar point when he wrote that because of their new birth, Christians must life a new life (1:23--2:1). Now, he offers instructions to Christians about their relationship to the social structures of human government, the institution of slavery and the covenant of marriage.

He prefaces his remarks with the general admonition to stay clear of the urges

typical of the materialistic, humanistic, orgiastic lifestyle of Greco-Roman culture (2:11). The expression "fleshly cravings" refers to the natural impulses that belong to the selfish and lower nature. In fact, the expression *apechesthe epithymion* (= renounce cravings) was a familiar traditional Greek ethical instruction from the time of Plato.[84]

Like Paul, Peter sees the Christian life as a constant war against the pressures of the surrounding hostile culture (cf. 2 Co. 10:4; Phil. 2:25; Phlmn 2; Ep. 6:10-18; 1 Ti. 6:12; 2 Ti. 2:3-4; 4:7). However, Peter is also very much aware that the impulses of fallen human nature are joined together with the outside pressures of this culture, and together these enemies serve in the army against one's spiritual life. Thus, it is essential that the Christian continues the fight against such alien forces by maintaining good Christian conduct, especially in the midst of non-Christians. Peter does not answer all the questions that might be posed concerning Christ and culture, but his instruction certainly bears upon the tension between the two.[85] At the very least, it can be said that Peter does not take a stance that reduces the church to a subculture. He is clearly concerned that since Christians live in the world, they must display good conduct among those who are not Christians.

Peter's readers were facing serious slander from outsiders (2:12), some of which may have been accusations of serious crimes (cf. 4:15). By the second century, outsiders were accusing Christians of such things as incest, cannibalism and atheism.[86] Peter's advice is that Christians should be gentle to their opposers. If they were to win the affirmation of such outsiders, or better, if they were to convert them, they must do so by exemplary Christian behavior, not aggression. If their cultured despisers could be won over, they would come to glorify God in the great tribunal at the end when the Lord assesses the lives of every person.[87] Peter's advice accords well with the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Mt. 5:16).

Taking up the first category in the code of duties, Peter charges his readers to submit themselves to civil authorities (3:13). His charge is issued "because of the Lord," by which he means Jesus Christ. Christians are to submit to civil authorities both because the Lord Jesus expects them to do so and also because this is the way he

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[84]Michaels, 116.

[85]For an insightful classic work on the tension between the Christian and culture, see H. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951).

[86]They were charged with atheism because they would not participate in Caesar worship. They were charged with cannibalism because they used the eucharistic language of eating Christ's body and drinking his blood. They were charged with incest because they greeted each other as "brother" and "sister," H. Boer, *A Short History of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 46-47.

[87]Earlier, Peter alluded to the last judgment when he spoke of the faith that would be proved genuine at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:7).

himself behaved toward the civil authorities (cf. 2:21-23). Peter seems to assume what Paul states explicitly, that is, that the principle of civil government is ordained by God (cf. Ro. 13:1). Peter does not imply that any particular style of government, or for that matter that any particular ruler, is sanctioned by God, but rather, that the principle of order rather than chaos is of God. The good purpose of civil authority is to curb and rebuke lawbreakers (3:14; cf. 1 Ti. 1:9-11), and therefore the believer owes allegiance and respect toward all the various civil leaders (cf. Tit. 3:1).[88]

It is probably fair to point out that Peter writes from a circumstance where the political powers of the Roman world had not yet become thoroughly oppressive. In the early decades of Christianity, Christians were still viewed by the Romans as a sect of Judaism (which was legally recognized). By the end of the first century, however, the situation would change dramatically. Christianity would be categorized as a *religio prava* (= depraved religion), and by the time of the writing of the Book of Revelation, John would depict the Roman Caesar as a blasphemous beast in league with the devil (cf. Rv. 13:1-6; 19:19-20). This shift implies that the attitude of Christians toward the state fluctuated, at least to some degree, in proportion to how the state exhibited religious tolerance. Peter views obedience to civil authority as the will of God, since such obedience was aimed at silencing those who slandered Christians as criminals. Such slander, in the presence of living proof to the contrary, would make the ignorance of the detractors apparent to all (3:15).

Obedience was to proceed out of freedom (3:16). Christians were free in Christ, and their highest allegiance was to the Lord Jesus, not any human institution. Christians were slaves, to be sure, but they were slaves to Christ. Above all, they must not use their freedom as an excuse to disobey the rightful demands of civil authority. Thus, Peter concludes with four directives covering the widest range of respect (2:17).

Duties to the Household (2:18-25)

The second social structure is the *oikonomia* (= household community). Households in the Greco-Roman world were large, inclusive units, often composed of a number of families bound together under the authority of the senior male of the principal family. They might include friends, clients, freedmen and slaves, all of whom were engaged in a common agricultural or mercantile enterprise and who lived on the same farm or estate. Traditionally, there was a clear demarcation of hierarchical authority, ranging from the senior male at the top to the company of slaves at the bottom.[89]

It was commonplace for such households to have relatively large numbers of

[88]Paul goes so far as to call for prayer for those in positions of civil authority, cf. 1 Ti. 2:2.

[89]D. Tidball, *The Social Context of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1984) 79-80.

slaves who were purchased and offered for sale like other commodities. The economic situation of slaves spanned a wide range, depending upon their education, professional training and ability. Slaves had rights, such as the right to marry and hold property within certain limits. They could receive wages, serve as witnesses in courts of law, and they were generally allowed to eat with the families of their masters. Well-educated slaves might even serve as estate managers, though they were restricted from representing themselves in legal matters. Unlike freedmen, however, slaves could not work where they pleased, and they held no freedom of movement. It is estimated that one in five residents in Rome were slaves, though this ratio would have been somewhat less in the provinces.[90]

It is apparent that a substantial number of Peter's readers were household slaves.[91] Because they had come to faith in Christ, they were now included in the new people of God, citizens of another world, but resident aliens in the present world. Still, Peter advises them to reverently and voluntarily submit themselves to their owners, regardless of the temperament of the owner (2:18).[92] Though Peter does not specifically say so, the aim of this advice is almost certainly evangelistic. At least this is the case in the situation of Christian wives married to pagan husbands, which Peter will discuss next (cf. 3:1ff.). Modern readers wish they had more information about Peter's ethic of freedom,[93] but it is not unlikely that his ethic was similar to Paul's, where personal freedom was voluntarily sacrificed for the sake of the gospel (cf. 1 Co. 9:19-23).[94]

The motivation for such voluntary submission is an awareness of God (2:19). Since Christ voluntarily submitted himself to the world, his followers should respond in kind. This is the nature of grace--the bestowal of undeserved favor. Grace is particularly called for when there is unjust suffering. In the Greco-Roman world, it was commonly held since the time of Aristotle that the suffering of slaves could not be unjust.[95] Peter, however, answers to a higher standard. Of course, it is no testimony to God's grace if one endures deserved punishment. Rather, it is the endurance of undeserved punishment that testifies to God's grace and wins his approval (2:20). This would be particularly true if a master required a Christian slave to do something unacceptable to God, for upon disobedience, the slave would be

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[90]H. Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 59-62; E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 45-47.

[91]There are several words for slaves in the New Testament, but Peter uses the one for household slaves, cf. R. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 33.

[92]The same advice is to be found in other New Testament social codes (cf. 1 Co. 7:20-23; Ep. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25; 1 Ti. 6:1-2; Tit. 2:9-10).

[93]Peter is content to say, "Submit as free persons" (2:16a).

[94]For extensive discussion of Paul's approach, see P. Richardson, *Paul's Ethic of Freedom* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979).

[95]Aristotle writes that what is owned cannot be treated unjustly, cf. *Nichomachean Ethics*, V.6.8-9.

punished unjustly.[96]

The supreme model for unjust suffering is the passion of Jesus, and Peter makes the remarkable statement that Jesus' disciples were called to endure this sort of suffering as well (2:21). Christ certainly suffered unjustly, as Pilate, and later Judas, clearly affirmed (Lk. 23:4, 14-15, 22; Mt. 27:4). The entire force of the Servant predictions, which Peter here quotes, is that the Servant suffered vicariously for the sins of others (2:22; cf. Is. 52:13--53:12). From the Sanhedrin, Herod, the soldiers, Pilate, the temple guard and the onlookers at Golgotha, Jesus suffered both verbal and physical torture. Yet, during this abuse he did not threaten his tormentors,[97] but he prayed for their forgiveness (Lk. 23:34) and committed himself into the hands of God (2:23; cf. Lk. 23:46). Jesus' statement to Pilate carries full force here and may have been in Peter's mind, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above" (Jn. 19:11a). If in the purposes of God suffering seems unjust, it is God who will ultimately balance the scales, for he is the one who judges righteously. Full justice is ultimate, not immediate.[98]

Peter now shifts temporarily from the second person to the first person (2:24). This serves to emphasize that the vicarious work of Christ was for all Christians, Peter included. Those who interpret Jesus' sin-bearing as meaning only that in his earthly life he endured all the evil deeds which sinful men did to him misunderstand the force of the text. To be sure, Jesus did put up with the evil behavior of others, but the sin-bearing that Peter has in view is the vicarious expiation of sin through Jesus' death on the cross (cf. 3:18).[99] The Old Testament idea of sin-bearing refers to bearing sin's penalty (cf. Nu. 14:33; Eze. 18:20). The most graphic picture of vicarious sin-bearing is surely the Servant's song in Isaiah 53. Early on, Peter used the Isaianic servant passages to explain Jesus' mission to the Jews (Ac. 3:13), and Peter's appeal follows a standard New Testament pattern.[100]

By using the word *xulon* (= wood), Peter intentionally chooses a term with maximum emotional value for slaves.[101] Roman crucifixion was essentially a penalty

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[96]Best, 118.

[97]Some have considered Jesus' words to Caiaphas, "You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven," as a threat, but Peter obviously did not think so. Similarly, when Jesus said to those along the *via Dolorosa*, "Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Lk. 23:28-31), he was not threatening them, but grieving over the inevitable trauma of the future.

[98]Since the verb *paredidou* (= he delivered) does not have an object, some have suggested that the implied object should be "them" (i.e., the tormentors of Jesus) rather than "himself" as most translators take it. If so, then Jesus would have committed his enemies over to the judgment of God, cf. Michaels, 147. In any case, it is clear enough that Jesus did not take vengeance into his own hands.

[99]L. Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 322-327.

[100]F. Bruce, *New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 94-99.

[101]Also, the term *xulon* is used in the LXX of Dt. 21:22 where it refers to a gibbet, the place where the corpse of a condemned person was exposed by attaching it to a pole or by impaling it, cf. J. Thompson, *Deuteronomy [TOTC]* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1974) 232.

for slaves. Probably invented by the Persians, it was adopted by Alexander the Great, then the Phoenicians, and eventually the Romans, who instituted mass crucifixions during slave revolts. Slaves to be so executed were scourged, stretched out and tied to a piece of wood that reached across their backs and shoulders to each wrist, and then they were suspended upon a pole and left to die.[102] If the Lord Jesus endured innocent suffering and died the death of a slave, then Peter's call for Christians slaves to follow his example would have been very compelling.

The death of Jesus on the cross anticipates the Christian life that follows. The renunciation of sins is not an end in itself, but it is preliminary to the positive goal of living for what is right. All along Peter has made various statements about the "right" kind of lifestyle (cf. 1:13-15, 22; 2:1, 12, 13-20). The break with our sins in the death of Jesus makes this new lifestyle possible. Just as the cross was the demarcation between the earthly life of Jesus and his resurrection life, so the cross is the demarcation between the old life of sin and the new life of righteousness for all who believe. The healing of which Peter speaks contextually must refer to the dilemma of sin, as the does the original phrase in Isaiah 53:5. The notion developed by faith-healers that it refers to physical healing would hardly fit Peter's argument, for Peter is not arguing for the healing of welts and beatings but for patient endurance of suffering as Jesus suffered.

Peter closes this section on Jesus as the paradigm of suffering by the simile that is very much like one Jesus used when he saw people "like sheep without a shepherd" (2:25; cf. Mk. 6:34//Mt. 9:36). The simile in Isaiah 53:6 emphasizes the straying of people from God's ways. Upon their acceptance of the gospel, however, they had been turned toward the heavenly shepherd, which in turn recalls Jesus' claim to be the Good Shepherd (cf. Jn. 10:1-18). While the sheep simile originally was applied to the Israelite nation (Mt. 9:36; 10:6; 15:24), Peter uses it more in the Johannine sense to refer to the Gentiles who were estranged from God (cf. Jn. 10:16; 11:52). Christ, then, is the ultimate Pastor and Bishop who protects, feeds and oversees the lives of his people.[103] Later, Peter will address his fellow pastors and call their attention to Jesus as the Chief Pastor (cf. 5:1-4).

Duties to the Marriage Covenant (3:1-7)

Finally, Peter addresses the third of the social structures. He gives needed balance to the Greco-Roman household codes. In marriage, voluntary submission by the wife "to her own husband" is urged (3:1a).[104] In this advice, Peter

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[102]H. Weber, *The Cross: Tradition and Interpretation*, trans. E. Jessett (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 5-12.

[103]The two titles, *poimen* (= shepherd, pastor) and *episkopos* (= guardian, overseer, bishop) are probably not technical hierarchical terms here, as they came to be used later in the history of the church, cf. D. Arichea and E. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the First Letter of Peter* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1980) 86.

[104]The imperative to submit is in the middle voice, which means that it is an appeal for voluntary submission. It

has not followed the blind submission typical of Greco-Roman household codes which urged wives to "worship the god of their husbands" and for a husband to "rule his wife." By contrast, the New Testament social codes exclude such domination, instructing husbands to love their wives (Ep. 5:25), an exhortation unheard in Greek social codes. Here, husbands are to give to their wives honor, respect, and equal status as fellow-believers (3:7).[105]

The goal of such submission is evangelistic (3:1b). Peter does not argue that women are inferior to men in the created order. Rather, he says that Christian wives with non-Christian husbands should follow the expected social custom of submission so as to gain the conversion of their husbands through godly conduct rather than by constantly badgering them with words (3:2). Peter is obviously avoiding a confrontational style of evangelism, much as he did in addressing the social structures of the government and the household.

Peter's statements about adornment sometimes have been appropriated as categorical restrictions for women's apparel (3:3). This is not Peter's argument at all, nor is Peter drawing up a list of taboos. Rather, Peter wishes to inform Christian wives with non-Christian husbands as to the appropriate method of gaining their spouses for Christ. They will not be successful in attempting to impress their husbands with external beautification, but with internal beautification. To use the passage to forbid the wearing of jewelry, for instance, would also necessitate the prohibition of arranging one's hair or wearing clothes.[106] Inner character is the most important quality in the believer's witness to the outsider (3:4). A gentle, humble and tranquil demeanor says far more about Christ than polemics and argumentation. It is fair to point out, of course, that a gentle and quiet temperament is not restricted to women, though in this case it is appropriate for Christians wives with non-Christian husbands.

Examples of this gentle and quiet disposition are to be found in the ancient women of faith (3:5). Though Peter does not name any, Hannah, Ruth and Esther readily come to mind as sterling examples of gentleness, quietude and reverence. Such women put their hopes in God rather than in their own powers. They submitted, not because their husbands were perfect, but because they trusted in God.

In the larger context, it should be remembered that Peter addresses the household code as a human institution (cf. 2:13), and he urges that believers are to submit to every human institution as "free persons" (cf. 2:16). Sarah becomes Peter's specific example of quiet conformity to cultural expectations under the customs of the

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does not cancel a woman's freedom, but calls upon her to take the initiative in voluntary submission, cf. J. Bristow, *What Paul Really Said About Women* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1991) 38-41.

[105]G. Krodel, "The First Letter of Peter," *Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. G. Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 73.

[106]Grudem, 140.

ancient Near East (3:6a).[107] As a holy woman of ancient times, she deferred to her husband without disrupting the social order. Peter advises Christian wives who live with non-Christian husbands to do the same. When they do, they emulate Sarah and figuratively become her daughters (3:6b). Peter's final advice to these wives echoes the words of Jesus, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt. 10:28).

Finally, Peter turns to Christian husbands, though his comments are more brief, probably because the number of Christian wives with non-Christian husbands was larger than the reverse (3:7). He advises husbands to relate to their wives according to good sense, or in a rather freer rendering, "You husbands in turn must know how to live with a woman."[108] The marriage relationship is reciprocal, and each partner should be concerned for the other. The female physically is less strong than the male, so because the male is physically stronger, he must not use his physical strength to dominate or denigrate the female.[109] He should honor her, just as God habitually gives honor to those who are weaker or less honored (cf. Mt. 5:3-12; 1 Co. 1:26-29; 12:22-25; Ja. 2:5; 4:6; 1 Pe. 5:5). Peter's concluding remark is egalitarian. He describes Christian spouses as co-heirs of eternal life, which puts them on equal footing with each other, must as does Paul (cf. Ga. 3:28).

The idea that relational difficulties in marriage might thwart the effectiveness of prayer is remarkable. Peter seems to say that if the Christian husband does not treat his wife with honor, God will discipline him by not answering his prayers. Marital relationships are extremely important, not only for domestic reasons but for spiritual ones. Later, Peter will say that God listens to the prayers of the righteous, but he opposes those who do evil (cf. 3:12). His comments agree with the teachings of Jesus about human relationships and their effect on one's relationship with God (Mt. 5:23-24).

Suffering in an Alien Society

Living a Good Christian Life (3:8-12)

The development of Peter's thought throughout the letter has been cohesive. In various ways he has addressed the challenge of Christians living in an alien environment. They subsist as resident aliens of the Christian diaspora (1:1, 17;

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[107]C. Pfeiffer, *Old Testament History* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973) 83-84.

[108]Michaels, 167.

[109]To be sure, some have interpreted that this statement refers to lesser powers in intellect and discernment, cf. P. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 65. However, while it might be true in particular cases that a woman is intellectually or morally weaker than a man, it is hard to see how this could be true generally. Peter's use of the term *skeuos* (= vessel) implies that the category is physical.

2:11). During the time of this alien residency, they naturally face various distressing trials (1:6), that serve to test the genuineness of their faith (1:7), a faith that remains strong in spite of the fact that they serve an invisible Lord (1:8). Thus, they must take care not to be pressed into the mold of the present alien culture (1:14), and they must keep their vision firmly fixed on the future (1:13). They belong to a new society by a new birth (1:3, 23; 2:2). They are part of a new people of God (2:4-5, 9-10). For the present, they are obliged to submit themselves to the temporal structures of human society, such as, the government (2:13-14, 17), the household (2:18), and the marriage bond (3:1, 7), and in these structures they must maintain relationships with those who are not Christians. In all such relationships, they must live the Christian life in such a way as to reflect the suffering of Jesus (2:21-24), demonstrating such depth of godly character that others also will be converted to the faith (2:9, 12, 15; 3:1-2).

Beginning at 3:8, then, Peter further develops the character of Christian suffering in this alien society. He starts by urging his readers to live a good Christian life, a recurring pattern throughout the letter (cf. 1:14-15, 22; 2:1, 11-12, 15; 3:2). This involves such things as Christian unity, empathy, brotherly-love, compassion and humility.

Christian unity is frequently urged throughout the New Testament (cf. Jn. 17:11, 20-23; Ro. 12:4, 16; 1 Co. 1:10; 10:17; 12:12-31; 2 Co. 13:11; Ga. 3:26-29; Ep. 2:11-22; Phil. 1:27; 2:1-4; 4:2; Tit. 3:9-11; 2 Ti. 2:23-24). William Barclay is doubtless correct when he says that factions among Christians call into question the gospel itself and serve as a sign that those involved are carnal (cf. 1 Co. 3:3).[110] Brotherly-love, that is, love for fellow Christians, is closely related to Christian unity (1:22; cf. Jn. 13:34-35). Empathy[111] and compassion[112] are also closely related to each other as they describe the depth of feeling that Christians should have toward those in need. Humility is the context out of which empathy and compassion arise. It is difficult for a proud person to be truly empathetic and compassionate.

Finally, forgiveness is all important in Christian suffering. There is, of course, a kind of suffering which wallows in self-pity and reflects a martyr's complex. This is not the kind of suffering Peter has in mind. Rather, he urges a kind of suffering that arises out of forgiveness and love. It is the kind of suffering expressed by the Lord when he forgave his executioners (Lk. 23:34). Peter seems particularly concerned with avoiding retaliation, even verbal retaliation (3:9). He has already mentioned that Jesus did not resort to such methods (2:23), and here he calls for his readers to

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[110]*The Letters of James and Peter*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) 225-226.

[111]Or, "sympathy" (from the prefix *syn* = together, and the root *pathos* = passion). In English, the word "sympathy" too often only carries the nuance of a detached pity, whereas empathy means to feel with someone, not merely to feel for someone.

[112]The Greek word *eusplanchnos* is cognate with *splanchnon* (= entrails; but figuratively it refers to affection or love) and roughly parallels the English idea of the heart as the seat of the emotions.

respond to abuse with blessing, just as Jesus also taught (cf. Mt. 5:43-45; Lk. 6:27-28). They should do so because they themselves were called to inherit the blessing of God.

Notice the repetition of the calling that was first voiced in 2:21. The patience endurance of saints is not the only thing toward which Christians are called; they also are called "to retaliate with blessing" (NEB). Christian suffering is not the same as Stoic endurance; it is not merely a "stiff upper lip," but it is repaying harm and abuse with kind words.

Scriptural support for this advice comes from Psalm 34:12b-16a, where Peter quotes from the Septuagint (2:10-12). Originally composed as a Hebrew acrostic, the passage was written in the style of the wisdom instructor.[113] The essence of the passage is that the good one enjoys goes hand in hand with the good one does. In order to love life and see "good days," one must live in uprightness and honesty, shunning evil and doing good. The Lord[114] looks with favor on those who live such lives, but he opposes those who do not.

The question may well be posed as to whether this view of good works and divine reward stands in tension with the Pauline theology of justification by faith alone. It should be remembered, however, that even Paul taught that God would reward all people according to their works (cf. 1 Co. 3:11-15; Ep. 6:8), and further, that the purpose for which they have been saved is to perform good works (Ep. 2:10). In any case, the subject here is not justification, and one must not approach the passage as though Peter were attempting to answer a set of Pauline questions.[115] He is simply affirming the oft-repeated principle in Scripture that God rewards those who do good things. In particular, he hears their prayers for help. Those who live carelessly, on the other hand, can expect the Lord to oppose them. The expression concerning the "face of the Lord" is particularly Hebraic. In the Old Testament, the whole personality of Yahweh is concentrated in his face, both his love as well as his anger.[116] Thus, the ultimate expression of favor and blessing is to have Yahweh's face "shine upon you" (cf. Nu. 6:25), and of course, to have Yahweh set his face against you is quite the opposite.

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[113]Wisdom literature in the Old Testament is a reflection on life, particularly religious life, that is lived in the marketplace outside the formal structures of religion, cf. W. Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1979) 189-190.

[114]In the original Psalm, the Lord is Yahweh, but here, Peter probably has in mind the Lord Jesus, and if so, Peter assumes Christ's deity.

[115]Michaels, 182.

[116]E. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. A. Heathcote and P. Allcock (New York: Harper & Row, 1958) 77-79.

Suffering as Evangelism (3:13-17)

Evangelism has been close to the heart of Peter's discourse on Christian suffering from the beginning (cf. 2:9, 12, 15; 3:1), and here he takes up the theme once again. The climax is in 3:15b, but he builds toward that climax by posing the rhetorical question, "Who will harm you if you are an enthusiast for good" (2:13)?[117] The answer, of course, ought to be no one, for this is the expected result if humans behave in the way they are supposed to behave. Sometimes, in fact, this is the way it happens. Christians who live good lives in a nonaggressive and nonconflicting manner often will be shown good will.

On the other hand, as any realist knows, this ideal frequently falls short in real life. Humans being what they are, even the performance of good deeds does not always earn the kindness and courtesy of others. Thus, Peter appropriately adds that even if Christians do suffer for righteousness, they will be blessed by God (3:14a). Once more, Peter's words echo the teachings of the Lord Jesus (cf. Mt. 5:10-12; Lk. 6:22-23).

At the same time, however, Peter counsels his readers not to be intimidated by their persecutors (3:14b), just as he previously told Christian wives with non-Christian husbands not to be intimidated by their spouses (cf. 3:6b).[118] Here, he alludes to Isaiah 8:12 in which Yahweh instructs the prophet not to share the fears of the Jerusalemites who were terrified concerning the threats of the Syro-Ephraimite league that was trying to force Judah into joining their political alliance against Assyria (cf. Is. 7:1-6).[119] Fear is a great leverage with which people can be manipulated, and in many cases, intimidation has been used to coerce Christians into compromising or denying their faith. Perhaps Peter reflects on the words of Jesus, "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more" (Lk. 12:4; cf. Mt. 10:28). His command to hold highest allegiance to Christ, the Lord, certainly fits well with the follow-up saying of Jesus, "Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell" (Lk. 12:5). Peter's ethic is clearly shaped by that of Jesus.

Highest allegiance for all Christians goes to the Lord Jesus Christ. The fundamental Christian confession is, "Jesus is Lord" (cf. Ro. 10:9; 1 Co. 8:6; 12:3). If Peter has been consciously alluding to Isaiah 8:12b in the statement about fear, his

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[117]Peter uses the title "zealot" in a metaphorical way, but he may also be engaging in mild irony in that while zealots were given to terrorist activities in their eagerness to accomplish their goals, Peter calls for peace and good deeds as the means to accomplish Christian ends. The Christian response in society, while it is no less a commitment than that of the political Jewish activists, still shows itself in non-aggressive rather than aggressive ways.

[118]A rather free translation of 3:14b might be, "But do not let their intimidation scare you or disturb you" (author's translation). Such a rendering captures the semantics of the sentence through a dynamic equivalency rather than the woodenly literal translation which reads, "But do not fear the fear of them, nor be disturbed." Peter's statement is analogous to the sense of Roosevelt's famous fireside advice, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

[119]J. Bright, *A History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972) 271-273, 289.

instruction to reverence Christ the Lord parallels the opening phrase of Isaiah 8:13, "Yahweh Tsabaoth is the one you are to regard as holy; he is the one you are to fear."[120] Such a transposition of "Christ" into a passage that originally read "Yahweh" (Hebrew Bible) or "Kyrios" (LXX) certainly argues for the deity of Christ, and it was not uncommon in Old Testament passages that spoke of God as "Lord" for early Christians to see a foreshadowing of Christ.[121]

The fact that Christ was to be held in reverence "in your hearts" was not intended to be taken as a privatization of faith (3:15).[122] Rather, this confession has both an inward and an outward orientation. Inwardly, the confession holds Christ the Lord in highest allegiance. Outwardly, the confession is to be shared with those who are not believers. Though Peter does not advocate confrontational evangelism, he does intend for life-style evangelism to provoke questions from the outsider. When this happens, he charges his readers always to be prepared to defend their faith.

The kind of defense Peter has in view is not simply a matter of polemics. He refers to a reasonable defense offered in the spirit of humility and courtesy (3:16a). In particular, this word of defense should make clear that the Christian's good behavior is motivated by an eschatological hope, a hope that earlier Peter said would result in final salvation and an imperishable inheritance (1:3-5). For those who believe, there would be praise, glory and honor at the apocalypse of Jesus (1:7).

Peter is careful to indicate the manner in which such a defense should be offered. Christians who are belligerent and rude in sharing the gospel do disservice to the message. Aggression and force rarely assist people in coming to faith, and in any case, the one who ultimately convinces unbelievers to become believers is the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 16:8-11). Not many have been won to Christ by heated argument. Furthermore, a Christian's witness is immediately discredited when it comes from one whose lifestyle is not in line with Christian principles. Thus, Peter urges his readers to defend their faith while maintaining a good conscience (3:16b). To be sure, slander might be forthcoming from those opposing the Christian message, but such slander will be put to rest and will cause shame in the perpetrators when it becomes evident that one's Christian life is exemplary.

Finally, Peter says that suffering may, in fact, be God's will (3:17). If so, it is

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[120]Earlier, Peter quoted another part of this same passage in speaking of Christ as the stumbling stone (cf. 2:8; Is. 8:14).

[121]Best, 133.

[122]I would translate 3:15a, "Instead, in your hearts hold Christ the Lord in reverence..." Many translators render it, "Set apart Christ as Lord" (so RSV, NIV, NASB, TCNT, Williams, Weymouth), thus giving the word *kyrios* (= lord) the force of a predicate. This can certainly be done, but it seems better to render it as an apposition (so NEB, NAB, JB), since such a translation follows the sense of Is. 8:13 (LXX) more closely. In the LXX, the phrase reads, "Consecrate the Lord himself." The Textus Receptus *Kyrion ton Theon* (= [reverence] God as Lord) is overthrown by very impressive witnesses from a diversity of manuscripts (i.e., p72, Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and the early versions in Latin, Coptic, Syriac and Armenian), cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 691.

better to suffer for doing good than to reap just deserts for doing wrong. This statement can be taken in two ways. First, it may mean that it is morally advantageous to suffer for doing good than for doing wrong, since such suffering has evangelistic value. However, it may also mean that it is better to suffer in this present life for doing good than to later pay the penalty in the great judgment for doing wrong.[123]

Jesus, the Paradigm of Suffering and Victory (3:18-22)

The supreme pattern for innocent suffering, of course, was Jesus himself. In the next section, Peter offers an apostolic summary of Jesus' passion, after which he continues his advice to his readers with the words, "Since Christ suffered, arm yourselves with the same attitude" (4:1).

The apostolic summary in 3:18-22 begins with the Greek word *hoti*, but this raises the immediate question as to how it should be taken.[124] Peter may be quoting Christian traditional material, and if so, then the passage should function as though it were in quotation marks, whether or not the introductory "for" appears. There is virtually universal agreement among scholars that at least some traditional material is being used.[125]

A second preliminary issue in this passage is an acute textual problem involving the verb, preposition and pronoun. At least nine variations appear in the various early witnesses to the text of 3:18a.[126] Theologically, there is not a substantial amount of difference in how the variations function with regard to Peter's argument. In all cases, the death and suffering of Jesus is the highest example of innocent

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[123]J. Michaels, "Eschatology in 1 Peter iii.17," *NTS*, 13 (1967) 394-401.

[124]*Hoti* can function as a causal conjunction (i.e., "because") or as the introduction to direct discourse (i.e., a quotation). If the former, *hoti* is translated with the word "for" (so NIV, RSV, NEB, TCNT, TEV, etc.); if the latter, *hoti* is not translated at all. While most English translations favor the former, a wide range of individual scholars favor the latter, since they view the passage as the reworking of traditional material, either liturgical, hymnic or catechetical, cf. Kelly, 146; R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. K. Grobel (New York: Scribners, 1955) I.176; J. Fitzmyer, *JBC* (1968) II.363; L. Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. J. Alsup (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) II.176.

[125]Michaels, 197.

[126]The nine variations are: Christ suffering concerning sins (Vaticanus); Christ suffering in behalf of sins (some minuscules); Christ died concerning sins in behalf of you (Alexandrinus, Bodmer Papyri); Christ died concerning sins in behalf of us (Sinaiticus); Christ died in behalf of sins concerning you (Athos); Christ died concerning our sins (Paris/Ephraemi Rescriptus); Christ died concerning sinners (Didymas); Christ suffered concerning sins in behalf of us (some minuscules); Christ died in behalf of our sins (326 mg). The difficulty of the problem is reflected in the English Versions: Christ died for sins (NAB, RSV, NASB, JB, Weymouth); Christ died for our sins (NEB); Christ has suffered for sins (KJV, Williams); Christ suffered for us (Phillips); Christ suffering concerning sins (UBS); Christ died concerning sins (Nestle; Westcott and Hort); Christ died to atone for sins (TCNT); Christ died for you; he died for sins (TEV). The UBS critical text offered only a "D" rating (i.e., a high degree of doubt), B. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 2nd ed. (London: UBS, 1975) 692-693.

On the basis of the Bodmer Papyri (3rd or 4th century) along with Sinaiticus (4th century) and Alexandrinus (5th century), I prefer the reading of the Nestle Text.

suffering, which is the point Peter wishes to make.

The addition of the expression "once for all" is an important New Testament way of describing the finality of Christ's redemptive work (cf. Ro. 6:10; He. 7:27; 9:12, 26, 28; 10:10). Jesus' death was a clear example of innocent suffering, for as a righteous man, he died in behalf of the unrighteous to bring them to God. His example should become the pattern for Peter's readers in accepting their own role of innocent suffering. In his passion, Jesus was "put to death in the flesh" but later "made alive by the Spirit" (3:18b). The two contrasting spheres refer to Christ in his human realm of life, where he was executed, which is different than his resurrected realm of life, where he lives forever.[127]

It was also in the spiritual realm that Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison (3:19).[128] The phrase in the Apostles' Creed, "He descended into hell," is based on this passage (along with Mt. 12:40; Ep. 4:9). The verse was commonly exegeted by the ante-Nicene fathers to refer to a preaching of the gospel by Christ in Hades.[129] It may be that the fathers were too heavily influenced by Greco-Roman notions of the underworld. If the framework of 3:19 was derived from the Pseudepigrapha, then it should be pointed out that in Jewish thought the place of imprisoned spirits is variously described as "in the depths of the earth" (Jubilees 5:6), "between Lebanon and Sanser" (1 Enoch 13:9), "inside the earth" (1 Enoch 14:5), "in the West" (1 Enoch 22:1; 67:4), "a place beyond earth, where the heavens come together, without heavenly firmament above it or earthly foundation below it or water" (1 Enoch 18:10-12), and "on the second heaven" (2 Enoch 7:1-2). Such descriptions are conflicting, but some of them imply that the place of imprisoned spirits is above the earth in a

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[127]E. Schweizer, *TDNT* (1968) VI.417, 447-448; VII.143; W. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965) 124-134. Of the major English translations, the NAB does justice to this idea best by rendering, "He was put to death insofar as fleshly existence goes, but was given life in the realm of the spirit." Some translators have rendered the datives differently, the first as a dative of reference and the second as a dative of instrument (so NIV, KJV), but this can hardly be correct because of their obvious parallelism in the text. If the approach is correct that they are datives of sphere, however, then the terms "flesh" and "spirit" do not enter the christological discussion as two different parts of Christ, as in dyophysitism and Chalcedonian christology (cf. contra Origen, *Against Celsus*, II.43). Neither does the translator need to chafe in making a decision between Christ's human spirit or his divine Spirit, cf. Blum, *EBC* (1981) 12.242. Furthermore, there is no threat here toward the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

[128]A daring emendation that a mistake of hearing/copying took place because *Enoch kai* (= and Enoch) was misunderstood to be *en hoi kai* (= in which also) has been suggested by various translators (e.g., Griesbach, Nestle, Harris, Moffat, Goodspeed). However without a scrap of textual evidence, it must be rejected.

[129]Ignatius, *Magnesians*, IX.2; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue*, LXXII.4; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III.20.4; IV.22.1; IV.27.2; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VI.6; Tertullian, *A Treatise On the Soul*, LV; Hippolytus, *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, 26. Both Justin Martyr and Irenaeus attribute this idea to the Old Testament, Justin to Jeremiah (though he claims that the Jews had excised it from the text) and Irenaeus alternately to Jeremiah and Isaiah. The passage is quoted as, "The Lord God remembered his dead people of Israel who lay in the graves; and he descended to preach to them his own salvation." However, no such passage is extent in any known text today, so unless some textual evidence is forthcoming, it must be concluded that Justin and Irenaeus were citing an inferior tradition.

heavenly sphere. The Greek verb *poreuomai* (= to go) does not necessarily imply descent, as would a verb like *katabaino* (= to go down), so the direction of Christ's "going" cannot be pressed linguistically. Thus, some suggest that Christ could have "gone" to the spirits during his ascension when he passed through the heavens, granting the legitimacy of the imagery in 2 Enoch, and that he made known his wisdom to the spirit beings along the lines of Ephesians 3:10.

A common interpretation since post-apostolic times, of course, is that Christ descended into the place of the dead. Several ante-Nicene fathers connected the thought of 3:19 with that of 4:6 (though the connection is not a necessary one). They believed that after his death Christ preached the gospel to those in hell so that no one who had died before the coming of Jesus would be deprived of hearing it.[130] Calvin suggested that the spirits in prison were Jews who had looked for the advent of Christ.[131] On the other hand, another interpretation, going back at least to the time of Augustine,[132] is that the Spirit of Christ preached through Noah to the antediluvian population. As such, the preaching was in the time of Noah, not after Jesus' death. This approach has become so well known in evangelical circles, probably out of the discomfort of having to deal with a passage that seems so bizarre, that one translation has emended the text to read, "He made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison" (NASB). This interpretation hardly does justice to the verb *poreuomai* (= to go), however, and the emendation must be rejected.

Much depends upon the nuance of the verb *kerysso* (= to preach, to announce). The verb is frequently used in the New Testament to describe the proclamation of the Christian message, and most of the foregoing interpretations take it in this way. However, the verb is also used in other contexts to refer to announcements in a more general way (cf. Mk. 1:45; 5:20; 7:36) as well as to the proclamation of Jewish law (cf. Ac. 15:21; Ga. 5:11) or a loud announcement by a herald (cf. Rv. 5:2). If the verb here is to be taken in the broader sense of an announcement, as some versions render it (so NEB, Williams, Weymouth), it need not refer to a preaching of the gospel among the spirits of the dead but probably refers to an announcement of Christ's victory in the realm of imprisoned spirits.

Can the imprisoned spirits be positively identified? Probably not. If they are

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[130]Ignatius, for instance, envisioned Christ preaching to the dead as an announcement of triumph to the Old Testament prophets, *Magnesians*, IX.2. Justin Martyr and Irenaeus interpreted the passage to mean that Christ preached salvation to "his dead people Israel who lay in the graves," *Dialogue*, LXXII.4; *Against Heresies*, III.20.4; IV.22.1; IV.27.2. Tertullian speaks of Christ preaching in Hades to the "patriarchs and prophets," *Treatise on the Soul*, XV. Hippolytus speaks of Christ "preaching to the souls of the saints, *Treatise on Christ and Anti-christ*, 26. Clement of Alexandria developed a rather interesting variation of this theme by interpreting that Christ preached both to the righteous who were under the law and prophets and also to the pagans who were righteous under the tutelage of Greek philosophy, *Stromata*, VI.6.

[131]Cf. Commentary on 1 Peter, loc. cit.

[132]Fitzmyer, *JBC* (1968) II.366.

human spirits, the options from the ante-Nicene fathers remain open (i.e., Old Testament saints, pagans, patriarchs, prophets, and so forth). If they are angelic spirits, then one is obliged to accept the pseudepigraphical explanation of disobedient angels in the time of Noah (cf. Ge. 6:1-2, 4) who lusted after human women and generated giants through this perverse union.[133] In either case, the spirits must be connected to the time of Noah during the period when God granted 120 years of respite while the ark was being constructed (3:20a; cf. Ge. 6:3).

At the end of this period, the antediluvian world was destroyed by the flood, and only eight people survived (3:20b). They were saved from the destruction "through water." The difficulty of this expression has been keenly felt by translators and commentators, since the waters did not save Noah at all, at least in the conventional sense. Rather, God (or the ark) saved Noah from a watery death. Among Christians who lean toward baptismal regeneration, the instrumental sense of the preposition *dia* (= through) is often pressed, since it becomes an antitype of Christian baptism, and this sense is reflected in several English versions (so KJV, JB, TEV, AB, Spanish common language versions [*Dios Habla Hoy*]). It should be pointed out, however, that *dia* need not be taken in an instrumental sense but may also be taken in a locative sense, that is, in the sense that the flood waters were the place through which the eight persons passed, not the means by which they were rescued (so NEB, NASB, Phillips, Weymouth, Knox, Williams). The verb *diasozo* (= to rescue, to save) can certainly carry such a sense.[134] If the locative sense is followed (and in this writer's opinion this sense is preferable), then the translation of the passage would be that Noah was "brought safely through the waters."

Even if one takes the construction in an instrumental way, however, it seems better to understand the waters to have saved Noah in the specialized sense that they bore him and his family to the top of the Ararat Mountains where they could descend from the ark. In other words, they were "brought safely through by means of water" (so Rotherham, German common language translation [*Die Gute Nachricht]*). As such, the flood waters became both the agent of death to those who perished and the agent of life to Noah's family. Some translations, of course, merely leave the issue ambiguous altogether (so RSV, NAB).

The salvation of Noah and his family from the flood is analogous to the baptism which now also saves Christians (3:21). Peter uses the term *antitypos* (= copy, representation, something serving as a counterpart) which, along with *typos* (=

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[133]cf. *1 Enoch*, 10-16; 21; *2 Baruch*, 56:12; *Jubilees*, 5:6; 10:1-14; *2 Enoch*, 7; *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs/Naphtali*, 3:5; Josephus, *Antiquities*, I.3.1. Because of this "disobedience," such rebel angels were bound in prison. They are credited with the ongoing corruption of the human race through spiritual powers, and all human sin is traced back to them and to Azazel, their leader. Possible New Testament allusions to this rebellion are 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6-7.

[134]Cf. *BAG* (1979) 189.

pattern, figure, archtype), forms a peculiar and unique hermeneutic in the New Testament. An Old Testament person, object or event exists in a special correspondence to a New Testament person, object or event.[135] Typology is not merely allegory in that allegory seeks hidden meanings in a single primary source, whereas typology involves a historical connection between two sources, a past one and a present one. Typology assumes that God, who is the lord of history, causes earlier historical occurrences to embody characteristics that will reappear later.[136] Paul used a similar analogy for baptism with respect to the crossing of the Red Sea (cf. 1 Co. 10:2).

The Greek syntax of 3:21b is difficult, which literally reads, "...which counterpart also now saves you--baptism." English versions vary considerably, and several offer dynamic equivalencies:

- … *And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also* (NIV; similar to JB, TEV, Williams)
- … *You are now saved by a baptismal bath which corresponds to this exactly* (NAB)
- … *Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you* (RSV; similar to NASB, TCNT, Moffat, Weymouth)
- … *And I cannot help pointing out what a perfect illustration this is of the way you have been admitted to the safety of the Christian 'ark' by baptism* (Phillips)
- … *This water prefigured the water of baptism through which you are now brought to safety* (NEB)

The general meaning is clear enough that in some way the salvation of Noah's family during the flood prefigures Christian salvation as represented in baptism. However, it should equally be clear that Peter's comparison of the waters of baptism with the waters of the flood prevents one from taking his statement about salvation in a causal sense as though baptism caused salvation. Baptism does not cause salvation any more than the flood caused Noah to be saved. Both waters are associated with salvation, however.

Peter now goes on to explain what Christian baptism is not as well as what it is (3:21b). Baptism is not a removal of "filth of the flesh." The translation of this phrase is critical, and it is made even more so by the fact that the crucial word *rhypos* is a *hapax legomenon* (i.e., a word used only here in the New Testament). *Rhypos* is usually translated as "dirt" or its equivalent.[137] However, there is a good case to be made for *rhypos* referring to moral filth, not physical contamination. In the LXX,

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[135]L. Goppelt, *TDNT* (1972) VIII.248-259.

[136]A. Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) 236-264.

[137]So RSV, NEB, NASB, NAB, TCNT, JB, TEV, JNT, Goodspeed, Moffat, Weymouth, Williams.

several uses of *rhypos* suggest a meaning of moral uncleanness (cf. Job 11:15; 14:4; Is. 4:4),[138] while cognate terms in the New Testament support this nuance (cf. Ja. 1:21; Rv. 22:11).[139] So, while the word might mean physical dirt,[140] the metaphorical nuance of moral filth is a better option.[141] J. Ramsey Michaels is probably right in saying, "It is unlikely that the present passage intends to say anything so banal as that baptism's purpose is not to wash dirt off the body. What early Christian would have thought that is was? More probably Peter...has moral defilement in view..."[142] As such, the older English translations, which do not tilt the nuance toward physical dirt, are to be preferred in rendering the passage as "the filth of the flesh" (KJV and earlier).

If the above translation is correct, then Peter directly negates the notion that Christian baptism in and of itself is a method for removing sins. Rather than a negative meaning, baptism has the positive meaning of a pledge of faith. Once again, the reader encounters a *hapax legomenon* in the noun *eperotema* (= request, pledge or appeal). The word is cognate with the verb *erotao* (= to ask a question, to request), and there are two possible meanings. If the emphasis falls toward the nuance of requesting, then it may be an appeal to God for remission of sins.[143] That there is a relationship between baptism and forgiveness is attested elsewhere (cf. Mk. 1:4; Ac. 2:38; 22:16), though the precise relationship is debated and certainly cannot be causal, given the rest of the New Testament's emphasis on grace and faith, not ritual, as the primary realities of salvation. However, if the emphasis falls toward the nuance of pledging (which seems preferable), then the reference is to a statement of faith made by the baptismal candidate in answer to a formal question, such as, the baptismal interrogations that gave rise to the more formal creeds of the early church and the kind of confession related in Acts 8:37 of the Western Text.[144] If what Peter has in mind here is a confession of faith, then it is the pledge itself, not baptism, that demonstrates a clear conscience. As such, baptism is not a ritual that effects a clear conscience, but rather, a ritual that demonstrates a clear conscience when it is accompanied by a confession of faith. And this, of course, agrees with St. Paul's, "If

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[138]The only exception is Job 9:31, where physical contamination seems intended.

[139]The other New Testament cognate in Ja. 2:2 is less clear, where it either means "dirty clothing" or "shabby clothing."

[140]In non-biblical documents of the Koine Period, for instance, the word is used of the ear-wax of a she-mule and the discoloration of liquid, J. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 565.

[141]For various other uses of *rhypos* in the sense of moral or intellectual pollution, see G. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1961) 1219. Furthermore, as Bo Reicke has observed, the removal of "uncleanness of the flesh" by ritual washing was a feature of contemporary Judaism, cf. 114.

[142]Michaels, 216.

[143]H. Greeven, *TDNT* (1964) II.688-689.

[144]"And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?' Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God'" (NKJB, KJV), cf. Best, 148; G. Angel, *NIDNTT* (1976) II.880-881; Selwyn, 205-206.

you confess with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Ro. 10:9; cf. Ac. 16:30-33). Such a confession of faith is oriented around the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, just as Peter says here.

Peter concludes this section by affirming Christ's ascension and exaltation to God's right hand (3:22). At his enthronement, all the spiritual beings are subjected to him, or as the ancient psalmist put it, all things are now "under his feet" (Ps. 110:1). The categories of supernatural beings are described in various places in the New Testament as well as in other Christian and/or Jewish literature. The exact phraseology used here appears in the Pseudepigrapha, where it refers to powers of evil connected with Gehenna.[145] In the Pauline letters, similar expressions appear:

… *angels, rulers, powers* (Ro. 8:38)

… *rule, authority, power* (1 Co. 15:24)

… *rule, authority, power, lordship, name* (Ep. 1:21)

… *rulers, authorities in the heavenlies* (Ep. 3:10)

… *rulers, authorities, world-rulers* (Ep. 6:12)

… *heavenly [beings], earthly [beings], subterranean [beings]* (Phil. 2:10)

… *things in the heavens, on the earth, visible, invisible, thrones, lordships, rulers, authorities* (Col. 1:16)

… *rule, authority* (Col. 2:10)

… *rulers, authorities* (Col. 2:15)

These categories have a negative tone in the Pauline literature and include, if they do not exclusively refer to, forces aligned against God. At the same time, the terms are general enough that it is inappropriate to define them in a precise hierarchy or make any sharp distinction between them.[146]

If Peter speaks from the same cosmological viewpoint as Paul, then the "angels, authorities and powers" represent evil forces over which Christ was triumphant in his ascension and exaltation. This, in turn, may relate to the previous statement about his announcement to imprisoned spirits.

Living in God's Will (4:1-11)

Following the summary of apostolic teaching in 3:18-22, Peter picks up the thought he interrupted in 3:17, that is, the suffering of Christians. He admonishes his readers to be prepared for suffering, since it is not alien to the Christian life. His

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[145]*Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, 1:3. It should be noted, however, that many scholars believe this passage to be a Christian interpolation, cf. M. Knibb, "Mart. Isa.," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985) II.156.

[146]L. Mitton, *Ephesians [NCB]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 72.

verbal metaphor, "arm yourselves," is often used in a military context to refer to equipping soldiers with weapons,[147] and since the context as to do with tension between Christians and pagans, the military metaphor fits. At the same time, Peter is not advocating conflict, but rather, urging his readers to arm themselves with the same insight that Christ demonstrated when he suffered (4:1).

The translation of the conjunction in 4:1b is critical.[148] Some versions render it "because" (so KJV, RSV, NEB, NIV, NAB, NASB, Phillips). This translation is followed by the explanatory phrase "...the one who has suffered has ceased from sin," perhaps an aphorism of conventional or proverbial wisdom. A corpse certainly commits no sins! Many interpreters take the thought to be that if Christians suffer to the point of death, their struggle with sin will be over. Some scholars, however, render the word as "that" (so JB, Moffat, Williams, Kelly), thus more directly explaining Christ's attitude when he suffered. In this view, the pronoun would refer directly to Christ, not to a Christian sufferer. If the latter translational option is followed, it must be balanced with the succeeding expression, which is also capable of more than one rendering. Here are the translational options:

- *the one who has suffered in the body has finished with sin* (so JB, NAB, NEB, Moffat, Rotherham, Weymouth, Williams).
- *the one who has suffered in the body has ceased from sin* (so KJV, RSV, NASB).
- *the one [i.e., Jesus Christ] who has suffered in the body has been relieved of the forces of evil* (Kelly).
- *the one who has suffered in the body has broken with [the lifestyle of] sin* (various commentators).

The last option seems to fit the sense of the passage best, since Peter follows with a discussion of his readers' pre-Christian lifestyle, a lifestyle that Christians have now forsaken. Such a sense also is possible with the first two translational options, though they are more ambiguous. The idea that suffering is itself a means of purification from sin does not do justice to the perfect tense of the verb, unless one is willing to say that some single instance of suffering was sufficient to give complete purification. In any case, the idea that sins can be cleansed by means other than the atonement of Christ flies in the face of the rest of the New Testament.

If 4:1 refers to the Christian's break with the lifestyle of sin, then 4:2 means that the Christian has finished with a life dominated by fleshly cravings. Instead, the Christian life will be ruled by the will of God. The readers' past lives, before coming to faith, had been filled with the debaucheries, cravings, drunken fits, carousings,

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[147]A. Oepke, *TDNT* (1967) V.294.

[148]The word *hoti* may be taken in the sense of "because" or "that," and the translator's decision affects the meaning of the verse.

drunken parties, and illicit deeds committed in connection with idolatry (4:3).[149] The degenerate lifestyle of the pagans has so desensitized them to their depravity that they find it surprising that Christians do not rush with them toward the same kind of behavior.[150] Consequently, they stoop to slander (4:4). Such pagans will surely be accountable to the God who stands ready to judge the living and dead (4:5).

The coming judgment is why the gospel was preached in the first place. This same gospel was preached "to those who are dead so that on the one hand they might be judged as to their physical existence, but on the other hand they might live in the spirit with respect to God" (4:5). The fact that Peter repeats the term *nekroi* (= the dead ones, corpses), which he has just used in the phrase "the living and the dead," probably means that he refers to those who are physically dead (4:6). If he were speaking of spiritual death, he probably would have used the word *thanatos* (= death) or some qualifying phrase along with *nekroi*, such as Paul's "dead in sins" (e.g., Ep. 2:1, 5).

But who are the deceased ones? The early church fathers often connected this passage with the "spirits in prison" of 3:19 to make the case that between his crucifixion and resurrection Jesus preached the gospel in the underworld (see comments on 3:19). However, it is just as feasible that what Peter has in mind is the preaching of the gospel to people who are now deceased but who, while they were alive, had the gospel preached to them. If this is so, then the sense of the passage would be, "For toward this end also the good news was preached to those [Christians] who are [now] dead in order that on the one hand they might be judged [with death] as to their physical existence, but on the other hand they might live in the spirit with respect to God" (my translation). The expression "judged according to men in the flesh" would simply refer to the fact that all humans are judged with death (so TEV, Williams, Weymouth). Peter's phrase is the rough equivalent of the line from Hebrews, "Humans are destined to die once" (He. 9:27).[151]

Early Christian eschatology was clearly that Christians, since the advent of the messiah, were living in the "last days" (cf. Ro. 16:20; 1 Co. 7:31),[152] and Peter affirms

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[149]Lit., "illicit idolatries;" however, the force of the phrase is more likely pointing toward some of the reprehensible practices of Greco-Roman idolatry that clearly violated God's laws (i.e., sacred prostitution, etc.) and that not only are wrong because they are associated with pagan deities, but are wrong because they call for immoral behavior as well, cf. *BAG* (1979) 221.

[150]Peter mixes his metaphors here by using the words *syntrecho* (= to run, race together) and *anachysis* (= pouring out, flood). Together, they yield a meaning "to run together into the same flood," which in English is confusing. It seems better in the interests of English diction to translate the former word in the sense of hurrying or some similar idea.

[151]This is the second time Peter has juxtaposed the words *sarx* (= flesh) and *pneuma* (= spirit), and it is likely that in both cases he refers to the contrasting spheres of earthly life and resurrected life (cf. 3:18). If so, then *pneuma* refers not only to religious life on earth prior to death, but also eternal life that is consummated in resurrection (so Phillips). While resurrection life begins in the act of faith, it is eschatological in hope.

[152]For a full development of this idea, see D. Lewis, *Three Crucial Questions About the Last Days* (Grand Rapids:

that same conviction (4:7a). In view of the imminence of the end, Christians should live sensible,[153] well-balanced[154] lives that enable them to pray (4:7b). Even though they faced the imminent end of all things, Peter discourages Christians from being caught up in an eschatological frenzy. Peter is not merely discouraging an overt lapse into paganism, but also an implicit lapse into the mystical excesses of paganism.[155] As their highest priority, Christians must maintain a constant love for each other, because love covers a host of sins (4:8). Here, Peter quotes a phrase from Proverbs 10:12. The primary idea is conciliation. It gains its meaning from its antithesis to the Hebrew verb *te'orer* (= to arouse, set in motion, disturb), and in 1 Peter it is similar to Paul's statement that love "bears all things" (1 Co. 13:7). As such, love does not harp on mistakes and shortcomings, and it does not betray confidences.[156]

Another imperative Peter offers is toward hospitality (4:9). Christians should be hospitable to each other without raising the issue that fellow Christians do not deserve such hospitality. Especially if some of Peter's readers were slaves and some masters, hospitality should be shown equally without regard for class status, and the burden of responsibility was squarely on the shoulders of the more wealthy brothers and sisters.

The ministry of spiritual gifts is yet another imperative. Every Christian is gifted in some way,[157] and Christians should use their gifts like good house-stewards[158] of God's diversified grace (4:10). As Paul, Peter also understands spiritual gifts to be the manifestation of God's grace in many and varied ways (cf. Ro. 12:3-8; 1 Co. 12:8-11; Ep. 4:8-13). If one's gift is speaking, for instance, then that person should use his/her gift out of the fund of strength that God underwrites.[159] In so using one's gifts, the believer glorifies God through Christ Jesus, and Christ is the one to whom has been given the glory and the power forever (4:11). The *amen* (= so be it) at this point need not imply a first ending to the letter as some have supposed. It is typical that doxologies, such as the one just offered, are punctuated with an amen of affirmation even when they occur in the midst of discourse (e.g. Ro. 11:36; Ga. 1:5; Ep. 3:21; 1 Ti. 1:17; Rv. 1:6).

Baker, 1998)29-68.

[153]The verb *sophreneo* (= to be of sound mind, to be reasonable) is closely connected with the idea of rationality.

[154]The word *nepho* (= to be sober) is the opposite of intoxication, both literally and figuratively, cf. O. Bauernfeind, *TDNT* (1967) IV.936-937. Moffat's dynamic equivalency is worth repeating, "Steady then, keep cool and pray!"

[155]U. Luck, *TDNT* (1971) VII.1102-1103.

[156]James, also, quotes this proverb (Ja. 5:20), but his meaning is somewhat different in that he refers to the covering of sins in the context of evangelism.

[157]This is the only non-Pauline passage that directly uses the word *charisma* (= gift), and there is no reason to doubt that Peter uses the term in the same way as Paul.

[158]Previously used in 2:18 to refer to house-slaves, the word *oikonomos* here implies that the community of faith is like a Greco-Roman extended household bound together under the Lord himself, Jesus Christ.

[159]Lit., "out of the strength that God finances." The verb *choregeo* means to defray expenses, cf. *BAG* (1979) 883.

Suffering in God's Will (4:12-19)

Peter adds another important concept to his discussion of suffering. Earlier, he has commended unjust suffering rather than deserved suffering as an expression of following Jesus, who also suffered unjustly. Now, he describes suffering as being "according to God's will" (4:19). Such a fiery ordeal should not come as a surprise (4:12), for as he said at the very beginning of the letter (cf. 1:7), it is for the purpose of testing. Suffering is not foreign to the Christian life, but it is to be expected. Instead of despair, Christians should rejoice in the midst of the crucible, since in doing so they are truly sharing with Christ, God's suffering Servant (4:13; cf. Phil. 3:10). The Christian does not merely suffer *for* Christ, he or she suffers *with* Christ, and the ultimate end of such suffering is glory and joy when Christ is revealed (cf. 2 Ti. 2:11-13). Denunciation because of one's loyalty to Christ has the positive benefit that God's glory rests on the sufferer in the midst of the trial (4:14). It is possible that, given the fact that Peter has already developed the symbolism of the Christian community as the new temple (cf. 2:4-8), he is here adding to that symbolism by indicating that the *kavod Yahweh* (= glory of God) that once rested between the cherubim over the ark of the covenant now has come to rest upon members of the Christian community through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Since the phrase "spirit of glory" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, its frame of reference must come from the Old Testament.

Two direct connections may be made between Peter's advice and the teachings of Jesus. First, Peter's opening phrase "you are blessed if you are denounced for Christ's sake" admirably sums up Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt. 5:11-12). Second, the concept that the Spirit of God rests upon believers especially in times of persecution stems from the clear promises of the Lord (cf. Mt. 10:19-20//Lk. 12:11-12; Mk. 13:11).

It is to be expected that Christian suffering must be innocent and not deserved, as Peter has said previously (4:14; cf. 2:20).[160] If one suffers as a Christian, however, there is no cause for shame but rather cause for glorifying God because one bears the Christian name.[161]

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[160]The word *allotiepiskopos* (= meddler) is a rare word even in classical Greek with some uncertainty of meaning, and it appears only here in the New Testament. Based on etymology, it means "one who oversees other's affairs," but this definition does not help much in the context of 1st century thought and Peter's obvious negative tone. Conjectures range from "concealer of stolen goods" to "spy" to "informer" to "busybody" to "revolutionist" to "infringing the rights of others," cf. *BAG* (1979) 40. Translators, therefore, have provided a rather wide variety of possibilities, such as, "interfering in matters which do not concern Christians" (TCNT), "mischief-maker" (RSV), "a spy upon other people's business" (Phillips, Montgomery, Weymouth), "informer" (JB), "infringing other men's rights" (Knox, NEB, NAB), "busy-body" (KJV, NASB, Williams), and "trying to manage other people's business" (TEV).

[161]There is ambiguity as to whether the antecedent of "this name" is Christ or Christian. The name Christian is the closest possible antecedent, but some argue that the phrase "name of Christ," which was used earlier (4:14), is what Peter has in view. For general meaning, the point is moot, since even the name Christian is derived from the name

Now follows yet another aspect of Christian suffering. Judgment, Peter says, must begin with God's house (4:17). We should assume, given Peter's earlier symbolism (2:4-8), that the word *oikia* (= house) continues the metaphor of the church as God's temple or sanctuary. The allusion to judgment beginning with God's house has its Old Testament precedent in a vision of Ezekiel (Eze. 9:1-8), where six executioners were summoned along with a priestly scribe. The scribe marked the forehead of all Jerusalem's citizens who had not indulged in paganism, and the executioners slaughtered everyone who was not marked. While the executions were underway, Ezekiel interceded for the remnant. A similar judgment was described by Zechariah in the vision of "The Song of the Sword." Here, the prophet saw a slaughter of God's Shepherd and his flock in which two-thirds would be struck down and the remnant would be refined in the fire of oppression (Zec. 13:7-9). In the vision, the outcome of the judgment was the reunion of God and his people in which the remnant flock will call upon God's name and he will answer them, acknowledging them as his people while they claim him as their God. The expressions "they are my people" and "the Lord is our God" seems a deliberate play on the restoration promises of Hosea (2:23), to which Peter has already referred (cf. 2:10). Finally, Malachi speaks of the Lord beginning the work of purification at the temple (Mal. 3:1-5). In Jewish apocalyptic, the belief in a final eschatological showdown between the kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan was a common expectation, a showdown that would be preceded by desperate times of war, pestilence, famine and the dissolution of all order.[162] The later Jewish and Christian name given to this frightful period was "travail pains of the messiah" (cf. Mk. 13:8).

It is probably to these precedents that Peter refers, and the essence of his argument is that if the woes of messiah have already begun in the suffering of God's people, the final doom on the disobedient is certain to follow shortly.[163] If it is true that the woes of messiah begin with the suffering of God's people, what will be the end of those who reject the gospel? Peter's argument is *a fortiori*, that is, if the innocent suffering of Christians is severe, how much more severe will be the suffering of those who are not Christians? To reinforce this thought, Peter quotes verbatim from the Septuagint of Proverbs 11:31 (4:18). *If the righteous person is scarcely preserved,[164] what will be the fate[165] of the impious person and sinner (my*

Christ.

[162]E. Jenni, "Messiah, Jewish," *IDB* (1962) III.364; D. Russell, *The Message and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964) 271-276.

[163]Blum, 12.249.

[164]The verb "saved" should here be understood in the sense of preservation during the messianic woes, not salvation from sin. It is analogous to Jesus statement that "if those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened" (Mt. 24:22//M. 13:20). Similarly, both Ezekiel and John show that the only protection for God's people in such times is that they are specially marked and protected by God (Eze. 9:3-4; Rv. 7:2-4; 9:4).

translation)?

Now comes Peter's conclusion. Those who suffer according to God's will must entrust themselves[166] to God, their faithful Creator (4:19). This surrender to God's will, of course, is what Peter has already described as the mindset of Christ on the cross (cf. 2:23). The fact that God is a faithful Creator reminds the readers of God's role as the sustainer of the universe, and particularly, his role as the sustainer of his people. It may be that Peter implies God's creative lordship over history as well as the material universe, and if so, then believers can be assured that the faithful Creator has their best interests in mind, even if they are allowed to experience hardship and opposition. Finally, as Peter has urged all along (cf. 2:12, 15, 20; 3:9, 11, 13, 17; 4:9-10), Christian suffering must be accompanied by good works.

The Ecclesiastical Code (5:1-7)

The last major subject Peter offers before his final exhortations and closing is an ecclesiastical code, that is, a rule for church leaders and church life. He begins with an address to the elders of the churches in the provinces (5:1a; cf. 1:1), categorizing himself as a "fellow-elder." Of course, Peter is also an apostle, a fact to which he called attention in the opening of the letter (1:1), but his language here expresses collegiality. The term *presbyteros* (= elder) is commonly used in the New Testament to describe church leaders (cf. Ac. 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Ti. 4:14; 5:17, 19; Tit. 1:5; Ja. 5:14). There is not enough information here or elsewhere in the New Testament to reconstruct the primitive government of the early church. However, it may be pointed out that there are three terms and their cognates that seem, more or less, to be used interchangeably, that is, *presbyteros* (= elder, presbyter), *episkopos* (= bishop, overseer) and *poimen* (= shepherd, pastor). These titles are so used in the narrative of Paul's farewell to the Ephesian clergy (Ac. 20:17, 28). In the present passage, at least two of the terms are present (*presbyteros* and *poimeno*), and there is reasonably strong attestation for the third (the participle *episkopountes*).[167]

The term "elder" was almost certainly borrowed from Jewish life where it evolved from its Old Testament meaning of a person with seniority in the community, either by age or station, to the title in Judaism for leaders in the synagogue. It is clear that such persons were appointed or elected in the various Pauline communities to superintend the church (cf. Ac. 14:23), and they were of sufficient status to be called

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[165]Lit., "where [shall the] impious person and sinner show himself?" This phrase must be translated idiomatically to capture its nuance (cf. NEB, TEV, JB, NAB, Weymouth, Phillips).

[166]Lit., "souls;" however, this word should not be taken in a Platonic sense, but rather, in the sense of the whole person (cf. 2:11; 3:20, Greek text).

[167]The United Bible Society text and Textus Receptus include the latter (so KJV, ASV, NAB, JB, TEV, NIV), though the Nestle text omits it (so RSV, NEB, NASB), cf. discussion in Metzger, *Textual*, 695-696.

to assemble with the apostles in Jerusalem over doctrinal debate (Ac. 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 16:4). The other titles, though used less, are found in the Ephesian church (Ac. 20:28; Ep. 4:11; 1 Ti. 3:2), the Corinthian church (1 Co. 9:7), the Philippian church (Phil. 1:1), and the Cretan churches (Tit. 1:7). More generally, Paul can refer to those "over you in the Lord" (1 Th. 5:12), those having "gifts of administration" (1 Co. 12:28), and those who exercise "leadership" (Ro. 12:8). The ambiguity of these titles and their apparent overlapping if not synonymous functions have occasioned much scholarly debate.[168]

In addition to the term elder, Peter claims to be a *martys* (= witness) of the sufferings of Christ and a sharer of the glory about to be revealed at the return of the Lord. The term *martys* does not in and of itself imply an eyewitness. In both non-biblical Greek as well as the New Testament, the term was used in two senses, to witness to ascertainable facts and to make known and confess convictions about what was believed to be the truth.[169] The gospels are silent as to whether or not Peter actually witnessed the scene at the cross, though they may imply that he did not do so inasmuch as he departed the scene of the trial after his denial of the Lord. Thus, Peter may simply be confessing to the truth of Christ's sufferings as one who affirmed the common conviction of the church or as one who witnessed in the role of a fellow sufferer with Christ.[170] On the other hand, the role of eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ was extremely important in early Christian preaching (cf. Ac. 2:32; 3:15; 4:20, 33; 5:29-32; 10:39-41; 13:30-31; 1 Co. 15:1-8), and there is no evidence that makes it impossible for Peter to have witnessed the passion of Jesus. As a "sharer" in the glory of Christ, he was present at the transfiguration (Mt. 17:1ff.//Mk. 9:2ff.//Lk. 9:28ff.) as well as at the ascension of the Lord (Lk. 24:33-53; Ac. 1:3-9, 13).

Peter's intent in the next few comments is to encourage the leaders of the churches. Etymologically, the verb *parakaleo* (= to encourage) means to call to one's side, and the possibilities for translation are several, such as, summon, invite, appeal to, urge, encourage, exhort, implore, request, entreat, comfort, and so forth.[171] Whatever the nuance of the verb, Peter obviously wants the elders to take seriously their commission to shepherd God's flock, a metaphor that implies protection, care and nurture (5:2).[172] The metaphor is of a huge flock of sheep divided under the care of various shepherds. Sometimes such large flocks would be enclosed in a single structure for the night, and in the morning, each shepherd would then call forth his own portion of the larger flock.[173] If the participle "overseeing" (see footnote #167) is

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[168]To follow this debate, see M. Shepherd, Jr., *IDB* (1962) II.73-75.

[169]H. Strathmann, *TDNT* (1967) IV.489, 494-495.

[170]So John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, trans. J. Owen (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) XXII.144.

[171]*TDNT* (1967) V.773-799.

[172]*BAG* (1979) 683-684.

[173]*IDB* (1962) IV.316.

indeed part of the original text, it functions as another emphasis on protective care, though of course, other nuances, such as authority and judicial decisions, are possible too.[174]

Motives are critical in pastoral care. Peter urges that elders perform their task not because of compulsion[175] but voluntarily--not in the interests of dishonest profit, but rather, willingly. Especially, leaders must not use their office to domineer over[176] their share of the flock. Rather, they must lead by example (5:3). Pastors must always remember that they are under-shepherds, and when Christ, the Chief Shepherd, appears, they all will receive the unfading wreath of glory (5:4).[177] The wreath of glory is unfading in that, unlike a wreath of ivy, parsley, myrtle or olive leaves that wilts, the garland of victory for faithful shepherds will be an eternal reward. The eschatological symbolism of the wreath is not only analogous to other passages in the New Testament (cf. 1 Co. 9:25; Phil. 4:1; 2 Th. 2:19; 2 Ti. 4:8; Ja. 1:12; Rv. 2:10; 3:11; 4:4), but in the Septuagint the *stephanos* was also a symbol of both temporal and eschatological honor (cf. Is. 28:5; Je. 13:18; Pro. 4:9; 12:4; 14:24; 16:31; 17:6).

Peter's counsel to the youth is submission to the elders (5:5). Here, much hangs on the translation of the word *homoios* (= similarly, likewise) for Peter's meaning. If the word is intended to connect the "youth" with the "elders" of 5:1, then what Peter refers to is either young Christians or even junior ministers. On the other hand, *homoios* may simply be a transition to a new subject (similar to its usage in 3:1 and 3:7). If so, then it advocates that younger people in the congregation should defer to the older members. In either case, submission is urged. But whether young or old, all should put on the frock of humility to each other.[178] Peter's allusion to "putting on" humility may reflect upon Jesus' humble washing of his disciples' feet on the night of his betrayal when he girded himself with a towel. To reinforce his plea for humility, Peter quotes Proverbs 3:34 (LXX), just as does James (cf. Ja. 4:6). God opposes

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[174]H. Beyer, *TDNT* (1964) II.610.

[175]It is unclear whether Peter intends some outward compulsion (i.e., performing tasks as a matter of duty or because others have laid excessive or overly demanding burdens upon the minister) or an inward compulsion (i.e., the need or desire for money).

[176]Peter may be alluding to the words of Jesus in which the same verb is used of the pagans who domineer over their subjects (cf. Mk. 10:42//Mt. 20:25).

[177]A distinction should be made between *stephanos* (= wreath, garland) and *diadema* (= crown). The former, used here, is the garland of victory and accomplishment, usually woven out of leaves and awarded in athletic games, given to military victors, bestowed upon citizens for distinguished public service, or placed upon the bride and groom in weddings. The latter refers to the imperial or kingly crown, cf. R. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 78-81; C. Hemer, *NIDNTT* (1975) I.405-406.

[178]The verb *enkomboomai* (= gird, put on a frock or apron) appears only here in the New Testament, does not appear at all in the LXX, and does not appear in the Koine papyri, cf. Moulton and Milligan, 180; *TDNT* (1964) II.339. In classical Greek, the verb referred to binding on oneself a frock or apron so as to keep clean one's tunic, *LSJ* (1968) 473, 600.

arrogant people, but he gives grace to lowly people! Better, then, to humble oneself under God's mighty hand than to be humbled by force under God's displeasure. The humble person will be exalted at the designated time when Christ is revealed (5:6). Meanwhile, believers should throw all their anxiety upon Jesus, because it matters to him when his people are troubled.

Final Exhortations (5:8-11)

Peter now concludes with his final advice. Christians should be self-controlled and on the alert (5:8). Their opponent, the devil,[179] prowls like a lion seeking prey. The Christian is to oppose him while remaining solid in the faith. Believers must remember that the same misfortunes they experience are also laid upon their brothers and sisters throughout the world (5:9). Trials notwithstanding, the God of grace has called his people to eternal glory, and though suffering may last for awhile (cf. 1:6), in the end God will restore, confirm, strengthen and establish them (5:10). Peter adds a doxology which is familiar to most Christians as part of the liturgical conclusion to the Lord's Prayer (5:11).

Closing (5:12-14)

Peter closes the letter by mentioning Silvanus (5:12).[180] The expression "through Silvanus" might mean that he was the courier of the letter. More likely in most scholars' opinion, Silvanus was the amanuensis or secretary who either received the letter by dictation or was given the general outline of the contents and left to work it up into acceptable form, leaving the final approval to the original author, Peter. Of course, the two options are not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, it is entirely possible that further information could be conveyed orally by a courier to circumvent possible forgery or distortion. Such oral explanations provided further corroboration and explication of an epistle's contents, especially if conveyed by someone who was to be trusted implicitly.[181] Silvanus was obviously known to be such a person. What Peter has composed in a few words he certifies as the "true grace of God" in which his readers are to stand firm.

Members of the co-elect church in Babylon[182] sends greetings to their fellow

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[179]Peter's two words, *antidikos* (= opponent, enemy) and *diabolos* (= devil), derive from the Hebrew Bible's *ha-satan* (= the accuser).

[180]Or, Silas.

[181]J. Lown, *ISBE* (1982) II.123-124.

[182]As mentioned in the introduction, the name Babylon is probably the common cryptogram for Rome. To be sure, there was an Egyptian Babylon in Old Cairo mentioned in Strabo (XVII.1.30), but by the first century it was little more than a military fort. Mesopotamian Babylon was defended by John Calvin and some of the other Reformers, but their opinion was probably due to an effort to disconnect Peter from Rome. In any case, there is no historical indication that Peter was ever in Mesopotamian Babylon, and the Jewish community there had been largely expelled. Most commentators, modern and ancient, agree that Rome is the best solution, since there is clear

Christians in the provinces as does Mark (5:13). It is generally agreed that the Mark to whom Peter refers is John Mark, the author of the Second Gospel. That Mark was Peter's "son" should not be taken as a biological relationship but a spiritual one.[183]

The Christian kiss, also found in Paul's letters (Ro. 16:16; 1 Co. 16:20; 2 Co. 13:12; 1 Th. 5:26), had become a regular feature of the eucharistic celebration by at least the middle of the second century. Justin Martyr said, "Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss."[184] The letter ends with the Christian-Jewish *shalom*, but with the qualifier "to all the ones in Christ."

historical connection with the closing years of Peter's life.

[183]Papias, according to Eusebius (III.39.15), quotes a tradition that Mark was the interpreter of Peter, and if so, then a close relationship existed between the two.

[184]*First Apology*, 65:2.

Looking Forward to The Day of God - The Book of 2 Peter

The Book of 2 Peter has been surrounded by controversy from very early times due to its relatively late circulation in the early churches and doubt about its authenticity. Until about AD 200, external references to the epistle are virtually unknown. Much of the content of the letter reproduces the same material as found in the Letter of Jude, and most scholars conclude that 2 Peter has a literary dependency upon Jude. Like Jude, 2 Peter contains allusions to the Jewish pseudepigrapha. Conservatives find the question of authenticity sufficiently difficult that they tend to avoid the letter, and liberals sometimes dismiss the document as secondary. Hence, 2 Peter is perhaps the least familiar to most Christians of all the New Testament documents.

At the same time, 2 Peter has a relevant message for the modern church. It contains a stern and forthright warning against destructive heresies and apostasy, problems in both ancient as well as modern times. It also provides a defense against the perceived delay of the second coming of Christ and assures its readers of God's coming judgment on a world filled with evil.

Introduction

Argument

Putting aside for the moment the critical questions of authorship, literary dependency and canonicity, the reader can see that the argument of the letter is quite straightforward. After the opening paragraphs, which urge upon the Christian community the values and virtues of the faith (1:5-9) and the certainties of the apostolic tradition (1:16-21), the writer immediately enters into a polemic against false teachers (2:1). He recites a series of examples where God summarily judged rebels while sparing the righteous (2:4-9). His point, of course, is that human actions matter and humans are accountable for them. The arrogant rationalist who thinks God is oblivious is in for a terrible shock, as the old preacher said, "There will be payday, someday!" (2:13a). The false teachers were offering "freedom" (2:19a), but in reality, this "freedom" was no more than an ethical anarchy (2:13b-15). They advocated that they were beyond good and evil (2:18a). Such deceptive heresy was undermining the faith of the newly converted (2:18b). In the end, those who were duped by them were worse off then before they heard the Christian gospel (2:20-22).

Against this antinomianism, the writer warns that there will be a time of reckoning--what he calls the "day of the Lord" or the "day of God" (3:10, 12). Skeptics might scoff at the notion that the Lord will come in judgment upon the world (3:3-4). Nevertheless, the history of the Hebrew Bible is quite plain. The God who once judged the world by water (3:5-7) would, in the end, judge it finally by fire

(3:10, 12).

On the whole, then, the argument of 2 Peter is about the relevance of God to the world and its history, and in particular, the ethical implications of God's relationship to the world. Is the doctrine of divine providence and sovereignty true? The writer gives an emphatic, "Yes!" Can God's judgment be dismissed as inconsequential? Absolutely not! Closely associated with this debate is the problem of evil and the fact that God tolerates it for the present time. Why? The theodicy of 2 Peter is that God delays final judgment in order to provide ample opportunity for people to repent (3:9, 15). These conclusions give urgent ethical motivation to "live holy and godly lives" (3:11b) and to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord" (3:18).

Authorship

The vexed question of authorship is more than merely an exercise in arcane scholarship. There are several theological standards at risk in the issue, some of which are larger than what simply affects this single document. Among them are the following questions: Is the canon closed? Is the Bible inerrant? If so, how is inerrancy to be defined? Is Holy Scripture the final authority for faith and practice, or to put it another way, is the authority behind the Christian faith grounded in the truthfulness of its Scriptures or in the longevity of its tradition? If the former, then Simon Peter must have written 2 Peter because the book itself says so. If the latter, then the issue of inerrancy is less important than the issue of traditional acceptance. Finally, how far is one willing to allow the techniques of human scholarship to pass judgment upon a document considered to be the Word of God? Is it necessary to commit intellectual suicide in order to affirm the integrity of this book? These are not superficial questions, and one can readily see why the controversy over 2 Peter has been a particularly delicate one.

To the uninitiated, the authenticity of 2 Peter appears solid enough. The letter plainly claims to have been written by the great apostle himself, Symeon Rock (1:1),[185] and it uses the Hebraic form of the given name (cf. Ac. 15:14) as well as the nickname given to Peter by Christ (cf. Jn. 1:42). Early in the letter, the writer alludes to Jesus' prediction that Peter would suffer a martyr's death (1:14; cf. Jn. 21:18-19). The author also cites a particular event in the life of Jesus, the transfiguration, which was experienced by only three persons other than the Lord--Peter, James and John (Mt. 17:1ff.//Mk. 9:2ff.//Lk. 9:28ff.). He asserts that he was personally present on the "sacred mountain," he was an eyewitness of Christ's transformed "majesty," and he heard the voice from heaven saying, "This is my Son" (1:16-18). Furthermore, in an

[185]Oscar Cullmann has made the insightful suggestion that the nickname *Kephas* (Aramaic for "Rock"), or *Petros* (the Greek form), should be translated as "Rock" in order to bring out the power of the nickname in the same way the authors and early readers of the New Testament felt it, cf. *TDNT* (1968) VI.101.

allusion most naturally referring to the letter we call 1 Peter, the author states that the present work is his "second" one (3:1). He describes St. Paul as his "dear brother" (3:15), a description that harmonizes with the information we have from Acts (15:2-4, 7ff., 22) and Galatians (1:18; 2:9).

Given all these earmarks of authenticity, why then do most scholars object? The reasons are varied, some more substantial than others. In the first place, 2 Peter belongs to a group of New Testament documents which are called the *antilegomena* (= disputed writings).[186] Origen (3rd century) is usually credited with being the first Christian leader to mention 2 Peter directly, and when he does so, he says that the work was disputed.[187] Later, Jerome (4th century) says the letter was rejected by "the majority because in style it is incompatible with the former [letter],"[188] though it is clear that Jerome himself had no hesitation about citing 2 Peter as authentic.[189] Didymas, the 4th century blind church leader, bluntly stated, "...this letter is spurious; it may be read in public, but it is not part of the canon of Scripture."[190] Some early versions did not contain the book, notably the Syriac Peshitta (5th century).[191] It may be that 2 Peter figures in the allusions of several earlier Christian writers, but none of these references are unambiguous.[192] In spite of this early ambivalence, 2 Peter gradually was accepted due to support from Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzus, Hillary, Ambrose, Augustine and other Christian leaders. By the end of the fourth century and onward, 2 Peter appears regularly in the canon lists.

In addition to the external problems, however, several internal objections have surfaced over the centuries. It has long been recognized that the Greek in 2 Peter is quite unlike the Greek in 1 Peter.[193] In more than one place, the language used seems unnatural, at best, if written by the Apostle Peter. For instance, he seems to regard the collection of Paul's letters as already recognized Scripture (cf. 3:16). Would this have

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[186]The term *antilegomena* was used by the Christian historian Eusebius (4th century) to refer to the books which were not universally accepted nor universally rejected as authoritative by the orthodox church. Those books eventually accepted into the canon despite their questionable status were James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude. Though their status was disputed, the trend in the church of that period was to accept them, cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III.25. Eusebius pronounces no personal judgment upon their canonical status, though elsewhere he says that 2 Peter was used with the other New Testament Scriptures because "it has appeared profitable to many," cf. III.iii.1. He only points out the general state of affairs in the church of his day.

[187]Origen wrote, "Peter....has left one acknowledged epistle; perhaps also a second, but this is doubtful," cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, VI.xxv.8.

[188]W. Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. H. Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975) 434.

[189]For instance, Jerome quotes from both 1 Peter and 2 Peter side by side, attributing both works to Peter, cf. *Against Jovinianus*, I.37.

[190]Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 413.

[191]The Peshitta also excluded 2 John, 3 John, Jude and the Apocalypse.

[192]For a listing of these examples, see E. Harrison, 412.

[193]Those supporting the authenticity of 2 Peter generally put this down to Peter's use of Silvanus as an amanuensis for 1 Peter (cf. 1 Pe. 5:12).

been possible as early as AD 64 or 65 when Peter was martyred in Rome?[194] His statement about the time-lapse between the promise of Christ's return (cf. Ac. 1:11) and the death of "the fathers" (cf. 3:4) seems to imply that he was writing from the vantage point of second or third generation Christianity, a circumstance that does not fit with Peter's own life.[195] He refers to the command which Christ gave to "your apostles," by which he seems to exclude himself from the group (3:2).[196] Finally, why would an apostle of the stature of Peter wish to write an epistle drawing such large blocks of material, some nearly verbatim, from a letter by Jude?[197] Even more to the point, Jude is considered by most scholars to have been written later than the time of Peter's death.[198] When all has been said, and a good deal has been said over the years, the general opinion of most scholars is summarized by Archibald Hunter: "These....considerations compel every honest scholar to refuse the letter to Peter and to ascribe it to some church leader who, about the middle of the second century, borrowed the authority of Peter's great name to enforce a warning to his readers."[199]

This consensus notwithstanding, there remain some evangelical scholars who defend the authenticity of the letter outright.[200] Other evangelicals, however, are

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[194]The speed with which Paul's letters were collected and distributed in the early Christian congregations, of course, is unknown. Certainly the process of sharing had begun much earlier (cf. Col. 4:16).

[195]However, it is not at all clear that "the fathers" were necessarily post-Easter Christians. Particularly in light of the reference to the creation, this statement could just as well describe the Jewish patriarchs of the Old Testament.

[196]However, Ephesians, a much earlier work, also appeals to the authority of the apostles and prophets (cf. Ep. 2:20; 3:5), and even though they are spoken of in the third person, the reference does not exclude Paul himself (cf. Ep. 1:1).

[197]The parallels between 2 Peter and Jude are as follows: Jude 4//2 Pe. 2:1-3; Jude 5//2 Pe. 2:5; Jude 6-7//2 Pe. 2:4, 6; Jude 8-9//2 Pe. 2:10-11; Jude 10//2 Pe. 2:12; Jude 11-12a//2 Pe. 15, 13; Jude 12b-13//2 Pe. 2:17; Jude 16//2 Pe. 2:18; Jude 17//2 Pe. 3:2; Jude 18//2 Pe. 3:3, cf. R. Martin, *New Testament Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) II.385. However, it must be conceded that it is by no means certain that 2 Peter drew from Jude. That there is a literary relationship between the two documents is almost certain, but the question is not easily answered as to whether a reviser might be more likely to expand or abridge his source. In any case, the issue of dependency is still unresolved.

[198]Of course, if it is argued that Jude borrowed from 2 Peter, this problem disappears, but either way, the issue ends in an impasse due to the lack of compelling evidence.

[199]For those scholars who do not wish to tamper with the fixed canon of the New Testament, the argument is put forward that pseudonymous writing was a generally accepted practice in that era with no hint of ethical violation. If the author of 2 Peter was intending to faithfully capture the thought of his great predecessor, then the letter should stand as representing Peter though not composed by Peter. Thus, some scholars write, "Posthumous publication in Peter's name does not necessarily imply any intent to deceive. If the tradition behind Second Peter is genuinely Petrine, then the only kind of compiler of the material who might be guilty of deception would be one who presumptuously signed *his own* name to the apostle's teaching," cf. Martin, 386. Of course, the burden of proof is on such commentators to substantiate the claim that the statements of 1:1 and 1:16-18 could have been written by someone after Peter and yet remain honest statements. It must not be forgotten that these passages were not written as if *about* Peter, but rather, written as if *by* Peter.

[200]For example, D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1970) 847-848; D. Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1977) III.149. It is worth noting that in evangelical annotated study Bibles, for instance, the authenticity of 2 Peter often is assumed without even raising the question of authenticity.

cautious, to say the least. Some, like Everett Harrison, say, "Perhaps judicious scholarship....can do no better than to confess to misgivings....on this subject."[201] The reformer John Calvin, who certainly maintains respectable theological credentials, credited the letter to Peter in the following way, "....not that he wrote it himself, but....one of his disciples composed by his command what was necessary of the times demanded."[202]

A more recent position gradually gaining support is that the letter is both an epistle but also a testament composed by a disciple after Peter's death but compiled using genuine Petrine materials, possibly even at Peter's request.[203] If so, it was written using the teachings of Peter to confront a circumstance that arose after his death. If so, then the materials are genuinely Petrine. Thus, in one sense it is a letter, yet in another sense it is a testament or compendium of Peter's teachings. This hypothesis seems to do justice to the critical questions raised on both sides of the issue, and it may well be the best one. The hypothesis does not call into question the canon of the New Testament, the apostolicity of the document or the authority of Holy Scripture. It does not impinge upon the truthfulness of the letter. It accounts for the various anomalies observed by the ancient church as well as the critical issues raised by modern scholarship. J. Ramsey Michaels notes that there may even be a clue in the document itself suggesting that the compendium hypothesis could be correct. Peter is reported as saying, "I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things" (cf. 1:15). In the end, the relationship of 2 Peter to the historical Peter might be analogous to the relationship of the gospel writers to Jesus.

Setting, Readers, Date

Even if the compendium hypothesis is correct, it does not answer for us the questions of where, to whom, or when the work was composed. These questions remain open. However, based on 2 Peter 3:1, it is possible that both 1 Peter and 2 Peter were written to the same group(s), and if so, then the address of 1 Peter is definitive, marking the recipients as Christians in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia near the south shore of the Black Sea (1 Pe. 1:1).

The Address (1:1-2)

The name of the author is given as Symeon Rock (1:1a).[204] Symeon is the Hebraic form of Peter's given name (Simon is the Greek form), the same name as

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[201]Harrison, 425.

[202]D. Payne, *IBC* (1979) 1565.

[203]So R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter [WBC]* (Waco, TX: Word, 1983) 131-135; J. Michaels, *ISBE* (1986) III.817-818; Martin, 386-387.

[204]See footnote #185.

one of the patriarchal sons of Jacob.[205] Of course, Jesus gave to him the nickname *Kephas* or *Petros* (the Aramaic and Greek forms of the name "Rock").[206] His father's name was John, and his brother was Andrew, also one of the twelve apostles (Jn. 1:40-42; Mt. 16:17). He was married (Mk. 1:30), and in the period of the apostolic church, he traveled with his wife on missionary tours (1 Co. 9:5). By trade he was a fisherman, and he operated a fishing concern from the village of Bethsaida on the north side of the Galilee lake (Jn. 1:44; Mk. 1:16-21). His early ministry after Easter was in Jerusalem (Ac. 8:1), but eventually he began traveling through Judea, the Palestinian coastal cities, and finally north to Antioch (Ac. 9:32, 38, 43; 10:23-24; Ga. 2:11). In the end, of course, he traveled as far as Rome and was martyred there according to early Christian tradition.[207]

The original recipients of 2 Peter are virtually impossible to place (1:1b). The very general "to those who...have received a faith as precious as ours" could be said of any group of Christians. That Peter distinguishes between "they" and "us" may mean that as a Jewish Christian he was writing to Gentile Christians, but it could equally be no more than a distinction between an apostle and his readers who were not apostles. In any case, 2 Peter is quite possibly the most general of what is sometimes labeled "the general epistles."

The faith which characterizes both reader and recipients came as a gift of God's righteousness. It is a faith which is "received," not merely self-generated. So, the writer prays for grace and peace to be given to his readers as they continue to pursue the knowledge of God and his Son, Jesus the Lord (1:2).

Participating In The Divine Nature (1:3-4)[208]

The notion of participating in the divine nature has a long history in the ancient world, especially in Greek philosophical and religious thought. In the Hellenistic mystery religions, for instance, religious ritual made it possible for a person to be united with the gods and goddesses. By participating in religious drama and other ceremonies, the initiates believed they could share in the life of the deities.[209] During the first century of the Christian era, Christians carried on a "running battle"

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[205]It is not impossible that Symeon came from the Simeon tribe, Simeon being the second of Leah's sons. The Simeon tribe was identified with the northern kingdom after the monarchy divided, though later many came south as refugees (2 Chr. 15:9; cf. 34:6ff.).

[206]Both the Aramaic and Greek forms of the name are found in the New Testament.

[207]R. Martin, *ISBE* (1986) III.806.

[208]The section 1:3-11 follows the literary form of a civic decree in which there is an interplay between a Benefactor and a Recipient, the former acting in generosity and the latter responding in gratefulness. This literary form accounts for what appears to be the perplexing syntax of the Greek sentence structure, cf. F. Danker, "The Second Letter of Peter," *Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, Revelation [PC]* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 81-82.

[209]H. Kee, F. Young and K. Froehlich, *Understanding the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973) 33.

with groups which later came to be known as gnostics, that is, those who claimed to possess superior knowledge of God by special revelation. While full-blown gnosticism is more of a second century phenomenon than a first century one, the Greek world-view of spirit-matter dualism lay behind all such thought, and it was prevalent throughout the entire Hellenistic Period. Such dualism advocated the inherent goodness of spirit over matter and held forth the possibility of liberation from the material world into the spiritual world of the gods and goddesses after death.[210] The benefit of such religion was the power to overcome matter, death and fate and to be able to participate in the divine powers.[211]

The author of 2 Peter must surely have been aware of such concepts. The fact that he uses phrases such as *theias dynamis* (= divine power) and *theias koinonoi physeos* (= sharers of divine nature) can hardly be accidental. He puts the issue to his readers squarely. As Christians, they have indeed been given everything they needed for life and godliness--not through some hidden knowledge gained by a secret ritual, but by knowing God and his Son (1:3). God, by his own glory and virtue, had called them and promised them that they could participate in the divine nature as well as escape the corruption of evil desires (1:4). By participating in the divine nature, the author means not that Christians will become demi-gods or participate in the being of God, but rather, that they will share in the heavenly nature of immortality. The thought of 2 Peter is analogous to the thought of Paul when he says that the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, the mortal with immortality (cf. 1 Co. 15:50-57). His words are simply another way of talking about the concept of eternal life. Thus, God has given to his people all that they need for the present life as well as the ultimate promise that they will live in the same imperishable state as God himself. Later, this imperishable state will be called "the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (1:11).

The Life of Christian Virtue (1:5-11)

Because of the promises God has given, Christians should give their best moral effort to exhibit the virtues of the Christian life (1:5a). Virtue lists were well-known in the ancient world, both from Judaism as well as the Greco-Roman moralists. From the Mishna, Philo and Josephus as well as the non-canonical Jewish writings, the virtues of kindness, sympathy, benevolence, social justice, wisdom, thrift, truthfulness, honesty, faithfulness, and courage are common themes.[212] Some of the most well-known virtue lists of the ancient world came from the Stoics, who held

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[210]Kee, 28; H. Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982) 190-191, 202-203.

[211]Koester, 203.

[212]A. Cronbach, "Ethics in Noncanonical Jewish Writings," *IDB* (1962) II.161-167.

that virtue is the only good and vice the only evil.[213] Many scholars believe that it is precisely because of the existence of such ethical lists of virtues and vices that the New Testament contains so many similar ethical lists--lists which may have been adapted from extent lists and Christianized.[214]

The virtue list given in 2 Peter calls for ongoing moral effort. The Christian begins with faith and adds to it a host of other Christ-like virtues which come from a knowledge of the Lord Jesus (cf. 1:8). They are:

pistis	=	faith, trust, faithfulness, reliability
arete	=	virtue, excellence
gnosis	=	knowledge
enkrateia	=	self-control
hypomone	=	patience, endurance, fortitude, perseverance
eusebeia	=	piety, godliness, religion
Philadelphia	=	brotherly love
agape	=	love

These virtues should always be on the increase in the Christian life (1:8a). They are the evidence of a true knowledge of Jesus Christ in much the same way the fruit of the Spirit is the evidence of the Spirit's indwelling (cf. Ga. 5:22-23). If one claims to know Christ but does not demonstrate the virtues of Christ, then the claim is unproductive and ineffective (1:8b). Absence of such Christlike virtues suggest spiritual myopia, or worse, spiritual blindness (1:9a). Worst of all, such a person has put out of his mind the gift of forgiveness which Christ has given (1:9b).[215]

Consequently, Christians should be eager to put their full effort into the Christian life. Here, Peter embraces the paradox of divine sovereignty and human freedom in the phrase "make your calling and election sure" (1:10a). Calling and election are surely prerogatives belonging only to God, yet at the same time, the readers are urged to ratify or guarantee this calling and election by living a life of virtue.[216] Virtue is not a Christian option--it is mandatory if one is to claim the name Christian. "Unless these Christian virtues now *characterize* a person's life, there is no surety that the calling and election are authentic."[217] When such virtue is present, the Christian can be certain that he or she will not stumble but will be welcomed into

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[213]C. Wolf, *IDB* (1962) IV.444.

[214]O. Seitz, "Lists, ethical," *IDB* (1962) III.138.

[215]M. Green, The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude [TNTC] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 72-73.

[216]The word *bebaios* (= firm, secure, valid) had acquired a legal sense, such as, the confirmation of a sale or a legal guarantee, cf. H. Schlier, *TDNT* (1964) I.602.

[217]W. Klein, The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1990) 250.

Christ's eternal kingdom (1:10b-11).

The Christian Tradition (1:12-21)

In the earliest period of the church, some Christians seemed to have expected Christ to return within their own lifetimes. Some even believed that the apostle John would not die before the second coming of the Lord (Jn. 21:22-23). Paul's remarks concerning the transformation of those who would be living when Christ returned were inclusive--"*we* shall not all sleep, but *we* shall all be changed..." (1 Co. 15:51; cf. 1 Th. 4:15). However, as the years slipped by, more and more Christians died without seeing this glorious event (1 Co. 15:6). Furthermore, as the apostles began to die (cf. Ac. 12:2), it became apparent that the passing of the Christian tradition was of paramount importance. The composition of the four gospels must surely have been driven, at least partly, by such a concern. Mark's Gospel, according to the earliest Christian witnesses, was linked directly to Peter.[218] 2 Timothy is heavily preoccupied with the passing of the Christian tradition as is 2 Peter.

The part of the Christian tradition upon which Peter focuses is the second coming of Christ to judge the world. As will become clear later, neglect of this truth leads to careless moral habits.

Concern for the Passing of Christian Tradition (1:12-15)

2 Peter is a reminder of the central themes of the faith (1:12). Just how Peter knew his death was imminent is not clear, though of course, Jesus had predicted that Peter would die a martyr's death (cf. Jn. 21:18-19).[219] His *skenoma* (= tent, dwellingplace) would soon be put aside, and Peter would take his *exodos* (= exodus, departure) from life (1:13-14). Thus, Peter's deep concern was that in view of his approaching death, the Christian message must be kept pure (1:15). Mark's Gospel was certainly one way in which, as Peter puts it, "after my departure you will always be able to remember these things."[220] The legacy of 2 Peter, like the Second Gospel, was another way.

The Eyewitness Certainty of the Son's Glory (1:16-18)

Peter calls attention to the double foundation upon which the Christian

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[218]R. Martin, *ISBE* (1986) III.252.

[219]It is unclear whether Peter is merely alluding to Jesus' prediction recorded in John or intends that by some other means the Lord had informed him that his life was drawing to a close. Paul, in a similar way, seemed to sense the nearness of his death (cf. 2 Ti. 4:6).

[220]According to Papias (early 2nd century), "Mark, who had been Peter's interpreter, wrote down carefully as much as he remembered, recording both sayings and doings of Christ, not however in order. For he was not a hearer of the Lord, nor a follower, but later he was a follower of Peter, who accommodated his instructions to the necessities, but with no intention of giving a regular narrative of the Lord's sayings, *Fragments of Papias*, VI.

tradition rests--the eyewitnesses of those who personally saw and heard Jesus and the testimony of inspired Scripture about Jesus. The first of these Peter can cite from his own experience. His preaching concerning the anticipated second coming of the Messiah and the glory bestowed upon him by the Father had not been second hand (1:16),[221] but he had been present to witness a foretaste of this glory when Jesus was transfigured (1:17-18; cf. Mt. 17:1-8//Mk. 9:2-8//Lk. 9:28-36). The transfiguration was at once a compelling experience pointing to the true nature of Jesus as the divine Son of God and at the same time an anticipation of his glorious coming at the end of the age.

The Inspiration of Scripture (1:19-21)

The second ground upon which the Christian tradition rests is the divinely inspired testimony of the prophets. The predictions of the prophets about the end of history and the coming of the Lord were confirmed and made doubly certain by the event of the transfiguration (1:19a).[222] By prophets, Peter probably intends not merely the *Nebiim* but the whole corpus of the Hebrew Bible (cf. Ac. 3:24). This inspired Scriptures are like a lamp which enlightens God's people until the night is over and the sun rises (1:19b). The metaphor of human history as "night" and the eschatological future as "day" is similar to Malachi's prediction of the rising "sun of righteousness" (Mal. 4:2). The "morning star" is a metaphor for Christ himself (cf. Nu. 24:17; Lk. 1:78; Rv. 22:16). Just as the morning star glows brightly just before dawn, so the light of Christ arises in the hearts of believers as they anticipate the coming sunrise of God's future age.

As Christians look to the light of the Scriptures, they must take care to approach them with deep respect. There are two possible translations of 1:20. One, *no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation* (so NIV), refers to the origin of Scripture. It says that Scripture is of divine origin, not human ingenuity. The other, *no one can interpret any prophecy of Scripture by himself* (so NEB), refers to the exegesis of Scripture. It says that Scripture must be interpreted in light of the collective testimony of orthodoxy. Grammatically, either are possible. Theologically, both are true. Contextually, both make sense, for Peter could be contending with those who accuse the prophets of making up their own oracles or he may be contending with those who accuse the apostles of putting upon the prophecies

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[221]It may be that Peter, by using the word *mythos* (= tale, fable, myth), is here either defending himself against charges of fabricated stories or else providing a refutation against others who peddle religious mythologies.

[222]Some, following the older English translations, take Peter's meaning to be that the prophetic word was an even surer guarantee than Peter's eyewitness experience of the transfiguration (so KJV), cf. Green, 86-87. This interpretation is possible grammatically, but it seems less likely in context than the alternative possibility followed here (so NIV, ASV, RSV, NEB, TEV, JB, NASB, Phillips, Goodspeed, Weymouth), W. Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) 311-312; J. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 320-321.

their own favorite meanings. We should assume that Peter does not mean both at the same time. Since the issue of improper exegesis seems more likely than misgivings about the inspiration of the Old Testament, the second alternative may be correct.

In either case, Peter goes on to make clear that the prophecies were not originally composed by human concoction. Rather, the prophets spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The word *pheromene*, sometimes used of ships blown by the wind, describes the action of God upon his spokesmen. Scripture is the word of God in the words of humans, and any definition of biblical inspiration must give appropriate value to both the divine and human components.[223]

With Chapter 2, Peter begins the heart of his communication. Knowing that his own remaining time as a leader was brief (cf. 1:14-15), he felt compelled to forewarn his readers about a future fraught with theological danger. The belief that the future of the church would see the rise of heretical teachers is found in Paul as well (cf. 2 Ti. 3:1-9; 4:3-4). According to Jude and 2 Peter, this prediction was common to the apostles as a group (Jude 17-18; cf. 2 Pe. 3:3-4).

The coming heretics should be seen against the background of the development of angelology in the intertestamental literature. In the Jewish apocalyptic writings, the spiritual world was divided up into two camps, the myriads of angels who remained faithful to God and the legions of angels who followed "the Satan" and were bent on destroying the human race as well as the cosmos. The *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* describes the two spiritual forces that bid for human attention, the "spirit of truth" and the "spirit of deceit." On the side of the kingdom of God, *1 Enoch* describes a group of angels called "The Watchers" (those who do not sleep). These angels were instructed to intercede for humans. However, on the side of the kingdom of Satan was a demon named Azazel who led astray many of the Watchers. The fact that Peter connects his warnings to the ancient event of "angels who sinned" (cf. 2:4) suggests that he was familiar with this cosmic struggle between the powers of God and the forces of evil. The coming flood of false teachers were in league with the forces of evil who were attempting to deceive the human race.[224]

The Coming Heretics (2:1-3)

There had been many heresies in ancient times, false voices who led astray the people of God (2:1a).[225] Balaam opposed Moses (Nu.22-24), Zedekiah ben Kenaanah opposed Micaiah (1 Kg. 22:11, 17, 24-25), Amaziah opposed Amos (Am.

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[223]For a fuller discussion of the twofold implications of Scripture as both divine and human, see C. Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984).

[224]For more detail on the doctrines of angelology and demonology developed during the intertestamental period, see D. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964) 235-262.

[225]It is unlikely that Peter is here intending a sharp distinction between false prophets and false teachers. The burden of his message is against false voices who lead people astray.

7:10-13), and a whole company of false prophets opposed Isaiah (28:7), Jeremiah (Je. 22:9-40) and Ezekiel (Eze. 13). What had happened in the past could be expected to happen in the future (2:1b). The origin of such dangerous teachers would be from within the church, not from the outside (cf. Ac. 20:30-31). Their opposition to Christ was like a slave rebellion, for they would even deny their own *Despotes* (= the master, owner), the Lord Jesus who had purchased them with the price of his death.[226] However, as in Jesus' parable of the tares and wheat (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43), such heretics would be destroyed at the end.

Tragically, many people would be deceived by them, following their immoral behavior and marring the reputation of the true church (2:2). The motivation behind such heretics was financial profit (2:3a). Like the false prophets of old, such deviants "follow their own spirit and have seen nothing" (Eze. 13:3), and they "prophesy the delusion of their own minds" (Je. 23:26). Doom was impending for them (2:3b; cf. Jude 4), since as long ago as the law of Moses, the death penalty was handed down for false prophets (Dt. 13)!

The Case for Coming Judgement (2:4-10a)

The certainty of coming judgment for the false teachers is evident because of God's past judgments against flagrant sinners. Peter cites three examples from the Book of Genesis. The first recalls the angels who sinned (2:4). There is no passage in the Hebrew Bible which uses this precise language, but the Jewish Pseudepigrapha has extensive details about the *bene 'elohim* (= sons of God) in Genesis 6:1-4 which are interpreted to be fallen angels.[227] These celestial creatures lusted after human women, assumed human form, cohabited with them, and fathered children who became uncontrollable giants. This infiltration corrupted the earth, causing violence and bloodshed. The leaders of the fallen angels, Azazel and Semjaza, were imprisoned until the final judgment, at which time they were destined to be consigned to the abyss of fire (cf. 1 Enoch 6-36). The reference to angels who were sent to *Tartarus* (= a subterranean dungeon lower than Hades) seems to rely on the well-known imprisonment story about Azazel and Semjaza.[228]

The second example is the flood of Noah (2:5; Ge. 6:5ff.). Human wickedness reached such proportions that God determined to destroy the ancient world--men, animals and the land. Only eight humans survived, Noah, his three sons, and their

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[226]The imagery is one of slaves bought by a master. The NIV "sovereign Lord" does not quite capture the metaphor.

[227]See 1 Enoch 86:1ff.; 106:13; Jubilees 4:15; 5:1ff.; Testament of Reuben 5:6ff.; Testament of Naphtali 3:5; 2 Enoch 7:1ff; 18:1ff.; 2 Baruch 56:10ff.

[228]The verb *tartaroo* was used by the Greeks to describe the act of imprisoning in a subterranean dungeon lower than Hades. In Jewish apocalyptic, it was used to describe the place where divine punishment was meted out. There is a textual variation in the phrase that follows the verb, *seirais* (= chains, so KJV) and *sirois* (= pits, so NIV). The evidence is evenly balanced between them, B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1975) 701.

four wives (Ge. 7:13; 8:18). That Noah was a herald of righteousness is not recorded in the Genesis account, but he was described as such in Jewish oral tradition.[229]

The third example is the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6; Ge. 18:16--19:29). The five cities of the plain, of which Sodom and Gomorrah were the most important, were possibly to the east of the southern end of the Dead Sea.[230] These cities were destroyed by burning sulphur raining from the heavens because of their grievous and arrogant sin (Ge. 18:20; Is. 3:9), their social indifference and detestable lifestyles (Eze. 16:49-50), and their obsession with homosexual encounters (Ge. 19:4-13). Lot, Abraham's nephew, was rescued from Sodom prior to its overthrow (2:7), and his rescue was a sign pointing ahead to God's salvation of the righteous before the final judgment of the world (2:8-9). According to 2 Peter, Lot was tormented by the flagrant immorality which daily he heard and saw in Sodom.[231]

Thus, if God did not spare angels or the antediluvian world or Sodom and Gomorrah, he would not spare these present purveyors of destructive heresies. In particular, he would not spare those who rebelled against Christ's authority by their corrupt lives (2:10a).

The Slanderers (2:10b-22)

Their Arrogance (2:10b-13a)

If God intended to summarily judge the heretics, it was important that the church be able to recognize their traits in order to avoid being deceived by them. Peter charges that they did not draw back from slandering *doxas* (= the glorious ones) in their reckless self-will (2:10b).[232] The form of this slander is unclear. Were they dismissing the reality of angels altogether? Were they making light of the power of

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[229]Josephus, for instance, says, "Noah...being displeased at their conduct, persuaded them to change their dispositions and their acts for the better. But..they did not yield to him, but were slaves to their wicked pleasures...," *Antiquities*, I.iii.1.

[230]The announcement by Giovanni Pettinato, the chief Ebla epigrapher, that he had discovered the names of the five biblical "cities of the plain" in the cuneiform tablets of Ebla, Syria (3rd millennium B.C.) caused quite a stir, cf. H. Shanks, "Syria Tries to Influence Ebla Scholarship," *BAR* (Mar.-Apr. 1979) 45-46; "Ebla Evidence Evaporates," *BAR* (Nov.-Dec. 1979) 52-53; "New Ebla Epigrapher Attacks Conclusion of Ousted Ebla Scholar," *BAR* (May-Jun. 1980) 56; G. Pettinato, "Ebla and the Bible--Observations on the New Epigrapher's Analysis," *BAR* (Nov.-Dec. 1980) 38-41; A. Archi, "Are 'The Cities of the Plain' Mentioned in the Ebla Tablets", *BAR* (Nov.-Dec. 1981) 54-55. Two American archaeologists believe they have found evidence of the five ancient cities at Bab Edh-Dhra and nearby sites on the east of the sea, "Have Sodom and Gomorrah Been Found?" *BAR* (Sep.-Oct. 1980) 26-36.

[231]Reading the Genesis account, Lot's "righteousness" does not stand out so clearly, though Abraham interceded for him as part of the righteous remnant (cf. Ge. 18:23-33). However, in the intertestamental *Book of Wisdom* (Apocrypha), Lot is described as being rescued from Sodom by the personification of Wisdom: "She delivered the just man from among the wicked who were being destroyed when he fled as fire descended upon Pentapolis [five cities]" (10:6).

[232]The same expression is used in Jude 8. While some have interpreted the "glorious ones" to refer to church or civil leaders, in the present context it seems that the dynamic equivalency "celestial beings" is correct.

angels, especially the fallen angels who, as demons, were a spiritual force with which to be reckoned? Did they refuse to recognize that in their headstrong pursuit of fleshly desires their behavior was an open door for demonization? It is clear from 2:11 that the "glorious ones" are not the same as the faithful angels. Hence, most commentators conclude that the "glorious ones" refer to the fallen angels. If so, then the heretics were foolhardy to disregard them. Even righteous angels, who have superior power, do not treat the danger of such creatures with contempt (2:11). 2 Peter seems to have in mind the same sort of thing mentioned in Jude 9, where the incident of Michael's confrontation with Satan is cited.[233] Also, the Book of Zechariah uses the language of theophany in describing Yahweh's manner when confronting Satan, where God speaks of himself in the third person and says, "Yahweh rebuke you, Satan" (Zec. 3:1-2).

If, then, angels are cautious in how they treat such powerful creatures as the fallen ones, the reckless abandon of the heretics was evident in that they "blaspheme in matters they do not understand" (2:12a). Oblivious to the consequences of their impudence, they were like animals who live by instinct rather than reason (2:12b). Such animals are easily trapped and destroyed by a higher intelligence. The heretics would be destroyed too, just as brute animals. They would suffer the same harm they had inflicted on others (2:13a).

Their Misdeeds (2:13b-16)

In a scathing attack, the writer now exposes the immoral lives of the heretics. Most sinners reserve their debauchery for the night, but these heretics were so blatant that they caroused in broad daylight (2:13b)! In their revelry, they soiled the Christian fellowship.[234] They had become so obsessed with sex that they could not look at a woman without calculating adultery (2:14a). In their constant sins, they lured weak Christians into following their errors (2:14b). They had "trained their hearts"[235] for greed like children under a curse (2:14c). Leaving the straight way of truth and moral integrity, they had wandered down the side paths of wickedness for money, just as Balaam ben Beor had done in ancient times (2:15; cf. Nu. 22:7, 16-17; Jude 11).[236] Yet, even Balaam was rebuked for his avarice by the strange speech of a

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[233]Since the time of the early church, it has been agreed that the incident comes from the lost ending in the pseudepigraphical *Assumption of Moses*. For a full treatment, see Baukham, 65-76.

[234]Translations are split between the textual variations *apatais* (= deceptions, so KJV, NEB, NASB, RSV, NAB, TEV, JB, Phillips) and *agapais* (= love feasts, so Weymouth). If the latter, the term "love feasts" parallels Jude 12 and refers to Christian communal meals. Such meals were probably served in the context of the eucharist, cf. J. Lambert, *ISBE* (1979) I.66. Most scholars, however, follow the former reading, because they deem a scribe to have assimilated the text of 2 Peter to Jude.

[235]The verb *gymnazo* (= exercise, train) usually refers to the work of an athlete who trains for competition.

[236]If 2 Peter was compiled as late as the persecution of Domitian in the 90s A.D. (which is not at all clear), the example of Balaam might point to a situation of political agitation in which influential men, in their attempt to foment revolution, tried to use certain Christians as agents to disseminate their ideas within the Christian

donkey (2:16; Nu. 22:21-33)!

Their Character (2:17-22)

Continuing his diatribe, Peter characterizes the empty promises of the heretics as "springs without water" (2:17a). The metaphor is particularly apt in the context of the ancient Near East. They were like the haze of summer heat which, far from bringing rain, is driven away by sharp gusts of wind (2:17b). For these deviants there awaited the black doom of judgment (2:17c). With their empty boasts they lured new Christians by appealing to their baser instincts (2:18).[237] They promised freedom, but in reality, it was bondage to depravity (2:19a). It was the naked freedom of irresponsible living which would end in judgment, not the freedom from sin which is true liberty. For the Christian, there is no state which is "beyond good and evil," for no one is truly free who is still under the slavery of sin (2:19b; cf. Ro. 6:16).

In the end, those who begin the Christian life but fall back into the entanglements of immorality are worse off than before (2:20). Better not to have known the righteous way of Christ than to have known it and then rejected it (2:21). The slanderers had become fools repeating their folly--like a dog returning to eat his own vomit (cf. Pro. 26:11). They were like a clean sow returning to the mud hole (2:22).

This passage, of course, raises the question of the doctrine of eternal security (alternatively, the perseverance of the saints). Does Peter mean salvation by his phrase *epignosis tou Kyriou* (= full knowledge of the Lord)? The passage falls in line with various others which, at face value, seem to imply apostasy (i.e., Mt. 12:43-45; 24:10-13; Jn. 15:6; Ac. 8:13, 18-23; Ro. 11:20-22; 1 Co. 8:9-11; 10:1-12; Ga. 5:2-4; 6:7-8; 1 Th. 3:2-5; 1 Ti. 4:1; 2 Ti. 2:17-18; He. 2:1-3; 3:7--4:1; 6:4-8; 10:26-39; 12:25). Those committed to the doctrine of eternal security hold that this passage, and others like it, refer not to genuine Christians, but rather, to pseudo-Christians. They concede the possibility of apostasy for one who has simply belonged to the visible church, but they deny that such a person was ever a Christian in reality.[238] Exegetically, such a view is difficult to maintain in view of the vocabulary used here. Christians have divided over the issue for a long time. Luther and Wesley tend toward one side, Calvin the other. Catholics, Orthodox, Methodists, Nazarenes and

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community. Such agents would have been paid for their services, cf. B. Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter and Jude [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964) 144-145, 161, 166, 167-170. However, even if 2 Peter was composed after Peter's death by a disciple, the proof is scant for making it as late as 95 A.D. If 2 Peter was composed posthumously at Peter's own request (see introductory discussion), it seems unlikely that it would have been so late.

[237]The expression concerning the ones "just escaping from those who live in error" probably refers to new converts who were not yet established in their Christian faith.

[238]E. Blum, "2 Peter," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 12.282.

Pentecostals generally affirm the possibility of losing salvation, while Baptists, Reformed Churches, Brethren and Presbyterians usually deny it.

If the case for judgment which the author outlined in chapter 2 is valid, and if the slanderers are themselves liable to this judgment, then the question remains as to why judgment had not fallen upon them already. God's judgments upon fallen angels, the antediluvian world, and Sodom and Gomorrah were dispensed in close proximity to the moral violations which each of these groups committed. Why then were the deviants in the first century church allowed to propagate their egregious errors with impunity? This is the substance of Peter's final admonitions.

The Second Letter (3:1-2)

There is little doubt that the reference to a "second letter" has in view 1 Peter.[239] Just as 1 Peter was written to stimulate wholesome thinking and to recall the teachings of the Old Testament prophets (cf. Ac. 3:21; 2 Pe. 1:19-21), the Lord Jesus, and the New Testament apostles, so also this letter served the same purpose. Not too much should be made of the differences in subject matter between the two letters. The comparison is not about the contents but about the purpose behind the two letters.

The fact that Peter's readers were familiar with the first letter suggests the possibility that both letters were written to the same group(s). The pronoun *hymin* (= to you) seems specific. If so, then a destination, if not an origin, can be specified for this letter as well (cf. 1 Pe. 1:1).

The Coming Day Of God (3:3-18)

It is Peter's contention that the coming judgment upon the heretics will be delivered at the close of history, and that this event was impending. Peter uses four primary expressions in the passage to describe the closing event, the *parousia* (= presence, coming, 3:4), the *hemeran kriseos* (= day of judgment, 3:7), the *hemera Kyriou* (= day of the Lord, 3:10), and the *Theou hemeras* (= day of God, 3:12). Earlier in the letter, he used the metaphor of the dawn (1:19), and in 1 Peter the word is *apocalypsis* (= revelation, 1:7, 13). Clearly, Peter is thinking about a new era, the state which at the first he described as the "eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (1:11). The various terms, while distinct, speak of the same event or complex of events which will mark the change from the present age to the future one.

Skepticism About the Parousia (3:3-7)

Peter already has indicated that false teachers should be expected (cf. 2:1). Now, he says that the last days will be marked by skeptics who not only will

[239]Other theories, i.e., a "lost letter" or the subdivision 2 Peter into two letters, have been offered, but they have not won many adherents, cf. Bauckham, 287-288.

pursue their own selfish desires (3:3), but will ridicule the notion that Christ will return at all (3:4a). Two terms are important here. First, the expression "last days" draws from a rich eschatology which originated in the Hebrew prophets. It refers to the final period of history.[240] Second, the word *parousia* (= presence, coming) is stock vocabulary for the second coming of Christ (cf. Mt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Co. 15:23; 1 Th. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Th. 2:1, 8; Ja. 5:7-8; 1 Jn. 2:28).

It is crucial for understanding the passage to observe that the *parousia* is assumed to be the eschatological time of judgment. The issue all along has been God's judgment upon arrogant sinners, and the challenge of the skeptics was that Christ was not coming, and therefore, they would not be held accountable.[241] The soon return of Christ had not been fulfilled as they had been led to believe, so they rejected the idea altogether. Their argument was that history had continued unbroken since the very creation (3:4b).[242] Peter, however, argues that such a conclusion is folly! A major interruption in world history indeed had occurred, the flood of Noah, and it was quite definitely a judgment (3:5-6; cf. Ge. 6-9)! The ancient world had been formed originally by God's creative separation of the waters above from the waters below (Ge. 1:6-7). In the creation, God had stopped the waters above, beneath and around the earth so that they could not break loose in chaotic destruction (cf. Job 38:8-11; Ps. 104:5-9). Due to the violence of the human race, however, God had removed his restraining hand, allowing the chaotic waters to destroy the antediluvian world.[243]

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[240]In the eighth century prophets, the expression *be'aher'it hayyamim* (= at the end of days) is used to describe the blessings and judgments of Yahweh upon his people and the world in the eschatological future (cf. Ho. 3:5; Mic. 4:1ff.//Is. 2:2ff.). A century and more later, the same vocabulary was continued by other prophets (Je. 23:20; 30:24; 48:47; 49:39; Eze. 38:16; Da. 10:14). In time, the whole messianic ideal was integrally connected in the Jewish mind with the "last days." In the New Testament, the last days already have been inaugurated with the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. However, his coming was a fulfillment without a consummation. While the person and ministry of Jesus was a fulfillment of the Old Testament promises, there remains an eschatological hope for the future. A considerable body of New Testament prediction concerns the apocalyptic coming of the kingdom of God and the return of Christ, and it has not yet been consummated, cf. G. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974). Thus, when Peter speaks of the "last days," it is to this consummation that he refers.

[241]This observation figures in the theological discussion of pretribulationism and post-tribulationism. George Ladd is doubtless correct that the careful exegete cannot separate the *parousia* of Christ from his second coming to judge the nations, cf. G. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) 68-70. The present passage presupposes that the *parousia* is the time of eschatological judgment.

[242]There is disagreement among interpreters over the reference to "the fathers." Does this refer to first generation Christians? If so, then the meaning is that history had continued since the deaths of the earliest Christians, just as it did before them, all the way back to the creation, cf. extensive discussion in Bauckham, 290-291. On the other hand, if the reference is to the ancients in the Old Testament, which in the New Testament is a common meaning for "the fathers" (cf. Ac. 3:13; Ro. 9:5; He. 1:1; etc.), then the meaning is that ever since the time of the ancients there had been no disruption of history, and so, none should be expected soon, cf. Green, 128-129; D. Payne, "2 Peter," *IBC* (1986) 1568.

[243]There is an interpretation that 2 Pe. 3:5-7 refers to a destruction of the universe at the fall of Satan rather than to the flood of Noah, cf. D. Barnhouse, *The Invisible War* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965) 53. However, this interpretation owes more to the effort to support the so-called Gap Theory of Ge. 1:1-3 rather than from any

God had promised Noah that he would not destroy the world again by water (Ge. 9:8-17), but such a promise did not absolve the world from judgment. In fact, the world would be judged, this time by fire.[244] In this judgment, the ungodly would be destroyed (3:7).[245]

God and Time (3:8-9)

Not only were the deviants deliberately neglecting the full record of history concerning God's judgments, they were also forgetting that the dimension of time is not the same for God as it is for humans (3:8). This qualitative difference was recognized in Psalm 90:4, and Peter may well be deliberately expanding on this passage. Human standards for calculating divine fulfillments are inappropriate. If the *parousia* of the Lord seemed to be delayed, it was not due to divine tardiness, but human misperception (3:9a). It is unlikely that Peter intends to offer some precise equation for reckoning divine days, as though every time one of God's "days" are mentioned humans should multiply it by a thousand years.[246] Rather, Peter simply points out that God reckons time differently than we do.

The accusation that the Lord was "slow" was a failure to understand his divine purposes. The delay of the *parousia* was a demonstration of God's patience and mercy, not his delinquency in bringing judgment. God's purpose for humans is for them to be saved, and he deliberately withholds judgment in order to provide ample time for them to repent (3:9, 15; cf. 1 Pe. 3:20; Ge. 6:3).

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exegesis of 2 Peter, and it has won no significant support.

[244]Once again, the author's knowledge of Jewish apocalyptic is evident. Not found in the Old or New Testaments outside this passage, the eschatological judgment of the world by fire is found in several places in Jewish apocalyptic, such as, in Michael's announcement of judgment to Adam and Eve that "....our LORD will bring over your race the wrath of his judgment, first by water, the second time by fire; by these two, will the LORD judge the whole human race" (*Life of Adam and Eve*, 49:3), cf. *Sibylline Oracles* III.54, 544, 690; *2 Baruch* 27:10; 70:8; Josephus, *Antiquities*, I.ii.3.

[245]Because of the word *apoleias* (= destruction, ruin, perishing), some have adopted the position that the future of the wicked is not eternal punishment, but rather, cessation of existence. The position attempts to reconcile the love of God with the threat of eternal damnation, but it owes more to a theoretical defense of God's character than to exegesis. The doctrine has not been traditional in the church, and it was specifically condemned at the Fifth Lateran Council in 1513, cf. V. Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: Macmillan, 1964) 22. To speak of the destruction of the ungodly does not mean that the body or soul vanishes, but rather, that the ungodly are deprived of the presence and fellowship of God, cf. R. Nicole, "Annihilationism," *EDT* (1984) 50-51; A. Oepke, *TDNT* (1964) I.396-397.

[246]Such an equative model of interpretation was popular in some rabbinical as well as some early Christian sources, and the model was applied to the days of creation, the anticipated length of world history, the "day" upon which Adam "surely died" (cf. Ge. 2:17; 5:5), and various computations of the length of Christ's millennial reign, cf. Bauckham, 306-307. Some modern prognosticators, assuming Archbishop Ussher's chronology of the creation in about 4000 B.C., expect the world to end in 2000 A.D., and so predict, "If our inference [i.e., about this equative interpretation] is correct, then it follows that the Return of the Lord will take place before the close of this present century," C. Larkin, *The Greatest Book on Dispensational Truth in the World* (Philadelphia: Clarence Larkin Est., 1920) 16.

The Day of the Lord (3:10)

Not only had the heretics misjudged the course of history and the relationship of God to time, they had failed to grasp the single most important factor concerning the timing of the *parousia*, that is, that it would occur unexpectedly. The illustration of this factor is the "thief" metaphor (3:10a), developed by the Lord Jesus himself (cf. Mt. 24:43-44; Lk. 12:39-40), later to be repeated by Paul (1 Th. 5:2) and John (Rv. 3:3; 16:15) as well as here. Peter uses the expression *Day of the Lord*, a phrase which, like "the last days," comes from the Hebrew prophets (cf. Am. 5:18; Jl. 1:15; 2:1-2, 11, 31; 3:14; Ob. 15; Is. 2:12-17; 13:6-13; Zp. 1:14-18; Je. 46:10; Eze. 7:19; 13:5; 30:3; Zc. 14:1; Mal. 4:5).[247] A primary feature of the Day of the Lord will be the coming of the Lord (cf. Zec. 14:1-4), and in this context, the second coming. So, if the Day of the Lord would come unexpectedly, the coming of the Lord and his attendant judgment would be unexpected as well.

In the end, judgment would fall. The universe would disintegrate in a cosmic conflagration (cf. Mt. 5:18; Rv. 21:1). There is debate about the meaning of the term *stoicheia* (= elements) here and in 3:12. Does it refer to physical elements, spiritual entities, or the sun, moon and stars?[248] Also, there are the textual variations for the final phrase in 3:10 between *aphanisthesontai* (= disappearance, so Williams), *katakaesetai* (= burning up, so KJV, RSV, JB, ASV, NASB, Weymouth, Phillips) and *heurethesetai* (= laying bare, so NAB, TCNT, NEB, Rotherham).[249] In the end, it is impossible to be precise about either of these issues and probably unnecessary. The primary point is clear enough that judgment was coming.

A Call to Holiness (3:11-18)

The eschatology of the Old Testament prophets was always a call to holiness. The purpose of predictive prophecy was not to satisfy curiosity nor yet to stimulate speculation, but rather, to move God's people toward a serious attitude about their relationship with him. Peter now follows in that same vein.

Since judgment was coming and the present world and everything in it was marked for destruction, the obvious response of God's people should be to live holy and godly lives as they awaited God's intervention in history (3:11). The deviants used the perceived delay of God's judgment as an excuse to follow their own evil

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[247]For the Old Testament prophets, the *Day of Yahweh* seems to have included a near and a far fulfillment, the early one in the coming historical judgments of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, which brought an end to the independent life of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and a distant one at the end of the ages, which would include judgments on all the nations of the world, cf. A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 9-11.

[248]All these interpretations are possible, since the term *stoicheia* was used in the Greco-Roman world for each of them, cf. H. Esser, *NIDNTT* (1976) II.451-453.

[249]Metzger defends *heurethesetai* because it is the oldest, but gives it only a "D" rating (i.e., very uncertain) and concedes that it makes the text virtually unintelligible, cf. Metzger, 705-706.

desires (2:2-3, 10, 13-14, 18-19; 3:3). They had fallen into the ancient error of the fool, saying to themselves, "There is no God [to hold us accountable]" (Ps. 14:1; 53:1). By contrast, the awareness of God's coming judgment, even if reserved for a time later than expected, should have quite the opposite effect upon the truly faithful as they anticipate the day of God.[250]

The idea that the community of faith can "speed" the coming of the end is unique. The Greek text of 3:12a is capable of being translated in an alternative way, "...as you wait eagerly...," and many versions adopt this rendering (so RV, KJV, ASV, JB, NEB, Phillips, Weymouth, Williams, footnotes in NIV and RSV).[251] Other versions, however, follow the translation that Christians can in some way affect the timing of the coming Day of God, even though such a rendering introduces a theological difficulty with respect to the sovereignty of God (so RSV, NIV, NASB, NAB, TEV). If God the Father knows the time of the *parousia* (cf. Mt. 24:36//Mk. 13:32), and if this time has been "set by his own authority" (cf. Ac. 1:7), then it is hard to see how Christians can alter that determination. On the whole, the translation "wait eagerly" is probably to be preferred.

When the Day of God comes, the judgment that has been pending will be carried out with finality. The universe will disintegrate, and the prophetic promise of a new heaven and earth will be fulfilled (cf. Is. 65:17-25; 66:22; Rv. 21:1). In Jewish apocalyptic, this renewal of the universe is described by a return of the earth to primeval chaos, as in the flood, after which it will be restored in a new creation.[252]

This hope motivates Christian ethics and a moral lifestyle (3:14; cf. 1 Jn. 3:3). What might seem to be a delay in the *parousia* is merely a demonstration of God's mercy and patience toward those who need to repent (3:15a; cf. 3:9). Paul, also, explained that God showed great patience toward sinners so that his grace could be extended to them (3:15b-16a; cf. Ro. 2:4; 3:25-26; 9:22-29; 13:11-14). Furthermore, he held up the hope of the *parousia* as a powerful motivation toward righteousness (1 Co. 7:29-35; 2 Co. 5:6-10; Ep. 4:30-32; Phil. 2:14-16; Col. 3:4-17; 1 Th. 5:4-11). It is impossible, of course, to know what letters in the Pauline Corpus were available to Peter at this early period. It is clear, however, that he considers Paul's letters to be equivalent to the Scriptures of the Hebrew Bible, even though Paul's theology was at times difficult to interpret (3:16b).[253] To ignore Paul's warnings would be as

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[250]It is unlikely that any substantial difference should be made between the two phrases "Day of the Lord" and "Day of God." In the present context, they are simply variations of the same theme (cf. Rv. 16:14).

[251]Bo Reicke renders the word *speudontas* (= hurrying, being zealous for) as "striving for," cf. Reicke, 181.

[252]Bauckham, 326.

[253]The question as to whether Paul wrote epistles to the readers of 2 Peter cannot be answered with any certainty. If 2 Peter was written to the same congregations as 1 Peter (cf. 1 Pe. 1:1), then Paul indeed wrote letters to churches in Galatia and Asia (Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, 1 Timothy). However, what is more to the point, if Paul's letters already were being counted as inspired Scripture, then they can be considered "to" the Christian community at large and not restricted to any certain locale.

devastating as to ignore the Hebrew prophets.

Finally, the letter ends with the closing admonition to be on guard against the heresies which threatened (3:17a). Once again, the issue of falling from grace arises due to Peter's expression, "....fall from your secure position" (see discussion at 2:20-22). Is this merely a psychological stability or a soteriological one? Or, does this refer to the firm stance of the Christian community against error, rather than the loss of salvation? It is impossible to tell, though it can be said that the verb *ekpiptein* (= to fall out of) is used elsewhere to refer to apostasy (cf. Ga. 5:4). Christians will doubtless continue to disagree on the matter.

The doxology at the end recalls the blessing at the beginning of the letter--the pursuit of grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus (3:18; cf. 1:2). All glory is ascribed to Christ in the present and the future.