"Correspondence of 1 Peter" (woodcut by Weigel, 1695).
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The Transformed Life in the Context of Suffering, Grace, Hope, and Love (1:1–2:10)

Chapter 1

Author, Audience, and Abundant Grace (1:1–2)

Overview

The beginning of the epistle sets both the author and the readers within the framework of one of the issues which would stimulate future theological controversy and excitement, *viz.,* the foreknowledge of God. These verses are a striking example of the advanced level of the Greek grammar and style of the epistle. They are comprised of one sentence (two, if you count the

1, 2 Peter and Jude Through the Centuries, First Edition. Rebecca Skaggs.

grace-and-peace blessing as one), followed by three dependent clauses describing the nature of Peter's apostleship and the character of the recipients' relation to the triune God:

> according to the foreknowledge of God.
> through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.
> for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling of his blood.

Ancient Receptions

Some of the fathers, among them Cyril of Alexandria (375–444), Oecumenius (d. 990), and Theophylact (c. 1050–1108, *Comm. on 1 Peter*), read these three prepositional phrases in v.2 as modifying "apostle," thus substantiating the authority of Peter's apostleship. On the other hand, Bede associates God's foreknowledge with the recipients: "they were chosen … [so] they might be sanctified" (*Comm*., 1985: 70). In any case, the intriguing issue is God's foreknowledge. Of course, the famous controversies about predestination and free will would be further developed in the later Reformation with Calvin, Arminius (1560–1609), and many others.

At an earlier time (c. 200–300), interest centered on the nature of God's knowledge and what that meant. For example, Origen discusses this in the context of the role of the Spirit in the Trinity, especially in revelation:

> We are not, however, to suppose that the Spirit derives His knowledge through revelation from the Son. For if the Holy Spirit knows the Father through the Son's revelation, He passes from a state of ignorance into one of knowledge; but it is alike impious and foolish to confess the Holy Spirit, and yet to ascribe to Him ignorance. (Origen, 1973, 1:3–4: ccel.org)

For Didymus the Blind (313–398) foreknowledge is a matter of perspective; he comments that "foreknowledge … becomes knowledge as the things which are foreseen take place." So, although Peter's readers had already been chosen according to God's foreknowledge, "by the time he was writing to them their election had already taken place" (*Comm. on 1 Peter,* 19–20, PG 39: 1755–1756: my tr.).

Perhaps Didymus anticipates the larger issue to come regarding predestination, since he addresses some of the problems raised later. He says that God's sovereignty is "beautiful and comforting … being chosen relies not on our worthiness and merit … but on the hand of God and … his mercy" (Didymus: ibid.). Therefore, it is certain and cannot fail. It would seem that Bede also anticipates the later contentious issues of predetermination, when he indicates that it is a cooperative effort between us and God which brings about the reality

of heaven: "No one by his own effort alone can become worthy of achieving eternal salvation by his own strength" (*Comm*., 72: ACC).

Reformation

Later, Calvin would use this passage as one of the preeminent supports for his doctrine of election:

> Hence when Peter calls them elect according to the foreknowledge of God, he is showing that the cause of it depends simply on God alone, because he of his own free will has chosen us. Thus the foreknowledge of God excludes every worthiness on the part of man (Calvin, *Comm*., 1963: 230).

In contrast, Arminius reads vv.1–2 as a refutation of Calvin's thesis of foreknowledge as election. He defines "foreknowledge" as the knowledge of something before it happens. Although God knows who will believe, he does not cause it; those whom he foreknows, he also elects to be saved (for the first translation from the Dutch and explanation of Arminius' *Declaration of Sentiments*, see Stephens, 2012).

John Bengel (1687–1752), a learned German exegete, wrote a commentary on the whole Bible which has influenced and continues to influence biblical scholars. He points out that Peter's words on foreknowledge here (along with v.20) are broad concepts, incorporating also good-will and love; in fact, he understands this reference to include the mystery of the Trinity as a summary of the entire epistle (1981: 727). We see little if anything of the controversial issues to come. Peter will address this issue in more detail later in the epistle.

John Wesley goes further and sidesteps the entire issue of sovereignty and free will: "there is no foreknowledge or after-knowledge. All is present to God" (WesleyCenterOnline: ccel.org).

Other Interpretations

Several later faith groups have made strong statements about the implications of this position. For example, the *Mennonite Articles of Faith* (1766/1895/1902) go so far as to contend that:

> It is therefore contrary to the renewed nature of the believers and in antagonism with it, to sin. Moreover, they are carefully watched over and kept (1 Pet. 2:25). (Pelikan, vol. III, part V: 172)

The *Declaration of Faith of the New Hampshire Baptist Convention* (1833–1853) more generally maintains that, "We believe that election is the eternal purpose of

God, according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners" (Pelikan III, V: 245). The *Confessional Statement of the United Presbyterian Church* emphasizes the process of sanctification more than the nature of election.

Thomas Vincent (1634–1678), an English Puritan minister and author, ascribed to the reformed theory of election, but was evidently most interested in sanctification. He describes the process in some detail, maintaining that it is present in all Christians, but is further developed in them over time. For example, "True Christians are sanctified wholly, in their whole man, though they be not sanctified thoroughly … Their whole spirit is sanctified, that is, the higher faculties of the soul, namely, the understanding and the will" (1812: 19–20: digitalpuritan.net).

Some modern scholars take this reference to God's foreknowledge in the context of the epistle as a whole, with its emphasis on the readers being estranged because they are "chosen" by God. In this light, "God's foreknowledge" is emphasizing that they are not enduring random suffering, but are indeed part of God's preordained plan and purpose (there is a similar concept in 1 Pet. 1:20, Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:28–30, 11:2). Throughout 1 Peter this is underscored by the concept of believers being identified as "called" (*kletois*) (see 1 Pet. 1:25; 2:9, 21; 3:9; 5:10), that salvation through Jesus Christ is part of God's preordained plan (Elliott, 2000: 318–319). Hence, the alienation resulting from becoming God's "chosen" is also preordained.

Verse 2 alludes to an early Trinitarian pattern of the threefold manifestation of the Godhead which was to dominate all the later creeds, such as the Apostles' Creed (late second century) and the Athanasian Creed (sixth century) (see Kelly, 1950: 22–23). Although there are also Pauline examples of this pattern, 1 Peter 1:1–2 stands out as a clear "stereotypical tag or cliché before the third generation of the first century" (Kelly, 1950: 21). With some modifications, this emphasis on the work of the members of the Trinity continues into later times.

The *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563) cites 1 Peter 1:1–2 in answer to Question 70, about the meaning of being washed in the blood and Spirit of Christ. The Catechism states: "it means to have the forgiveness of sins from God, through God, for the sake of Christ's blood which he shed for us in his sacrifice on the cross." Note that the Catechism omits "through the sanctifying work of the Spirit" from v.2, substituting the more general "through God" (Pelikan II, IV: 442).

A number of hymns have been influenced by this passage, for example, *Blest be the Everlasting God* (1707) and *Bells of Hope* (1905). In particular, *Blest be the Father and his Love* (1709), written by the prolific hymn writer Isaac Watts (1674–1748), reflects the work of each member of the Trinity. Paraphrases (not direct quotes) are highlighted in bold:

Blest be the Father and His love,
To whose celestial source we owe
Rivers of endless joy above,
And rills of comfort here below.

Glory to Thee, great Son of God,
From whose dear wounded body rolls
A precious stream of vital blood,
Pardon and life for dying souls.

We give the sacred Spirit praise,
Who in our hearts of sin and woe
Makes living springs of grace arise,
And into boundless glory flow.

Thus God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, we adore;
That sea of life and love unknown,
Without a bottom or a shore.
(cyberhymnal.org).

The grace-and-peace blessing is a Christian adaptation of the secular peace blessing and is found in virtually all of the New Testament epistles, as well as in many other letters of the early church. In 1 Peter, the unique feature is the word "abundance" (*plethyetheie*) used here in the optative, which Paul never includes in his peace blessings. The sense, then, is "May your peace be great!" (Michaels, 1988: 13). This use certainly influenced 2 Peter and Jude, as well as 1 Clement and Polycarp (Philippians and Martyrdom). Throughout 1 Peter, the theme of grace is what conveys on the readers their privileged status with God (1:2, 10, 13; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12. cf., 2:19, 20). At the end of the epistle (5:10, 11), the grace-and-peace blessing is reiterated, forming an *inclusio*.

The Meaning and Purpose of Suffering (1:3–10)

Overview

Mercy, hope, and joy are three of the overarching themes of 1 Peter interwoven in his discussion of suffering. This passage is composed of three sentences, presented in such a way as to lead some scholars to identify it as a hymn. It is divided rhythmically into five stropes of five to seven lines each (for details, see

Windisch and Priesker, 1951: 52; cf., Goppelt, 1993: 79). "Hope" is first introduced here:

> vv.3–5 praise for God who has brought us to a living *hope*.
> vv.6–7 *hope* in spite of suffering.
> vv.8–9 *hope* although salvation cannot be presently seen.

Additional important concepts of 1 Peter are seen here: suffering, God's mercy, and future eternal rejoicing promised to the chosen of God, with hope underlying the entire passage.

Peter's notion of what God has done through Christ is based on the inalterable precept: God, out of mercy, has become Father to all, whether Jew or Greek, who acknowledge Christ as Lord. The use of "mercy" strongly echoes its Old Testament predication as an attribute of God (e.g., Num. 14:18; Pss. 86:5, 15; 104:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13). For example, Psalm 65[66].20 [LXX] says, "Blessed be God who has not turned away my prayer, nor his loving kindness from me." By means of "mercy" God unites both Jew and Gentile in the rebirth made possible through Christ's death and resurrection. In this way, Peter links mercy to "grace" which is given by God, but it is mercy which motivates the giving, the quality inherent in God as God.

Ancient Receptions

Hilary of Arles (c. 403–448) emphasizes that God's actions to redeem us require no help from us (*Intro. Comm. on 1 Peter*, PLSupp 3: 101: ACC); see also Andreas (*Catena*, CEC: 42) and Bede (*Comm*., 1985: 71).

Throughout the epistle, hope continues to be a central idea. "Living hope" follows from being reborn and chosen; they are not only living an existence that is dynamic and authentic, they also are looking forward in anticipation to an inheritance (v.4) and salvation (v.5). The LXX uses the term "inheritance" over two hundred times, often in reference to the land of Canaan. Here, our author reflects the New Testament usage, referring to a spiritual, eternal, kingdom (e.g., Matt. 25:34; Mark 10:17; Luke 25). An early issue here is whether the inheritance is earthly and physical or eschatological and spiritual. Many early church leaders understood it in the eschatological sense. Oecumenius explains God's blessings:

> This hope is not the kind of hope which God gave to Moses, that the people would inherit a promised land in Canaan, for that hope was temporal and corruptible … Rather, God gives us a living hope, which has come from the resurrection of Christ. (*Comm. on 1 Peter*, PG 119: 516: my tr.)

Clement of Alexandria is more interested in the nature of the incorruptible body as a part of the inheritance and the soul's relation to the corruptible body:

> The soul never returns a second time to the body in this life … in the resurrection the soul returns to the body, and both are joined to one another according to their peculiar nature. (*Adumbrations*: FC: ccel.org)

In v.4, Peter describes the inheritance in terms of three negatives, it "can never perish, spoil or fade"; several early writers address this, further supporting the understanding that it is spiritual rather than physical. Didymus the Blind (313–398) is one of the earliest to comment:

> Peter calls it incorruptible and unfading, demonstrating by this that it is a pure and divine inheritance which will remain uncontaminated. (*Comm. on 1 Peter*, PG 1756: my tr.; Hilary of Arles agrees, *Intro. Comm. on 1 Peter*)

In contrast, Bede reads "hope" in relation to our anticipation of the resurrection in the time to come, rather than as an earthly physical inheritance (*Comm*., 1985: 71–72). He adds a practical application to the description:

> [Our inheritance is] imperishable because the heavenly life is untouched by age or disease or any sorrow … unfading, because the heavenly way of life cannot at last become worthless. (*Comm*., 1985: 72)

Andreas also emphasizes that the inheritance is heavenly, not earthly (*Catena*). Clearly, for these early writers, inheritance involves a future state of existence; it is not merely a present mental state.

By the Middle Ages, the issue shifts from the nature to the location of the inheritance, to where the soul goes after death. St. Thomas Aquinas particularly addresses the issue at some length; in fact there are kernels of thought here which would eventually develop into the theory of purgatory, the place where souls abide until they are appropriately cleansed:

> after the body's dissolution, the soul has an abode, which had been reserved for it in heaven … as soon as the soul is set free from the body it is either plunged into hell or soars to heaven, unless it be held back by some debt, for which its flight must needs be delayed until the soul is first of all cleansed. (ST XP [Sup. TP] Q [62] A [2]: "Whether souls are conveyed to heaven or hell immediately after death?" For additional discussion on this, see Gregory, *Dial*. IV, 25, and *in De Eccl. Dogm*. xlvi)

St. Thomas addresses hope in 1 Peter 1:3 in a different way. He uses the analogy of a lover (analogy is one of the medieval exegetical methods of interpretation).

He explains that every lover has the desire of union with his beloved. When a person loves God, grace causes the desire for union with God. Then, faith makes this union possible. As in natural love, desire without the hope of attainment is troublesome: "It was proper therefore that in men, in whom the love of God and faith in Him was caused by grace, there should be caused also the hope of attaining to future blessedness" (*Summa* Q. 17, art. 6: ccel.org). St. Francis de Sales has a similar concept: when we first perceive the Divine Goodness, our love draws us closer to God, making us rejoice in God's goodness (PC).

Other Interpretations

Several churches use these verses in their confessional or catechetical statements. For example, the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563) is not concerned with the location of the future inheritance, but focuses on the means by which it is attained (Pelikan II, VI: 437). The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647) is similar; while omitting some details of v.4, it declares that we are "heirs of everlasting salvation" (ibid.: 622). The Second Vatican Council likewise expresses hope for a future place in heaven: "the church … serves all humanity … as it makes its pilgrim way toward the homeland which is its goal" (Pelikan III, V: 637).

The *Confessional Statement of the United Presbyterian Church* (1925) is more expansive:

> We believe in … the consummation and bliss of the life everlasting, wherein the people of God, freed from sin and sorrow, shall receive their inheritance of glory in the kingdom of their Father, and with capacities and powers exalted and enlarged, shall be made fully blessed in the fellowship of Christ, in the perfected communion of saints, and in the service of God, whom they shall enjoy forever and ever. (Pelikan III, V: 69)

Modern scholars have been intrigued by various concepts such as "hope" and "being kept." For example, Green (2007: 43) posits that Peter's hope "presumes transformed ways of thinking and is clearly set within an eschatological horizon." Another current scholar Michaels highlights the term "kept" and shows its significance for understanding the inheritance. The word "kept" is a passive participle indicating God's action in preserving the inheritance for the chosen. The perfect tense of this participle suggests that God's action had its beginning in the past (God's foreknowledge, v.2a). The idea of something being "kept" or hidden in God can be found in Jewish apocalyptic literature (for references from such, see Michaels, 1988: 21). The idea is that something precious is being protected by God himself for the end-time. Paul uses a similar concept (e.g. Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7), except that for him the hidden things *have been* revealed in the *present* in Christ, whereas for Peter they

will be revealed in the *future*. This entire section is mainly one of triumphant hope for the world to come (for like-minded thinking, see 2 Peter and Jude, where the wicked are "kept" for judgment (Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4, 9; 3:7). Also, in contrast, judgment is "kept" or "reserved" for the wicked in Jude 13 and 2 Peter 2:17.

It does not become clear until later in the passage (vv.6–9) that the believers are being protected during "trials": they are "kept" "by the power of God through faith." It also emerges that this protection is not eradication of the trials; rather, God, being the initiator of these, "preserves" the faith of those undergoing them.

Faith is Preserved During Trials (vv.7–9)

Early writers as well as modern scholars are interested in Peter's "faith during trials." Didymus the Blind is one of the earliest to explain, "Those who are afflicted in various ways because of Christ and who persevere to the end have their faith tested and proved" (*Comm. on 1 Peter*, PG 39: 1756: my tr.). Others interpret these trials as the persecution being experienced by Peter's church community. For example, the *Shepherd of Hermas* says:

> Just as gold is tried by fire and becomes useful, so also you who live in the world are tried in it. So then, you who remain in it and pass through the flames will be purified. (Shepherd, "Visions" 3.1. FC 1:259: ccel.org)

It is noteworthy that since, most likely, the *Shepherd of Hermas* was written in Rome around the second century, this author may have had the severe persecution by Nero in mind here.

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296–298) has a similar understanding of suffering as present persecution in fire (*Festal Letters*, 10: CWS: 70). Also see Bede, *Comm*., 1985: 72). It should be noted that there is a hint here of the concept to be developed later in the epistle about the special nature of suffering as a Christian. The concept of suffering is a recurring theme in 1 Peter.

Reformation

By the time of the Reformation, Luther further explicates the meaning and consequences of being "kept" or "guarded":

> This is his [Peter's] meaning: So tender and precious a matter is that which pertains to the faith which the power of God (that is with us and with which we are filled) produces in us, that He gives us a correct, clear understanding of all things that respect salvation, so that we may judge all that is on earth, and say, this doctrine is true, that is false; this conduct is right, that is not; this work is good and acceptable, that is evil. (Luther, *Comm*.: ccel.org)

Arminius addresses the notion of "being kept": perseverance in good is not from ourselves, it necessitates an action from God through the Holy Spirit. He remarks that if a person who has been born again falls into sin, they cannot repent or rise again "unless they be raised up again by God through the power of his Spirit and be renewed to repentance" (Arminius, 'Works of Arminius," vol. 1 online: on 1 Peter 1:5: ccel.org). This expanded into later discussions with Luther, Calvin, and others about whether salvation can be lost.

Other Interpretations

Some religious groups have interpreted this to mean that salvation cannot be lost. The *Mennonite Articles of Faith* (1766/1895/1902) declare:

> It is therefore contrary to the renewed nature of the believers and in antagonism with it, to sin. Moreover, they are carefully watched over and kept. (Pelikan III, V: 75)

Suffering: Purification or Punishment?

The interest in "hope" and "being kept" during trials quickly lead to the broader concern about the nature of suffering itself: is Peter addressing persecution in particular or is he also treating the sufferings everyone experiences through life? Moreover, does God himself send this grief and sorrow or is it from another source entirely? Many thinkers have addressed this issue through the ages and currently continue to struggle with finding a satisfactory solution.

Ancient Receptions

A number of early writers understand Peter's idea about the meaning and purpose of suffering in terms of purification for believers and punishment for sinners. For example, John Chrysostom (c. 349–407) distinguishes between the refinement of believers and the punishment of sinners: "The righteous suffer so that they may be crowned [with glory], but sinners suffer in order to bring their sins to full judgment" (*Catena*, CEC 44: my tr.).

Other early thinkers understand suffering as "grief," which ultimately brings about a good result. Origen says, "Read 'grieve' in this verse in the sense of 'suffer' as in 'in grief you shall bring forth children' [Gen 3:16]" (*Exhortation to Martyrdom*, 39 CWS: 70). Similarly, Didymus the Blind comments that there are two kinds of grief: "one leads to death and another leads to repentance" (2 Cor. 7:10) (*Comm. on 1 Peter*, PG 39: 17: my tr.).

Hilary of Arles conceives of suffering in a different way; that is, in relation to undergoing temptation: "The glory of the redeemed will never fade after they have been raised from the dead, for it will have withstood the fire of temptation" (*Intro. Comm. on 1 Peter*, PLSupp 3: 85: ACC). Bede concurs *(Comm*., 1985: 78).

Reformation

By the time of the Reformation, Luther comments, "This grief shall last but a little while; afterward ye shall be exceeding glad, for this salvation is already prepared for you" (*Comm. on Peter and Jude*, 1990: 42). He also emphasizes the role of suffering as necessary for the purification process:

> The fire does not take away from the gold, but it makes it pure and bright, so that all dross is removed. So God has imposed the cross upon all Christians, that they might thereby be purified. (*Comm*.: ccel.org)

Calvin elaborates on the metaphor of gold as a refining process involving two phases:

> Gold is, indeed, tried twice over by fire; first when it is separated from its dross, and then, when a judgment is to be formed of its purity. Both of these processes are suitably applied to faith … so that it becomes pure and clean before God. (Calvin, *Comm*., 1963: 235)

Other Interpretations

John Wesley, on the other hand, understands Peter's notion of suffering as general distress experienced in daily life. In a sermon he gave on several occasions, "Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations" (Sermon 47, WesleyCenterOnline: ccel.org), he makes an important distinction between this kind of suffering (*lupethentes*, literally "distress" or "grief") and "darkness" which is a result of sin. He interprets this grief as depression or "heaviness" of spirit which is experienced by believers but is not the same as the "darkness" of the sinful state. He points out here that Peter's readers are obviously believers, not sinners, being "kept" through these trials (v.7), while they possess a "living faith" (v.9), have multiplied peace and grace (v.3), and are rejoicing in the glory of God (v.8). It is clear that believers are undergoing distress. In fact, Wesley feels that, except in some unusual cases, it is actually necessary for believers to endure trials for faith to increase and to confirm the hope of glory.

Later, existential philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) has a unique perspective. In relation to being "tried in the oven" (v.7), he explains that suffering results in strength; at first, we hold on to the hope that it may be avoided, but ultimately the real strength only comes when we realize that no help is coming:

> there is nothing cruel about this seriousness, which deals gently with a man and never tempts him beyond his capacity to bear. He has seen what he is going to

> suffer, he has seen what this love will cost him, "But maybe," says he, "better times will come, help will yet come, and all may yet be well." So he does not let go the picture, but advances tranquilly into the suffering whereto he is led. For governance is love; in its indulgence towards this ardent youth it has not the heart to let him understand at once that here there awaits him a disappointment, that he is reckoning without his host. But this he could not yet endure to understand, and therefore (oh, infinite solicitude of love!) he is not able to understand it. He holds out, and by thus holding out he is strengthened, as one is strengthened by suffering." (*Training*, 1978: 189)

Rejoice (vv.6–8)

Verses 6–8 comprise a small unit around the word "rejoice." In the LXX, this is a technical term for the eschatological rejoicing of the redeemed in worship (cf. Goppelt, 1993: 90). In the New Testament, this word is used primarily to express the work of the Spirit, particularly at the end of time (see Luke 10:21; Acts 2:46, 16:34; Jude 24; Rev. 19:7). Peter himself uses the term in this way in 4:13. This is the joy associated with coming through the suffering of the purification process. Some of the early writers focus on this rather than on the suffering needed to produce it. For example, Hilary of Arles comments, "Not even a thousand ironclad tongues can sound out the sweetness of the heavenly blessings" (*Intro. Comm. on 1 Peter*, PLSupp 3: 85: ACC). Bede remarks:

> To ask joy of this sort is not to plead only with your words for entry into the heavenly fatherland but also to strive with labor to receive it. (*Homilies on the Gospels* 2:12, HOG 2:111)

Luther conveys some of the nature of the joy promised:

> An unspeakably glorious joy shall that be, – and there is scarcely so clear a passage on the subject of the future joy as the one in this place, – and still he finds himself unable to express it. (Luther, *Comm.*: ccel.org)

After the time of the Reformation, writers and pastors were also interested in the relation of suffering and joy. For example, Matthew Poole (1624–1679) reads 1 Peter 1:6–8 in terms of grief and joy, but explains that a person can experience both "heaviness" or grief at the same time as joy by realizing that the grief is in the present while rejoicing is coming in the future: "they might grieve as men but rejoice as saints … suffering might affect them but the faith of better things coming will relieve them" (1669: 900).

Thomas Vincent (1634–1678) was also an English Puritan minister and author. Having graduated from Oxford, he ministered in London during the plague and fire of 1665–1666, during which seven members of his own family

perished. He used this passage (vv.6–8) in a practical way to comfort the sufferers of this terrible time in London. In fact, he published a beautiful devotional on 1 Peter 1:8, *The True Christian's Love for the Unseen Christ*, in which he exhorts Christians to "promote the decaying love of Christ" in their hearts (1812: 6: ccel.org). Vincent sets Peter's message of comfort within the framework of the love of Christ by emphasizing the comfort which comes only from the experience of Christ's presence in the suffering, along with the hope of future glory, love, and joy. For example, he powerfully yet poetically expresses: "O the future glorious light which there and then will shine into every corner of my mind! … this, this only will make you willing to die, and this sense of Christ's love will effectually sweeten your passage through the dark entry of death" (1812: 172: ccel.org).

About the same time, Thomas Watson (1620–1686), another English nonconformist, Puritan preacher and author also used Peter's message of love and suffering. In his sermon "The Perfume of Love" on 1 Peter 1:22 he interweaves Peter's message on love with both Paul (1 Cor. 13) and the Gospel of John to encourage and exhort Christians to "arm themselves with love" in order to confront suffering with a pure heart (*The Thomas Watson Reading Room*, Sermon: "The Perfume of Love": preceptaustin.org).

Modern scholars debate whether the term should be read as an imperative (a command to the readers to rejoice) or an indicative (descriptive with a future meaning). The present indicative conveys "confident assertions about the present," particularly prophecies, which can stand for the future (for the meaning of this grammatical construction, see Blass and Debrunner, 1961: sec. 323; for a current perspective, see Martin, 1992). This suggests that the joy will certainly take place after they have suffered for a little while. Hence, for Peter, suffering produces current joy, but more importantly, "inexpressible, glorious joy" in the future.

Some writers are particularly interested in an existential sense of joy. For example, Kierkegaard is intrigued by Peter's concept of "inexpressible joy" in 1:7. As usual, he views it through the lens of paradox and existence:

> he calls the joy unutterable – But suppose the inexpressible joy had its ground in the contradiction that an existing human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite situated in time, so that the joy of the eternal in him becomes inexpressible because he is an existing individual, becomes a highest breath of the spirit which is nevertheless incapable of finding embodiment, because the existing individual exists: then the explanation would be that it is unutterable, that it cannot be otherwise; no nonsense please. (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 1968: 198)

This passage (1:3–9) has been used for centuries and is still being used in the Easter liturgies of the main religious groups, such as the Roman Catholic,

Episcopal, Lutheran, and United Methodist Churches, to express the future hope and joy of salvation (*Choral Literature for Sundays and Seasons;* also see the *Revised Common Lectionary*).

The "unspeakable" or inexpressible joy of v.8 has been memorialized in song, for example, "Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory" by Barney E. Warren, published in 1900, captures the spirit of joy expressed in these verses. In 2012, "Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory" is used as the title of a book detailing the life and ministry of the young eighteenth-century pastor Samuel Pearce and his wife Sarah (*Classics of Reformed Spirituality*). Their lives express the sense of this passage: although he died at 33 years old, his biographer remarks that according to many of his contemporaries he "condensed a lifetime of holy and joyful ministry into a single decade" (back cover of the book, amazon.com).

(Refrain) It is joy unspeakable and full of glory,
Full of glory, full of glory,
It is joy unspeakable and full of glory,
Oh, the half has never yet been told.

I have found His grace is all complete,
He supplieth ev'ry need;
While I sit and learn at Jesus' feet,
I am free, yes, free indeed.

I have found the pleasure I once craved,
It is joy and peace within;
What a wondrous blessing! I am saved
From the awful gulf of sin.

I have found that hope so bright and clear,
Living in the realm of grace;
Oh, the Savior's presence is so near,
I can see His smiling face.

I have found the joy no tongue can tell,
How its waves of glory roll!
It is like a great o'erflowing well,
Springing up within my soul.

I've found a Savior dear to me,
More precious than gold;
He saved my soul and made me free,
There's joy in my soul!

(cyberhymnal.org)

Consequences of the Transformed Life: Suffering Related to the Suffering of Christ (1:11–12)

Overview

Here, Peter sets his argument on suffering into a larger context: the trials his readers are experiencing are not random or unintentional on God's part. They are directly connected to the suffering and glory of Christ himself, foretold by the prophets. Most likely, these are Jewish figures (including apocalyptic ones) as well as Christian ones in the church at the time. For Peter, the salient point is that they "made diligent and careful inquiry" into these things. These two words are linked in Ps. 118[119]:2, LXX, and convey the sense of "searching out" the testimonies of the Lord and "seeking out" the Lord himself (Michaels, 1988: 40). Peter is emphasizing the devotional intensity with which the prophets pursued knowledge and understanding of God's promised plan, as revealed by the "Spirit of Christ." According to Peter, this revelation has to do with the sufferings and ultimate glorification of Christ. Even though the prophets knew they would not see the fulfillment of these promises, they ardently sought to understand them.

In our author's time, many of these promises had already taken place, but more is to come. There is the "grace to be given you when at the end of time Jesus Christ is revealed" (vv.11, 13). This grace goes beyond the salvation they experience in the present. Both terms ("salvation" sought by the prophets and the "grace" yet to come) are in a similar grammatical construction, with the preposition *peri,* indicating that they are to be taken together. Assuredly, Peter expects the final revelation of Christ to be in an eschatological context (vv.5, 9). The mysterious nature of this revelation is further highlighted in that, while the prophets intensely searched to understand it, the angels themselves "long to look into these things" (v.12).

Ancient Receptions

One of the issues which interests the early writers is whether the belief of the Old Testament prophets in the promises of God is as inspired as those who lived at the time of Jesus. Clement of Alexandria considered the Old Testament prophets to be foundational to understanding the New Testament work of Christ; he adds: "the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, and … [it] is declared by this that the prophets spoke with wisdom, and that the Spirit of Christ was in them, according to the possession of Christ, and in subjection to Christ" (*Adumbrations*: FC: ccel.org).

Oecumenius also understands the Old Testament prophecies as the work of the Spirit of Christ: "The Spirit of Christ predicted his sufferings to Isaiah

(Isa. 53:7), and he predicted the resurrection to Hosea" (Hos. 6:3) (*Comm. on 1 Peter*, PG 119: 520: my tr.).

Andreas concurs (*Catena*, CEC 44). Didymus the Blind explains that at his time (fourth century) this was a debated issue, and explicitly remarks that the opinion held by many that the promises and salvation of the Old Testament prophets were inferior to those of the ones who saw Jesus in the flesh "is false." He explains further that Christ comes in two ways. One is by the intellect as Divine Word; the other is through the senses as when he appeared on earth historically (*Comm. on 1 Peter*, PG 39: 1757–1758).

Theodoret of Cyr (393–458/466) agrees and states emphatically: "Peter says that whatever was announced to you through the proclamation of the Holy Spirit [through the prophets] was sent from heaven" (*Catena*, CEC: 45–6: my tr.). Ambrose of Milan (c. 340–397) agrees (*Letters to Laymen* 66: FC: ccel.org).

Reformation

Later, for Luther, the issue continues to focus on the relation between the Old and New Testaments:

> Thus the books of Moses and the prophets are the Gospel, since they have first preached and written of Christ that which the Apostles afterward preached and wrote. Yet there is a distinction between them [the Old and New Testaments]. For although both … have been written out on paper, yet … the New Testament, cannot be said so properly to be written, but to have consisted in the living voice which published it. (Luther, *Comm.*: ccel.org)

Calvin similarly takes a positive view of the prophets and the Old Testament:

> This passage [1 Peter 1:10-12] has been strangely perverted by fanatics, so as to exclude the fathers, who lived under the Law, from the hope of eternal salvation … but [It] teaches us that … they indeed by faith tasted those things which the Lord has passed on by their hands. (*Comm.*, 1963: 241)

Other Interpretations

The writers of the French Confession (1559, 1571) affirm that "the word contained in these [Old Testament] books has proceeded from God" (Pelikan II, IV: 376).

In 1869, Jane Borthwick (1813–1897) communicated this relation of the prophets to the fulfillment and the ultimate unity that results in Christ (1:10) in

the words of the hymn, "Hasten the Time Appointed." The hymn concludes with the joy anticipated in the future:

Hasten the time appointed,
By prophets long foretold
When all shall dwell together,
One Shepherd and one fold.
Let every idol perish,
To moles and bats be thrown
And every prayer be offered
To God in Christ alone.

Let Jew and Gentile, meeting
From many a distant shore
Around one altar kneeling,
One common Lord adore.
Let all that now divides us
Remove and pass away,
Like shadows of the morning
Before the blaze of day.

Let all that now unites us
More sweet and lasting prove
A closer bond of union,
In a blest land of love.
Let war be learned no longer,
Let strife and tumult cease,
All earth His blessed kingdom
The Lord and Prince of Peace.

O long expected dawning,
Come with thy cheering ray!
When shall the morning brighten,
The shadows flee away?
O sweet anticipation!
It cheers the watchers on
To pray, and hope, and labor,
Till the dark night be gone.
(cyberhymnal.org)

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) was an American philosopher, essayist, and transcendentalist poet. Although he is best known for his humanist

writings, such as "Self-Reliance," he was deeply interested in spirituality and ethics (biography.com website). Emerson was intensely interested in the "Spirit's involvement in the New Testament writings" (1992: 269–270). At the dedication of the Second Church vestry in Boston, Mass. on February 28, 1831, he specifies that one of the purposes of the dedicated hall was to provide a place for the work of the "Spirit of the New Testament, not the letter." The attraction of the gospel, according to Emerson, is the love that "glows in its pages … when it teaches the humble believers that God is love … that God dwelleth with the humble [Mt 18.4; Js 4.6 and 1 Pet 5.5] … that we should be holy as he is holy [1 Pet 1.16]."

The Interest of Angels (v.12b)

From an early time, a number of church writers have commented on the curious notion that angels themselves are intrigued by Christ's work of redemption. Clement of Alexandria is one of the earliest leaders to comment on the role of angels in 1 Peter; these angels are not the fallen angels, but "angels who desire to obtain the advantage of that perfection" (*Adumbrations*: FC: ccel.org). Irenaeus says, "There is one Son who accomplished the Father's will and one human race in which the mysteries of God are accomplished, which angels long to behold" (*Against Heresies* 5.36.3: LCC 1: 379).

Hilary of Arles has the perspective that the angels are interested because of their great love (*Intro. Comm. on 1 Peter*., PLS 3:86). Niceta of Remesiana (335–414) asks, "If the angels desire to look upon him, should not [human beings] be all the more afraid to despise him?" (*Power of the Holy Spirit*, 19. FC: 7:39: ccel.org).

The issue slightly shifts by the time of the Reformation; for example, Calvin approaches this subject from a different angle:

> The meaning of this passage [about the angels] can be … either that the treasure we have in the Gospel fills the angels with a desire to see it … or that they anxiously desire to see the kingdom of Christ. (*Comm*., 1963: 242)

In the Middle Ages there was a strong interest in angels, particularly in the Catholic tradition. St. Thomas Aquinas in fact did so much work on angels that he became known as the "doctor of angels" (Catholic Encyclopedia online). He explains angels' desire to know about salvation in terms of potentiality and actuality:

> An angel's intellect can be in potentiality with regard to things learnt by natural knowledge; for he is not always actually considering everything that he knows by natural knowledge. But as to the knowledge of the Word … he is always actually beholding the Word, and the things he sees in the Word. (ST FP Q [64] A [1])

St. Francis de Sales, showing some influence by St. Thomas, explains the interest of angels (1 Pet. 1:12): "The angels who see the Redeemer and in him all the mysteries of our salvation, do yet desire to see him." They see him continually, "with a view so agreeable and delightsome" that although they are satisfied, their desire does not diminish; in fact, it increases (PC).

Pelikan and Hotchkins suggest that the biblical tradition of angels as messengers and servants of God eventually became linked to Jewish speculations about angels and the gnostic cosmologies which understood aeons and daimons as mediators between God and humans (2003: 133).

Consequences of the Transformed Life: Hope, Holiness, and Love (1:13–23)

Overview

Although this text has been read in a variety of ways, the early issue had to do with the nature of the life to which we are called; Peter's audience has been called from their past lives of "ignorance" of God and "emptiness" into the fulfillment of their hope. This, in turn, necessitates a certain kind of behavior – the holiness of God is a model for the conduct of the readers. Peter uses two participles to convey the urgency of the needed action: be prepared (*anazosamenoi*) and be alert (*nephontes*). They must be holy because the God who called them is holy.

The theme of hope, characterized as "living hope," is continued here from the introduction. This section is composed of two parts: first the ethical implications of hope, as expressed in a series of imperatives and participles, and second, the celebration of the ethical implications of this hope, in spite of present afflictions. Inherent within this hope is the life of holiness. It is meaningful that the word "hope" is used as both a noun and a verb (Michaels, 1988: 52). As a noun, it cuts to the very core of the gospel, addressing our behavior now, so that our present earthly existence is as important as our commitment to the anticipated future. Indeed, the content of this hope is holiness (vv.14–17) and reverent fear of God (v.17). As a verb, it is typified by mental alertness and readiness for action; it is not merely the expectation of good or bad (as it was for the Greeks), rather it is directed toward God's promise of salvation. Hence, hope is linked not only to the future (ultimate salvation), but also its nature and content dynamically affect the present. Green (2007: 43) insightfully shows that "living hope" incorporates both "now and not yet;" it is a consequence of transformed lives, yet anticipates ultimate rejoicing at the end-time.

Ancient Receptions

Two main themes are of interest here – the readers' ignorance of God in their past lives, and the alertness to which Peter urges them. The part that most modern scholars agree on is that the use of "ignorance" sheds light on the nature of Peter's readers, but there is considerable ambiguity about its deeper implications. It can mean that they are Gentiles who do not know God at all, or Jews who failed to recognize Jesus as Messiah, or a mixture of both. When we consider this entire passage, however, we realize that Peter here is not addressing the classical Jewish/Gentile controversy at all. Rather, he is contrasting the readers' past existence, characterized by a lack of "knowledge of God," driven by "desires" derived from ignorance of God. *Epithumiai* (v.14), means "desire" or "longing," but Peter associates it with the desires of their old life without God (see Ign., *Eph*. 19.3; Pseudo-Clem., *Hom*. 2.15). Out of this past "empty way of life" (Wallace, 1996: 438, translates it as "futile"), they have been called to be a "holy people" (vv.15–16, 18b, repeated in 2:10 and 4:2–3). The point is that the "empty life handed down to you from your forefathers" refers both to the self-absorbed life of the Gentiles and the Jewish life characterized by the attempt to justify our own righteousness by works.

Some of the early thinkers like Clement of Rome understand this in a general sense, "Since we are a holy portion, let all our actions accord with holiness" (*Epistle*, xxx. I: FC: ccel.org). Didymus the Blind concurs (*Comm. on 1 Peter*: PG 39: 1759). Andreas also agrees, "God insists that we become like him, for in His [God's] holiness lies our salvation." (*Catena*, CEC 46: my tr.). Bede is concerned about the life which embraces this hope. He comments: "The greater is the grace promised you, the more greatly take care that you are worthy to receive it" (*Comm*., 1985: 77). He goes further and relates this to Jesus' message about being "perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 9:2). He also reads this passage in a baptismal context:

> Just as the gift of the Lord's passion … is imperishable, so also is the sacrament of the sacred font by which we were reborn. These are so interrelated to each other that the one without the other cannot confer salvation. (*Comm*., 1985; 79)

Theophylact (1050–1108), like some of the earlier writers, reads this in a more general sense: "To be conformed to the things of this world means to be surrounded by them. We are to abandon this world and be conformed to the One who alone is truly holy" (*Comm. on 1 Peter*, PG 125: 1201. my tr.).

Reformation

At a later time, Luther emphasizes Peter's message about alertness and being prepared; he reads this as a double metaphor about ascribing loins to the

mind (literally, "gird up your mind," v.13), that our minds are held entangled by the cares of the world and by vain desires, so that they do not rise up against God. Therefore, anyone who really wants to have this hope must learn in the first place to disentangle himself from the world, and gird up his mind like a person in ancient times used to tie up his long garments "so that he does not turn aside to vain affections" (Luther, *Comm. on 1 Peter*, 1990: 243). For him, redemption from the past empty life and the anticipation of a new kind of existence is characterized in two ways by Peter: a life of reverence and holiness before God and recognition of redemption by a sacrifice without "blemish" or "defect" (vv.18–19).

Characteristically, Luther is concerned by Peter's statement about works (v.17). He explains the interaction of faith and works:

> although God judges us according to our works, still it remains true that works are only the fruits of faith, by which we perceive when there is faith or unbelief. (*Comm.*: ccel.org)

Holiness is an important theme for Luther. He exhorts on it in a "Sermon on 1 Peter," written in 1522 and preached after he had been condemned as an outlaw by King Charles V for his opposition to the Catholic Church. This sermon is an important presentation of Luther's theory of the holy life and the role of good works in the holiness. It is significant that he is using 1 Peter here. He explains that being "sober" (1 Peter 1:13) means fasting in moderation, that overdoing it results in poor health and even the inability to relate to people in social situations. He agrees that restraint in gluttony, sexuality, and other lusts are valuable expressions of good works as long as one realizes this is an affirmation of one's faith, not an achievement of merit. The key is reasonableness and sensibility, moderation. This, of course, may differ from person to person, so cannot be adhered to merely as a set of rules without consideration.

On the other hand, the acknowledgment of restraint cannot be abandoned; the point is that faith and knowledge of Christ are needed to live a life in which one understands right and wrong in a moderate way, always seeking to never return to the past life of ignorance and wickedness (Bielfeldt, 2015).

Luther accuses his adversaries of misunderstanding Peter's words that the prophet is holy because of his special revelation from God; Luther argues that every Christian has the revelation within himself – indeed this is the participation in God's "goods." He proceeds to describe how one lives the holy life: when you give yourself to God, you become his. We do not do holy things to become holy, we live a life acceptable to God because we belong to him who is holy (Bielfeldt, 2015, vol. 1: 101). Luther admonishes that this does not mean that we can live however we please: this is "stupid, changing Christian life into carnal

liberty" (ibid.: 102). On the other hand, works do not bring salvation; faith liberates from sin. Good works and a holy life merely follow as an example to others. Works of service will automatically follow from this holy life. It must be remembered that it is God alone who transforms (ibid.: 98–102).

Other Interpretations

Many current scholars also focus on the phrase "gird for action" (or be prepared). The second participle "be alert" or "be sober" underscores the sense of intensity in the exhortation. It is not clear whether the adjective "perfect" is modifying "sober" (live in "perfect alertness," extending to all aspects of behavior, akin to "pay attention", e.g., Hort, 1898; Michaels, 1988: 55; Bauer et al., 1957: 810) or to "hope" ("perfectly set your hope," suggesting "set your hope without hesitation or faltering". See Kelly, 1969: 66; Selwyn, 1958: 140). The admonition "be sober" usually refers to moderation in the use of alcohol, but many modern scholars understand it in its broader sense of self-control and clarity of mind (e.g. Kelly, 1969: 66). These qualities are needed in order to enter into the fulfillment of anticipated hope. Others follow some of the early thinkers, such as Bede, and read it as a baptismal challenge – as baptized Christians we are now obligated to live a certain kind of life before God, free from the pagan past and now living an existence characterized by holiness. Kelly makes the point that holiness here is not just ritual purity as in the Old Testament, but is "the freedom from sin and absolute moral integrity which fellowship with God makes imperative" (Kelly, 1969: 69). Peter provides practical applications – avoidance of slander, impure associations, drunkenness, violence, abominable pride, and so on (Kelly, 1969: 69; Selwyn, 1958: 141).

From his perspective as a writer, Emerson is impressed with Peter's emphasis on holiness and applies his exhortation to the church of all time. On the occasion of the dedication of the Second Church Vestry in Boston, Mass. on February 28, 1831, Emerson speaks about the purposes for the erection of the hall and cited 1 Peter 1:16 in particular, that the hall should be used to contribute to holy living, "we should be holy as he is holy" (Emerson, 1992: 270).

The Message Bible, an idiomatic translation, expresses an interesting dynamic sense of the whole passage:

> So roll up your sleeves, put your mind in gear, be totally ready to receive the gift that's coming when Jesus arrives. Don't lazily slip back into those old grooves of evil, doing just what you feel like doing. You didn't know any better then, you do now. As obedient children, let yourselves be pulled into a way of life shaped by God's life, a life energetic and blazing with holiness. God said, "I am holy, you be holy." (MSG)

The *Heidelberg Catechism* (l563), primarily interested in Christ's work of redemption through his blood, omits the reference to the readers' redemption *from* their "past futile existence" (Pelikan II, IV: 435). The *Dordrecht Confession* (1632), reflecting the later radical Reformation era, is similar: "The church of the living God he bought and redeemed with his own precious blood" (ibid.: 778). In contrast, the earlier *Catechesis and Confession of Polish Brethren* (1574) includes even more of the ideas of the verse (Pelikan II, IV: 727).

This passage has influenced popular music as well. In 1950, the folk singer and writer Bob Dylan included numerous times the phrase "the blood of the Lamb" in his album "Saved" (lyrics are available online). Dylan's interviewer Gilmour explains, however, that Dylan does not intend to express any particular message by using biblical words or phrases in his music, that his hearers will interpret the meaning themselves (Gilmour, 2004: 120). His use of these phrases from 2 Peter does indicate that this passage made an impression on him.

Verses 17–23 are used in the lectionaries for the Easter season of many faith groups: the *Revised Common Lectionary* is used by churches all over the world, for example by the Roman Catholics, the Episcopalians, the Lutherans, and the United Methodists (see Blass and Debrunner, 1961; textweek.com/1, 2 Peter.htm; *Choral Literature for Sundays and Seasons*, 66).

Peter continues with the implications of the holy life – a life typified by holiness is also characterized by love of one another. Because God is holy, we must be holy; because the Word is living and abiding, we should abide in holiness and demonstrate brotherly love. Although the word is *philadelphion* (literally "brotherly love"), it should be understood in a generic sense to include women as well. "Sibling love" would perhaps be better (Michaels, 1988: 73). Peter uses Isaiah 40:6–8 as a "centerpiece" to link this section together (vv.23–25): the perishability of human existence, like the transient grass, contrasts remarkably with the everlasting and dynamically abiding word of God.

The early thinkers are concerned with the nature of this holy life; what it looks like in practical terms. Hilary of Arles makes a point: "True purity comes from within. If the soul is clean, the body will be cleansed as well" (*Intro. Comm. on 1 Peter*, PLSupp 3: 87: ACC). Oecumenius is more concerned with the connection between the power of the Spirit and our behavior among one another (*Comm. on 1 Peter*, PG 119: 528: my tr.).

Current scholars are also interested in the focus of this passage on the life of holiness and understand the passage in a variety of ways**.** Green (2007: 50–52), using historical and social-scientific methodology, elaborates on the multifacetedness of ancient conversion.

Other scholars such as Michaels are intrigued by the language used: that the perfect tenses of *agnizo* (consecrate, purify, v.22), *anagennao* (give new

birth, v.23), and the aorists of *apotithemi* (put off, v.21) and *geuomai* (yearn, v.23), along with the imagery of seed (v.23) and growth (v.22), convey that salvation is both in the present and something we are anticipating (Green, 2007; see also Michaels, 1996: 251).

Others argue that the entire epistle is a baptismal liturgy with this passage (vv.22–25) being the "baptismal dedication delivered by the officiant following the actual baptism" (Martin, 1992: 36). Boismard (1956: 339–352) modifies the theory by suggesting that rather than the epistle being entirely a liturgy (Priesker, 1951: 152–156; Cross, 1957) or a homily (Perdelwitz, 1911), it contains several fragments of a primitive baptismal liturgy. He suggests that vv.22–25 is one of four baptismal hymns used by Peter.

Various catechisms express ideas from this passage. For example, the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), in answer to Question 65, says, "Since, then faith alone makes us share in Christ and all his benefits, where does such a faith originate?" The answer paraphrases 1:23: "The Holy Spirit creates it in our hearts by the preaching of the Holy gospel and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments" (Pelikan II, IV: 441). The Brief Statement of the Evangelical Synod (1932) comments on "Conversion": "All men, since the fall, are dead in sins … Hence, Scripture calls the faith of man, or his conversion … a new birth by the gospel, 1 Pet. 1:23–5" (Pelikan III, V: 491). The Statement of Belief of the North American Baptist Conference (1982) is more specific in terms of the nature of scripture: "We believe the Bible is God's Word given by divine inspiration … it is trustworthy, sufficient, without error – the supreme authority and guide for all doctrine and conduct" (1 Pet. 1:23–25) (Pelikan, ibid.: 809).

Our author now addresses the new life of holiness by using another metaphor, "taking off," such as in "removing clothes" (*apotithemi*, cf., also Rom. 13.12; Col. 3.8; Jas. 1.2). The readers, having "taken off" their past evil and deceitful ways (v.21), will now need to replace these with love (*agapao*), harmony, and loyalty. Peter emphasizes the imagery of family – they are now relatives with God himself as Father (vv.1:2, 3, 17) (Green, 2007: 51; see also van Rensburg, 2004: 387–388). Here, their new existence of "brotherly love" stands in marked contrast with their past state. Whereas they were once alienated and strangers from God, they are now "aliens and strangers" within their society because they are chosen by God (reiterating the notion from vv.1–2). Finally, this new existence grows out of, and is sustained by, the "word that was preached to us" (v.25).

Emerson (1992: vol. 4) understands the new birth in a different sense entirely, as evidenced by a sermon preached on several occasions. His text is Luke 20:38, and is entitled, "For all live unto him." According to editor Wesley

T. Mott, Emerson's idea of order in nature is anticipated here. In any case, Emerson interprets the doctrine of the second birth (as in John 3.3 and 1 Pet. 1.23) as a transformation of character and behavior:

> When a man begins strongly to feel the obligation of duty; when he begins to see the beauty of right actions, and to hate vice; when he begins to feel his debt to his Maker; there is such a growth and enlargement in his mind that he calls it a new life by emphasis; as if first he began to live. All the parts of his character acquire balance and energy; he becomes useful to his fellow men to the whole extent of his powers; so that he is born again. (Emerson, 1992: 122)

An exceptional hymn based on this chapter was written by Samuel Sebastian Wesley. Born on 14 August 1810, he was the first child of Samuel Wesley and his housekeeper, Sarah Suter. He inherited the outstanding musical abilities of his family and at the age of 22 was appointed organist and master of the choristers at Hereford Cathedral. While there, he composed the anthem "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," based generally on 1 Peter 1. Written for an Easter Day service, the circumstances surrounding the writing are certainly worthy of note and are described as follows by markfromireland on the website Saturday Chorale:

> Apparently on that particular Easter Sunday only the trebles and one bass (the Dean's butler) were available to sing. Despite this unpromising start "Blessed be the God and Father" is Wesley's best-known anthem sung in Anglican cathedrals and churches throughout the world. Structurally it's a very taut piece of music consisting of five sections linked in an unbroken chain and characterized by a remarkable variety of musical textures. The opening is unaccompanied and well worth listening to in its own right but it's the anthem's central portion – a wonderful dialog between a solo treble and the treble chorus that lifts the piece from the merely very good to the extraordinary. This central section is flanked by passages for deeper voices while the final fughetta after "But the word of the Lord endureth forever" is announced by the (in)famous dramatic dominant seventh chord of E flat on full organ. It is performed in modern times, for example, by the Worcester Cathedral Choir, conducted by David Hunt, with Adrian Partington on the organ. (Saturday Chorale, posted on 31 January 2013)

The content vibrantly captures the theological and creative imagery of this text. It should be noted that the text is very similar to the translation of the authorized version:

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
> which according to his abundant mercy
> hath begotten us again unto a lively hope

by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled,
that fadeth not away,
reserved in heaven for you,
Who are kept by the power of God
through faith unto salvation
ready to be revealed at the last time.

But as he which hath called you is holy,
so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.
Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.

Love one another with a pure heart fervently.
See that ye love one another.
Love one another with a pure heart fervently:

Being born again,
not of corruptible seed,
but of incorruptible,
by the word of God.

For all flesh is as grass,
and all the glory of man
as the flower of grass.
The grass withereth,
and the flower thereof falleth away.
But the word of the Lord endureth for ever.
Amen. (hymnary.org)

The Transformed Life: Three Metaphors (1:24 – 2:10)

The Grass Metaphor (1:24, 25)

Overview

This section is composed of three metaphors describing the transformed life: grass, milk, and living stones. They convey the dynamic quality of the life brought about by new life in Christ. Although two of them are in chapter 2 of 1 Peter, together they create a coherent message about the transformed life, vividly illustrating complementary qualities of this existence.

Many of the ancient writers liked Peter's use of the grass metaphor of Isaiah 40: 6–8. For example, Eusebius of Caesarea (c.260–340) comments,

"Like the grass of the field and like beautiful flowers he [man] will soon wither and die" (*Catena*, CEC 49: my tr.). Theodoret of Cyr expands it somewhat, allegorically: "But just as when the grass withers, the flowers fall off, so when men die, their pride and glory are extinguished" (*Catena*, CEC 49–50L my tr.). Hilary of Arles adds another perspective, that the human being has two sides: the outer person is mortal like the flower of the field and will pass away, but the inner person lives forever by God's power (*Intro. Comm. on 1 Peter*, PLSupp).

This metaphor has some notable effects in culture as well. For example, in 1760, Anne Steele was inspired by 1 Peter 1:24 to write a poem entitled "Life is a span, a fleeting hour." Steele captures the sense of the transience of life, seen through the lens of hope conveyed in the passage of Peter. She had certainly experienced suffering in an extraordinary way: she lost her mother at the age of three, became an invalid following an accident when she was 19, and finally her fiancé drowned on the day of their wedding. Hope still characterized her life and she cheerfully assisted her father in ministry for the rest of her life. Her poem was set to music in 1875 by John B. Dykes and is still popular, being included in 159 hymnals.

Life is a span, a fleeting hour;
How soon the vapour flies!
Man is a tender transient, flow'r,
That e'en in blooming dies.

The once-lov'd form, now cold and dead,
Each mournful thought employs;
And nature weeps her comforts fled,
And wither'd all her joys.

But wait the interposing gloom,
And lo! stern winter flies;
And, dress'd in beauty's fairest bloom,
The flow'ry tribes arise.

Hope looks beyond the bounds of time,
When what we now deplore
Shall rise in full immortal prime
And bloom to fade no more.

Then cease, fond nature! cease thy tears;
Religion points on high:
There everlasting spring appears,
And joys that cannot die.

(hymnary.org)

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) based the second movement of his Requiem, "Denn alles Fleisch, es ist wie Gras" (translation: "For all Flesh is as Grass"), on this metaphor and cited 1 Peter 1:24, even though the same metaphor is in Isaiah 40: 6–8. As is customary for German requiems, it is scored for full symphony, including strings and harp, woodwinds, brass, and timpani accompanied by full chorus. Interestingly, the beginning of the movement is used in the opening credits of the BBC documentary film series *The Nazis: A Warning from History*, and segments are repeated during the closing credits. Clearly this is a radical shift from the meaning of the text of 1 Peter, but is another example of material from 1 Peter being used without the knowledge of its connection to the text of 1 Peter.

The Milk Metaphor (2:1–3)

Overview

This is the second of the three metaphors Peter uses to illustrate the transformed life. Together, they provide aspects of the new existence, contrasting this new existence with their old life: the grass focuses on the transience of life (fleeting like grass) versus the eternality of life in Christ; the milk metaphor highlights the intimate relationship with God which the new existence makes possible; and finally, the living stones describe the new community into which they are incorporated by the new life. The metaphors also reintroduce and elaborate the main themes of this section: for example, the characteristics of the life they have left behind. Lists of vices and virtues are a common rhetorical device in the Jewish and Hellenistic worlds as well as in the Christian tradition. This list, in particular (2:1), is relatively short and appears to generalize the categories of evil and wickedness. The author broadens the meaning of the terms for "malice" and "deceit" by using the adverb "all" (pas). These characterize the life they have left behind representing forms of behavior that "oppose the ethos and practice of love" to which they have recently been called (cf. Green, 2007: 52). They are now asked to leave behind this former lifestyle and to move forward into their new, transformed life, described in terms of motivation and growth.

Peter uses the metaphor of newborn babies and milk to emphasize the intimacy of the new life. This is different from Paul's use of the milk metaphor in 1 Corinthians 3:2: whereas Paul contrasts the milk needed by new babies (new converts) with the solid meat craved by adults (mature believers), Peter's point is that the intense longing for the milk felt by babies expresses the way all believers should feel about their new relation with the Lord – their intense craving for

the Lord replaces their life of evil desires (cravings). Two main themes are included here: the life they have left behind and the transformed one they have chosen (elaborated upon with the metaphor of the "living stones").

Ancient Receptions

The imagery of the metaphors is of interest to the ancient writers. For example, Didymus the Blind comments, "This verse upsets the heretics, who like to think that natures are good or bad in themselves and thereby cannot be changed" (*Comm. on 1 Peter*, PG 39: 1761–1762: my tr.). Hilary of Arles allegorizes the milk metaphor in an intriguing way (clearly, he is using one of the medieval exegetical methods. See Lubac, 2000):

> Milk has three forms which can be compared to doctrine, that is, the liquid, cheese, and butter. Liquid milk is the literal sense of Scripture, cheese is the moral sense, and butter is the spiritual sense. (*Intro. Comm. on 1 Peter*, PLSupp 3: 88, ACC)

Oecumenius stresses still another issue:

> These words say a great deal, for it is unworthy of those who have been born again to an incorruptible life to be ensnared by evil and to prefer things which have no existence to that which truly exists. (*Comm. on 1 Peter*, PG 119: 529: ccel.org)

Andreas follows Paul in interpreting the milk metaphor; in fact, he paraphrases 1 Corinthians 3:2 (*Catena*). Bede also follows Paul, but goes further to relate the metaphor to the teaching of disciples by the priests: "the priests supply elementary doctrine, which is the rational milk without guile. But they also provide the solid food of more sublime doctrine to those who are more nearly perfect" (*On the Tabernacle and Its Vessels*, 2.10.81: TTH 18: 90: ccel.org).

However this metaphor is understood, it had significant impact on church ritual and in fact was involved in the baptismal ceremonial ritual in the early church. Tertullian says it was a sign of new birth, and denoted the communicants' adoption into God's family (Tertullian, *De cor. Mil.* c. 3). St. Jerome connects this to the passage in 1 Peter 2:1–3 about milk *(Comment. in Es.* LV, 1). Clement of Alexandria also comments on this custom:

> As soon as we are born, we are nourished with milk, which is the nutriment of the Lord; and when we are born again, we are honored with the hope of rest by the promise of Jerusalem which is above, where it is said to rain milk and honey: for by these material things we are assured of that sacred food. (Clem. *Alex.* 1:6, 103: FC)

Included in the third Council of Carthage is the explanation that milk and honey had a unique consecration distinct from that of the Eucharist:

> Nothing else should be offered in the sacraments of the body and blood of the Lord but what the Lord commanded, that is, bread and wine mingled with water. But the first-fruits, and honey and milk, which are offered on one most solemn day for the mystery of infants, though they be offered at the altar, shall have their own peculiar benediction, that they may be distinguished from the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord. (*Cod. Eccles. Afric*. can. 37, ap. Justellun)

Evidently, milk and honey were only to be offered on one special day, that is, on the great Sabbath – the Saturday before Easter, the most solemn time of baptism – and it was only for the mystery of infants, that is, persons newly baptized, who were commonly called infants, in a mystical sense, from their new birth, in the African Church. (See Riddle, 2015: 520; Coleman, 1852: 402; McClintock and Strong Biblical Cyclopedia: archive.org. Bede also relates new birth to baptism, *On 1 Peter*.)

The Living Stones Metaphor (2:4–10)

Overview

This is the third and final metaphor of this section: even as they personally long for spiritual milk, growth is not individual; rather Peter describes it in terms of community – their transformation "entails incorporation into a new community" (Green, 2007: 61; see also Feldmeier, 2005: 87–88). They will become "living stones" making up a "spiritual house" with access to God himself by means of "spiritual offerings." This spiritual house is held together by Jesus, the prophesied "chosen and precious cornerstone," who will also become the "stumbling stone" to those who reject him. The section concludes with the promise that they are now a "chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God for the purpose of praising him" (vv.9–10). Whereas they were heretofore strangers and aliens from God, they are now chosen and belong to God, and are incorporated into his community.

Ancient Receptions

The "living stone" imagery interests several ancient writers. For instance, Origen is impressed that "the church is a body and a house of God built upon

living stones" (*Comm. on John*, 10: 266 OFP: 1762: ccel.org). Augustine explains the metaphor with a somewhat different slant:

> The Lord will repay his faithful followers who are so lovingly, so cheerfully, so devotedly carrying out these works, to the effect that he includes them in the construction of his own building, into which they hasten to fit as living stones, fashioned by faith, made solidly firm by hope, cemented together by charity. (*Sermons* 337: WSA 3/9: 271)

For Didymus the Blind, the important point is that believers as living stones are built upon the Living Stone [Christ] and the foundation of the apostles and prophets (*Comm. on 1 Peter*, PG 39: 1762). Theodoret elaborates on the means by which believers are incorporated into God's spiritual house: "Those who he calls beforehand are accepted into the church of God … by sharing a common origin … by thinking and saying the same things and sharing the same minds and thoughts, we are built together into one house" (*Catena*, CEC: 51: my tr.).

Origen raises a different issue; he is concerned with how those who have died "insufficiently instructed but with a record of acceptable works" might still become "living stones." He explains that even after death, one can become a living stone:

> He [the one who has died without becoming a living stone] will be capable of receiving instruction in that Jerusalem, the city of the saints, i.e., he will be educated and moulded, and made a living stone, a stone elect and precious, because he has undergone with firmness and constancy the struggles of life and the trials of piety; and will there come to a truer and clearer knowledge of that which here has been already predicted. (*On First Principles* 2.11.3: ccel.org)

Augustine is also concerned with the state of the unborn, but has a somewhat more negative perspective:

> With the exception of the cornerstone which is Christ, I do not see how men are to be built into a house of God, to contain God dwelling in them, without being born again, which cannot happen before they are born the first time. (*Letters* 187.31 FC: 30: 246)

For Hilary of Arles, the implication of being built upon such a foundation of Christ and his apostles has serious spiritual ramifications:

> You have been built on a good foundation, that of the apostles, prophets and patriarchs … those of you who believe in Christ are more than just stones, you are sons of God! (*Intro. Comm. on 1 Peter*, PLSupp 3: 89: ACC)

Other writers emphasize what it means for Christ to be the cornerstone. Cyril of Alexandria points to the unity he brings: "Peter calls Jesus Christ a chosen and precious stone, fashioned by glory and splendor of divinity … because through one faith it [the stone] binds together in unity the two, Israel and the Gentiles." (*Catena*, CEC 51–52: my tr.). Didymus elaborates on this unity:

> Although we are from many different nations, the fact that we have all repented of our sins and accepted a common will and a common mind gives those who have repented one doctrine and one faith. (*Comm. on 1 Peter*, PG 39: 1763–1764: my tr.)

Didymus, however, acknowledges the "dark side"; that although Christ is the chosen cornerstone to believers, to those who do not believe, he is "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, considered worthless by the builders who have rejected him. These builders are the scribes and the Pharisees" (*Catena*, CEC 52–53, my tr.). Bede also shares this particular outlook (*Comm*., 1985: 81–2).

Other early writers examine the reason for this stumbling – is it on account of their own free choice or has it been predetermined by God? Didymus understands the stumbling to be the result of choice: "The position in which they find themselves [as unbelievers] is one which they have chosen, for it starts with unbelief: God was patient with those who despised his mercy, but ultimately left the choice to them" (*Comm. on 1 Peter*, PG 39: 1762–1763).

Oecumenius agrees and states very clearly that, "God is not to be held responsible for this, for no cause of damnation can come from him who wants everyone to be saved" (ibid., my tr.).

Reformation

Not surprisingly, Calvin strongly opposes this understanding and goes further to apply it not only to the Jews of Jesus' day but also to the papal party of his own day (Calvin, *Comm*., 1963: 264).

A number of other writers agree with the application of this passage to Israel; that the status of being the chosen race has been taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles (for example, see Origen, *Sermons on Genesis*, 3.5; Didymus the Blind, *Comm. on 1 Peter*; Bede, *On 1 Peter*). Here, we see a glimpse of the often bitter controversy which was to develop concerning the relation between Christians and Jews. In fact as time progresses, the controversy has become more and more divisive.

Other Interpretations

On the other hand, there have always been scholars who view Christianity as an outgrowth of Judaism (for an example of modern scholarship on the subject,

see New Testament scholar Green. (See also Achtemeier, 1996: 69), who emphasizes Peter's use of Old Testament language:

> To designate the significance of the conversion of his now-Christian audience … thus highlighting further the embeddedness of Christians in Israel's story with the result that the Scriptures of Israel are seen more and more as the account of their heritage … especially to show the continuity between followers of Jesus and Israel of old … Peter collapses the historical distinctive between ancient Israel and contemporary Christians in favor of theological unity, but not in order to deny the importance of history. (Green, 2007: 63)

This passage (2:1–10) has been used in a number of church documents. The *First Confession of Basel* (1534) cites 1 Peter 2:2–4, along with passages from the gospels and Pauline epistles, confirming the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit whom he sent (Pelikan II, IV: 275). The *First Helvetic Confession* (1536) notes vv.2–4, and comments that the church, as living stones, is built upon the person and blood of Christ (ibid.: 286). In response to Question 31, about the anointing of Christ, the *Heidelberg Catechism* cites vv.5–10 as follows: "through faith … I offer myself a living sacrifice of gratitude to him" (ibid.: 435). This document also refers to this same source regarding the renewal by the Holy Spirit "so that with our whole life we may show ourselves grateful to God for his goodness" (ibid.: 446). The *Catechism and Confession of the Polish Brethren* (1574) enlists vv.6–8 to support the dual function of the cornerstone which is chosen and precious to those who believe, but "for those who do not believe … will make men stumble" (ibid.: 718–719).

The notion of "holy" in this passage has affected church creeds through the centuries; by the middle of the second century, the word was becoming a "stock epithet" to describe the church. It reflects the Old Testament where it denoted whatever concerned or belonged to God. This passage uses it in reference to the church as "God's chosen people"; it reflects the creed – they are "holy" because God has predestined it [the church] to a glorious inheritance and they belong to Him through the Holy Spirit (Kelly, 1972: 158–159).

Doctrinal Interpretations: The Priesthood of all Believers

During the Reformation, a doctrine was developed from 1 Peter 1:9 (as well as from parallel passages in the Pauline epistles) by the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, and followed by the Protestant Free Churches, stressing that all humans have direct access to God through Christ, the true high priest, and thus do not need a priestly mediator. This democratic stance meant that all Christians are equal before God and hence the ordained clergy are merely representatives of the congregation, filling the role of preaching and administering the sacraments.

Many early writers interpreted the verse this way. Clement of Alexandria states, "We are priesthood because of the offering which is made in prayers and in the teachings by which souls which are offered to God are won" (*Adumbrations*). Origen also acknowledges that Christ's redemption results in all Christians being priests: "Because you are a priestly race you are able to approach the sanctuary of God." But he adds a warning, "do not let the fire depart from your altar" (*Sermons on Leviticus* 9.9; *Sermons on Leviticus* 4.6). Augustine adds his consensus: "In ancient times only one high priest was anointed, but now all Christians are anointed" (*Sermons* 198A). Similarly, Leo the Great (400–461) remarks, "All who have been born again in Christ are made kings by the sign of the cross and consecrated priests by the anointing of the Holy Spirit" (*Sermons* 4).

Later, Andreas, Severus of Antioch (c. 459), and Bede assert that the priesthood of all Christians is because Christ himself is priest and king. The same way that we are holy because he is holy, we are priests because he is a priest (Andreas, *Catena*; Severus, *Catena*; Bede, *On 1 Peter*).

Religious traditions also differ on their understanding on this issue. For example, The *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566) makes the point, "Christ's apostles call all who believe in Christ 'priests,' but not on account of an office" (Pelikan II, IV: 500). In contrast, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1642) cites v.5 in regard to "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God," but does not stress the point about all Christians being able to fill the role of priest (ibid.: 632). See also the *True Confession of the English Separatists* (1596) (Pelikan III, V: 36).

From a social-science perspective, Green (2007: 61) argues that:

> Neither here [v.5] nor in v.9 can we find a basis for the Reformation doctrine of "the priesthood of all believers," not because the doctrine lacks warrant (e.g., 4:10–11), but because Peter's emphasis is not on the priestly role of each believer but on the priestly identity of God's people.

Doctrinal Interpretations: Eternal Security

Perseverance of the saints (sometimes referred to as "eternal security" or "once saved, always saved") is a teaching which claims that if someone is truly "born of God" nothing or no one can take away that salvation (Rom. 8:39). Sometimes this theory is held along with the idea that no one can bring about his own transformation, the same way no one can take away another's salvation. In some cases, this theory is based on 1 Peter.

Classical Calvinism maintains that God has elected certain individuals to eternal salvation and hence, by implication, has elected others to damnation. Many Pauline passages are used to support this position, as are verses from 1 Peter (1:1–2:10), particularly the ones which speak of "election" (1:2; 2:15; 2:4–12).

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647, Chapter XVII) uses 2:5 to support the statement about perseverance of the saints:

> They whom God hath accepted as his beloved, effectively called, sanctified by his Spirit can neither totally, nor finally, fall away from the state of grace. (Pelikan II, IV: 626)

The *Canons of Dort* (1618, chapter 5) articulates the traditional Calvinist doctrine of perseverance, as does the *Baptist Confession of Faith* (1689, chapter 17). Other reformed confessions include it as well, but it should be noted that it is not officially an integral part of Reformed systematic theology (e.g. it does not even have a section heading in the three-volume *Systematic Theology* by Hodge). Most theologians, however, would consider that it necessarily follows from traditional Calvinism.

The Particular Baptists (emerged around 1616) adhered to the doctrine of a particular atonement – that Christ died only for the elect – and state their position as, "Those that have this precious faith wrought in them by the Spirit, can never finally nor totally fall away [1 Pet. 1:4–6]" (Pelikan III, V: 56). On the other hand, the *New Hampshire Baptist Convention Declaration of Faith* (1833) apparently reconsidered and concluded that there is some cooperation between God and the sinner: "In order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again … so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel [1 Pet 1: 22–5]" (Pelikan III, V: 245).

It may be helpful to distinguish between the doctrine of "Perseverance of the Saints" and the doctrine of "Assurance" which describes how we may be assured of our salvation and inheritance, as in 1 Peter 1–2. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647) makes this distinction between "Grace and Salvation" (see chapter 18).