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ESCHATOLOGY, COSMIC CONFLICT, AND SUFFERING
IN 1 PETER

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ESCHATOLOGY, COSMIC CONFLICT, AND SUFFERING
IN 1 PETER

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To Whitney, Caroline, Hollis, and Piper,
four evidences of God's love and grace toward me.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANE	Ancient Near East
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Edited by J.B. Pritchard. 3 rd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969.
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
BDAG	Walter Bauer, F. W. Danker, W.F. Arndt, and F.W. Gingrich. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3 rd ed. Revised and edited by F. W. Danker. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CSB	Christian Standard Bible
<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
<i>CTQ</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>DDD</i>	Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, eds. <i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> . 2 nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ESV	English Standard Version

<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
GNB	Good News Bible
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LSJ	Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick McKenzie. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NABPRSSS	National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion Special Studies Series
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible

NCB	New Century Bible
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDNTTE</i>	Moises Silva, ed. <i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> . 5 vols. 2 nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NLT	New Living Translation
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTG	New Testament Guides
NTL	New Testament Library
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>OTP</i>	James H. Charlesworth, ed. <i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . 2 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1983.
PGM	Hans Dieter Betz, ed. <i>The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells</i> . 2 nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
PNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary Series
REB	Revised English Bible
SB	Sources Bibliques
SBEC	Studies in Bible and Early Christianity
SBLABS	Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series

SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>ScEs</i>	<i>Science et Esprit</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
<i>TDNT</i>	Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976.
TNTC	Tyndale's New Testament Commentaries
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

PREFACE

Countless individuals have helped me in my pursuit of this degree and this dissertation, and any attempt to honor these individuals would doubtless prove woefully inadequate. May the Lord repay those I cannot.

Personally, I am deeply indebted to the innumerable sacrifices made by my wife, Whitney, and my three children as they have supported me in this endeavor. Without them, this project would never have been completed, nor would the journey have been nearly as fun. My love and appreciation for them is beyond words. My parents, Susan and Bill Byrley, and my in-laws, Marte and Bill Hoagland, have cared for me and my family in immeasurable ways these last several years. I have no idea how I would have even begun my studies, much less have finished them, without their love, prayers, and numerous forms of support. I am also deeply indebted to the generosity of my church family at Throne of Grace Community Church. Their love and care for me and my family during these years of study have been a true reflection of the love of Christ in the church body. I am also thankful for friends and pastors at Sojourn Community Church, who have pointed me to the gospel and encouraged me to preach it to myself daily. Also, much gratitude is due to the staff at Denton Bible Church and particularly Pastor Tommy Nelson for their investment in me before I even knew I needed theological training. Thank you for your faithful discipleship and teaching of the Scriptures that served as a catalyst for this journey.

Academically, I owe a great deal to the faculty of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Their investment in me during my M.Div. studies cultivated a love for the Word of God that led me to further my studies in the Ph.D. program. Specifically, Dr. Tom Schreiner and Dr. Jarvis Williams were both very kind and helpful

in encouraging and counseling me as I was seeking to determine the will of the Lord in applying to the Ph.D. program. Others, including Dr. Mark Seifrid, Dr. Rob Plummer, and Dr. Jonathan Pennington, have all challenged me to great scholarship through their teaching and leadership, as well as to pastoral faithfulness through their example in the church. Dr. Brian Vickers has served faithfully as a faculty supervisor and friend. I am thankful for the many hours of advice and support he has provided me through the years, and the opportunities to serve as an instructor and academic assistant along the way. Thank you for modeling the kind of scholar I most aspire to be.

Chris Byrley

Louisville, Kentucky

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In one of the earliest articles on the eschatology of 1 Peter, Edward Selwyn remarked, “There is no book in the New Testament where the eschatology is more closely integrated with the teaching of the document as a whole. It is eschatology thoroughly appropriated and digested both in the mind of the author and in the life and thought of the Christians whom he addresses.”¹ Despite this early recognition of the eschatological character of the epistle, there have been relatively few monographs published that detail the eschatological outlook of 1 Peter. In some respects, this is indicative of the larger neglect of the letter for much of the twentieth century, leading John Elliott, in a 1976 article, to memorably and colorfully refer to the letter as an “exegetical step-child.”² Recent decades, however, have shown some signs of the “rehabilitation” for which Elliott called, and the eschatology of the letter is no exception. Though prior scholarship on the eschatology of 1 Peter was limited to a handful of brief articles, in recent years much more attention has been devoted to the topic. Various commentators have taken note of the pervasive eschatological imagery,³ and several

¹Edward G. Selwyn, “Eschatology in 1 Peter,” in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: In Honour of Charles Harold Dodd*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 394.

²J. H. Elliott, “The Rehabilitation of an Exegetical Step-Child: 1 Peter in Recent Research,” *JBL* 95 (1976): 243–54.

³E.g., Elliott, “A vibrant *eschatological consciousness* pervades this letter and animates its ethical exhortation.” John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB, vol. 37B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 111; emphasis original. So also Davids, “The whole of 1 Peter is characterized by an eschatological, even an apocalyptic focus.” Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 15. Michaels calls 1 Peter an “Apocalyptic Diaspora Letter.” J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC, vol. 49 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), xlvi–xlix.

articles and monographs have sought to detail the eschatological perspective of the letter,⁴ as well as uncover the underlying eschatological tradition that shapes it.⁵

However, there remains room for further explanation of the eschatological character and vision of 1 Peter. Particularly, scholarship on 1 Peter has not taken adequate notice of underlying Jewish and early Christian depictions of cosmic conflict and how it relates to Peter's understanding and presentation of suffering and his paraenesis in the midst of social ostracization and persecution.⁶ Cosmic conflict refers to the portrayal of heavenly war between Yahweh and the forces of darkness, as well as to the connection between conflict in the heavenly realm and conflict upon the earth. In other words, cosmic conflict is the depiction of earthly conflict in relation to and as a product of heavenly warfare.⁷

Given the pervasive nature of this perspective and the numerous implications

⁴E.g., Selwyn, "Eschatology in 1 Peter;" J. Ramsey Michaels, "Eschatology in 1 Peter III.17," *NTS* 13 (1966–1967): 394–401; Ronald Russell, "Eschatology and Ethics in 1 Peter," *EvQ* 47 (1975): 78–84; Robert L. Webb, "The Apocalyptic Perspective of First Peter" (Th.M. thesis, Regent College, 1986); Webb, "Intertexture and Rhetorical Strategy in First Peter's Apocalyptic Discourse: A Study in Sociorhetorical Interpretation," in *Reading First Peter With New Eyes*, ed. Robert L. Webb and Betsy Bauman-Martin (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 72–110; Troy Martin, "The Present Indicative in the Eschatological Statements of 1 Peter 1.6, 8," *JBL* 111 (1992): 307–14.

⁵E.g., Dennis E. Johnson, "Fire in God's House: Imagery from Malachi 3 in Peter's Theology of Suffering (1 Peter 4:12–19)," *JETS* 29 (1986): 285–94; Mark Dubis, *Messianic Woes in 1 Peter: Suffering and Eschatology in 1 Peter 4:12–19*, *Studies in Biblical Literature* 33 (New York: Peter Lang, 2002); Kelly D. Liebengood, *The Eschatology of 1 Peter: Considering the Influence of Zechariah 9–14*, *SNTSMS* 157 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁶In using the name "Peter" here and throughout, I am doing so merely as a simple way to refer to the author of 1 Peter. I am not unaware of the significant debate that exists over this issue. For the purposes of this dissertation, the identity of the author of the letter does not significantly impact my thesis, and thus I will not attempt to make any detailed argument on the matter. For a brief but detailed survey of the recent scholarly literature on the subject, see Mark Dubis, "Research on 1 Peter: A Survey of Scholarly Literature Since 1985," *CBR* 4, no. 2 (2006): 200–202.

⁷Scholars may also refer to this idea using the terminology of "Holy War." See, e.g., Annang Asumang, "'Resist him' (1 Pet 5:9): Holiness and Non-Retaliatory Responses to Unjust Suffering as 'Holy War' in 1 Peter," *Conspectus (South African Theological Seminary)* 11 (2011): 7–46. I have chosen to avoid this term to avoid confusion with the idea of "Holy War" as warfare waged by humans on behalf of God, as seen in, for example, the Crusades. While the two ideas are related, the emphasis in this study is on heavenly war as it relates to conflict and suffering upon the earth, rather than vice versa. As such, I believe "cosmic conflict" is the more appropriate term to describe this conception. I am indebted to Paul Middleton in his use and description of cosmic conflict here and throughout the dissertation. See Paul Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity*, *LNTS* 307 (London: T & T Clark, 2006).

therein, the various attempts to understand the eschatological message of 1 Peter fall short. In light of these shortcomings, my contention is that the paraenetic function of Peter's eschatology merits closer examination. In particular, how does the Jewish and early Christian eschatological depiction of cosmic conflict inform Peter's use of eschatological imagery to encourage and exhort his readers?

Thesis

The aim of this study is to determine whether and to what extent Jewish and early Christian eschatological portrayals of cosmic conflict inform Peter's paraenesis in the midst of suffering. My thesis is that cosmic conflict does inform Peter's paraenesis and depiction of both suffering and righteous behavior in that Peter pictures the current conflict and persecution of the readers as a necessary and inevitable part of the cosmic struggle against Satan and the demonic realm. Their suffering is inevitable in that, as God's chosen people, Satan actively seeks their apostasy and destruction through their human oppressors. Their suffering is necessary, however, in that it is God's ordained means to bring about their vindication, as they follow the example of Christ (1:6–7; 2:21; 4:19). Accordingly, Peter not only exhorts his readers to view themselves as the people of God, born into an eschatological hope (1:3–5), but also to view their present conflict with hostile human institutions as an important part of the eschatological conflict with Satan (5:8–10). Peter's paraenesis is concerned with exhorting the readers to live lives of holiness (1:15–16) and righteous behavior (3:8–9, 13–14), remaining faithful to the Lord even in the midst of persecution—thus acting as God's elect people (2:9–10)—before their human opponents, who live lives of debauchery and malign the believers (4:3–4)—acting in line with Satan and the forces of evil (5:8–9). Thus, Peter provides meaning for their present suffering and explains the reason they are experiencing such hostility. Further, these eschatologically charged exhortations provide a basis for hope and perseverance in his readers' present suffering, in light of Christ's ultimate victory (3:22).

Background – History of Research

In this survey of research, I include studies from three primary categories. The first is made up of studies exploring the eschatological nature and outlook of 1 Peter. The second contains works addressing other important studies in 1 Peter, mostly related to the depiction of suffering and cosmic forces in the letter. The final category is comprised of works on the demonic realm and cosmic conflict. Following this survey, I provide my own evaluation of the current field of research and outline the contents of the following chapters.

Studies on Eschatology in 1 Peter

These works characterize the eschatological nature of 1 Peter, whether in identifying apocalyptic features of the letter, or in locating a source for the eschatological outlook of the letter. Some of these studies also relate the eschatological character of 1 Peter to the theology of suffering present within the letter, but do not note the importance of cosmic conflict to the suffering of the readers.

Edward Selwyn. One of the earliest contributions to the eschatology of 1 Peter comes from Edward Selwyn's contribution to *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*. Though brief, Selwyn's essay correctly emphasizes the importance of understanding the epistle's eschatology to understanding its message as a whole. As noted in the introduction, Selwyn notes the pervasive eschatological imagery throughout the epistle. As to how the eschatology integrates with the teaching of the epistle, he suggests that Peter depicts the end as having already begun in Christ:

The end, then, has supervened; the eschatological Messiah has entered history; the eschatological community has been called out of the Jewish and Gentile world and brought into being through conversion and baptism; what had been a hope has become an experience. Moreover, the experience has been decisive, even though not final.⁸

⁸Selwyn, "Eschatology in 1 Peter," 395–96.

In this way, Selwyn argues that the end is “organically linked” both with what has happened in Christ and what is happening presently in the church.⁹ Further, Selwyn regards the eschatology of 1 Peter to be linked to the persecution mentioned in the epistle. Selwyn briefly notes, though does not expand upon, “the close connection between persecution and the approaching final judgment,” which goes back to the sayings of Jesus himself (see, e.g., Matt 5:11, 12; 10: 16–26; Mark 13:9–13).¹⁰ This connection, Selwyn suggests, forms the basis for Peter’s exhortation to perseverance in holiness in the midst of their present suffering. In general, though Selwyn’s remarks are brief, they have served to shape future discussion of the eschatology of 1 Peter.

Robert Webb. Robert Webb has written at length on the apocalyptic and eschatological nature of 1 Peter. Webb suggests, “Apocalyptic discourse may be identified throughout 1 Peter, to such an extent that it could be said that an apocalyptic perspective pervades and penetrates the very heart of this letter.”¹¹ Webb is careful to nuance this characterization, noting, “Apocalyptic *discourse* must be distinguished from *apocalypses*, for the latter comprise a literary genre while the former is a mode of rhetorical discourse which is used in a wide variety of literary genres. However, there is a link between the two, for apocalyptic discourse is particularly expressed within those texts comprising the apocalyptic genre.”¹² Using criteria set forth by the SBL Apocalypse Group, Webb identifies the many apocalyptic aspects of 1 Peter.¹³ At the conclusion of

⁹Selwyn, “Eschatology in 1 Peter,” 397.

¹⁰Ibid., 399.

¹¹Webb, “Intertexture and Rhetorical Strategy,” 79. For a full-scale treatment of the apocalyptic character of 1 Peter, see Webb’s Th.M. thesis, “The Apocalyptic Perspective of 1 Peter.”

¹²Webb, “Intertexture and Rhetorical Strategy,” 75; emphasis original.

¹³This set of criteria can be found in J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 10, as well as J. J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, ed. J. J. Collins, *Semeia*, vol. 14 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 5–8.

his analysis, he finds within the text of 1 Peter 63 points of contact with 8 apocalyptic topoi from the SBL group.¹⁴ In applying this apocalyptic perspective to the content of 1 Peter, Webb concludes that Peter's exhortation in the midst of suffering is shaped by this apocalyptic perspective. Though Webb acknowledges the nature of the readers' suffering is that of localized, informal, and social persecution, and not due to state sponsored, imperial persecution, nonetheless he claims that Peter views the predicament of the readers as "an eschatological crisis."¹⁵

David Parker. David Parker's 1994 article, "The Eschatology of 1 Peter," is brief, but contains an important consideration into the eschatological understanding of the epistle.¹⁶ Parker begins by noting with disappointment that many do not conceive of an organized, thoughtful eschatology as present in 1 Peter, except for perhaps the expectation of an "imminent Parousia."¹⁷ Parker insists, "There is indeed an eschatology to this epistle, and . . . if the eschatology is misunderstood, then so is the rest of its theology."¹⁸ Parker frames his argument by examining several English translations of several passages that have traditionally been interpreted to depict the revelation of Christ in the future.¹⁹ He suggests that these translations are frequently misleading, and scholars have misinterpreted the eschatology of 1 Peter as a whole to focus entirely on the future revelation of Christ. Instead, Parker suggests these verses can be seen to depict that Christ

¹⁴These verses and their connection to the apocalyptic topoi are listed in Webb, "Intertexture and Rhetorical Strategy," 80–83. At the outset, Webb offers the caveat, "Not all the topoi are found, of course, for they are not all manifested in any one apocalypse. Furthermore, 1 Peter's apocalyptic thought is related to Jewish apocalyptic thought and literature in particular. So only certain topoi from the larger list noted earlier are relevant here." Ibid., 80.

¹⁵Ibid., 89.

¹⁶David Parker, "The Eschatology of 1 Peter," *BTB* 24 (1994): 27–32.

¹⁷Parker, "The Eschatology of 1 Peter," 27.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹The passages examined by Parker are 1:4b–5, 7, 13; 2:12; 4:13; 5:1. He surveys translations found in the GNB, NIV, NJB, NRSV, and the REB.

is revealed in the present life of the believer. He concludes his exegetical remarks: “The important thing about these passages we have examined is that they all emphasize, not the wonders of a future glory, but the significance of the present possession of Christ. The writer is attempting to set out a way of Christian life whose foundation is the character of God’s act in Christ, and the character of Christ’s life.”²⁰ In this way, while Parker does not altogether deny that Peter expected the Parousia in the future, he does emphasize the realized aspects of Peter’s eschatology. Though Parker’s overall thesis has not found widespread acceptance, many have noted Parker’s helpful corrective that Peter’s eschatological statements and ideas must have contemporary significance to the plight of his readers.

Mark Dubis. Dubis’ 2002 monograph was among the first full-length works to detail the importance of the eschatological nature of the letter, noting on the first page that a proper appreciation of the eschatology of the epistle is “vital” for understanding the work as a whole.²¹ Like Webb, Dubis classifies the letter as “apocalyptic,” referencing the same criteria used by Webb from the SBL Apocalypse Group and John J. Collins.²² Accordingly, Dubis argues that while the OT provides an important background for the letter, it is not sufficient to account for the entirety of Peter’s thought. Instead, one must also look to extrabiblical Jewish Apocalyptic literature.²³

Specifically, Dubis suggests that Peter draws upon the Jewish concept of the Messianic Woes—a period of suffering prior to the eschatological restoration brought about by Messiah.²⁴ Dubis argues that Peter conceives of the readers as in the period of

²⁰Parker, “Eschatology of 1 Peter,” 31.

²¹Dubis, *Messianic Woes in 1 Peter*, 1.

²²Dubis notes that 1 Peter is not strictly speaking an apocalypse, but that it shares important characteristics of apocalypses, and therefore should in fact be regarded as apocalyptic. *Ibid.*, 39.

²³*Ibid.*, 45.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 1. For a full-length disputation of Dubis’ findings, see Markus Theron Klausli, “The

the return from exile, inaugurated by Christ, experiencing the suffering of the messianic woes as part of their testing and subsequent glory.²⁵ While Dubis acknowledges the presence of exodus imagery, particularly in 1:13–22, he suggests that this is due to reliance upon Isaiah 40–55, which depicts the exile in terms of exodus language. In effect, then, Dubis suggests that the exodus event itself is depicted as a “first exile.”²⁶ The bulk of Dubis’ work focuses on 1 Peter 4:12–19, which he views as the height of Peter’s eschatology and the clearest example of Peter’s depiction of the Messianic Woes. Dubis notes that Peter views the suffering of the readers as “necessary” because of the tradition found in the messianic woes—these trials are simply what must take place before the end.²⁷

Kelly Liebengood. In a recent monograph, Kelly Liebengood examines the eschatological nature of 1 Peter as a whole, seeking to discern the source of Peter’s eschatological vision. Against Dubis’ reliance on the Messianic Woes tradition, Liebengood argues that “the eschatological programme of Zechariah 9–14, read through the lens of the Gospel, functions as the substructure for 1 Peter’s eschatology and thus his theology of Christian suffering.”²⁸ Liebengood seeks to show that Zechariah uniquely depicts God redeeming his people through a shepherd who will be rejected at the hands of his people. Those faithful to him will then endure a period of suffering, characterized by fiery trials, before ultimately experiencing vindication and glory.²⁹ He then seeks to

Question of the Messianic Woes in 1 Peter” (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2007).

²⁵In his chapter on the influence of the theme of exile/restoration, Dubis writes, “One will only properly understand 1 Peter’s theology of suffering if one sets it within the broader framework of his exile/restoration metaphor.” Dubis, *Messianic Woes in 1 Peter*, 46.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 51.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 69–70.

²⁸Liebengood, *Eschatology of 1 Peter*, 8.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 26–50.

show how the text of Zechariah was received throughout Second Temple Judaism and in the New Testament and documents of the early church. In this manner, he seeks to show that the text of Zechariah 9–14 is both relevant to 1 Peter and available to both the author and recipients of the epistle.³⁰

In the body of the work, Liebengood examines the shepherd imagery in 1 Peter as well as the mention of fiery trials and argues that Zechariah 9–14 offers the best explanation for the origin of these images. He argues that the imagery and metaphors throughout the epistle depict the readers in a second exodus, following a return from exile.³¹ He rejects Dubis' proposal, which sees exile as the dominant metaphor, and instead seeks to show how *παρεπίδημοις* in 1:1, as well as references to the Diaspora and Babylon, are not convincing proofs that the author is thinking primarily of his readers as being in exile.³² Thus the exodus and not exile is the dominant metaphor for Peter. Ultimately, Liebengood suggests that seeing Zechariah 9–14 as the substructure for the eschatological programme of 1 Peter helps to understand how and why Peter views suffering as a necessary component of the Christian life before the return of Christ and the eschatological judgment of the hostile world powers is brought about.

Other Relevant Studies in 1 Peter

Though not strictly focused on the eschatology of the letter, several other important studies have been done that relate to the thesis of this dissertation. Most of these studies relate to either the depiction of suffering and spiritual powers in 1 Peter, and so form a helpful backdrop for my own argument that suffering in 1 Peter is depicted as a

³⁰Liebengood, *Eschatology of 1 Peter*, 52–77.

³¹Contra Dubis, Liebengood argues that the return from exile “*precedes* the wilderness sojourning, where there will be testing and suffering.” *Ibid.*, 139; emphasis original.

³²On the argument against the mention of Diaspora (1:1), see *ibid.*, 157–60. On the dismissal of exilic overtones in the cipher of “Babylon” for Rome (5:13), see *ibid.*, 162–64.

product of cosmic conflict with Satan and the demonic realm.

Steven Richard Bechtler. Bechtler's work is focused on the theme of suffering throughout 1 Peter, stating his goal as "to discover how 1 Peter's references to Christ's suffering and glorification were intended to function, within the social conventions of the time, as integral parts of the letter's response to the suffering of the communities addressed."³³ In discussing the social problem of the readers, Bechtler concludes that the primary obstacle facing his recipients was one of honor and shame.³⁴ He explains the gravity of this situation:

In a world in which one's honor and attendant social status were of the utmost importance, the letter depicts a situation in which its addressees were finding their Christian faith to be a threat to their place and well-being in society. In sociological terms, life in their world had become problematic. It is this socially perilous situation that 1 Peter calls 'suffering.'³⁵

Bechtler goes on to argue that part of Peter's concern is to shape their symbolic universe to reframe their conception of honor and shame. He writes, "The letter's task is to offer its intended readers a legitimation of the symbolic universe into which they had been initiated at conversion but which has since become problematic for them."³⁶

Bechtler offers an extended discussion and critique of both Balch and Elliott in their debate over the nature of the ethical exhortation offered in the letter.³⁷ Bechtler's

³³Steven Richard Bechtler, *Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community, and Christology in 1 Peter*, SBLDS 162 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 1.

³⁴Ibid., 94.

³⁵Ibid., 103–4. On the honor-shame conflict and its sociological implications in Greco-Roman society, see also Barth Campbell, *Honor, Shame and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, SBLDS 160 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998).

³⁶Bechtler, *Following in His Steps*, 109.

³⁷This debate refers to the two contemporary monographs of John Elliott and David Balch, accompanied by subsequent critiques published in Charles H. Talbert, ed., *Perspectives on First Peter*, NABPRSSS 9 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986). In short, Balch alleged that the household code in 1 Peter urged acculturation to the larger society, whereas Elliott proposed that Peter exhorted his readers to live distinctly from the surrounding pagan culture. For the original works, see John Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), and David Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code of 1 Peter*, SBLMS 26 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981). For a helpful survey of this debate, see David G. Horrell, "Between Conformity and Resistance: Beyond the Balch-Elliott Debate

own proposal draws on the sociological work of Victor Turner in the form of the concept of liminality—an “in-between state.”³⁸ He explains,

Both temporally and socially, they exist neither here nor there, but ‘in between.’ Temporally, they find themselves to be participants in both the old aeon and the new simultaneously yet not completely engaged in either; socially they no longer participate fully in the institutions and lifestyle that defined their lives prior to conversion, yet they have not withdrawn entirely from relations with their non-Christian neighbors. It is precisely the ambiguity of their social location, in fact, that gives rise to the problem that occasioned the letter. First Peter, I contend, assays to fashion a vision of Christian liminality that would legitimate such an existence.³⁹

Finally, Bechtler examines the many references to Christ as the exemplar as the key to understanding how Peter intends his readers to think of their suffering. The fact that Christ suffered unjustly and was subsequently (or even consequently) glorified gives hope to the readers of the letter that they may too receive imminent glorification if they endure in the midst of their suffering.⁴⁰

John Elliott. Elliott’s important monograph *A Home for the Homeless* is not primarily eschatological in its outlook. However, his interpretation of the epistle through the lens of sociology provides an important consideration for the nature of the suffering experienced by Peter’s readers. He examines the usage of the terms *παροιχος* and *παρεπίδημος* in the LXX as well as in secular literature and concludes that the terms should be understood primarily as literal sociological markers, rather than as metaphors. He criticizes interpretations and translations that imply that “1 Peter represents a theological message for ‘pilgrims and exiles in this world’ based on a contrast between

Towards a Postcolonial Reading of First Peter,” in *Reading First Peter with New Eyes*, ed. Robert L. Webb and Betsy Bauman-Martin (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 111–17.

³⁸For Turner’s own explanation of this theory, see Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*,” in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 93–111; and Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Symbol, Myth, and Ritual Series (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969).

³⁹Bechtler, *Following in His Steps*, 21.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 179.

present life on earth and a future life in the heavenly home.”⁴¹ On the basis of his examination of these key terms, he argues, “Whereas *paroikoi* denotes a class of the population juridically defined as ‘resident aliens with specified limited rights and status,’ *parepidēmoi* refers more generally to the ‘temporary visitors, transients, immigrants or wanderers’ who have no intention or opportunity to establish permanent residence where they currently live.”⁴² Accordingly, he suggests that *πάροικος* and *παρεπίδημος* be translated as “resident alien” and “visiting stranger,” respectively.⁴³

Applying these insights to the text of 1 Peter itself, Elliott suggests that Peter is addressing actual resident aliens in Asia Minor, not merely Christians who found themselves as metaphorical strangers. Accordingly, they experienced a degree of suffering and ostracization by virtue of their sociological status, upon which their new religious affiliation with Christianity did not improve. Elliott writes, “The conflict and suffering which the addressees of 1 Peter were experiencing, in other words, can be seen as a concomitant factor of their organization as such a religious sect.”⁴⁴ And later, “1 Peter was directed to actual strangers and resident aliens who had become Christians. Their new religious affiliation was not the cause of their position in society though it did add to their difficulties in relating to their neighbors.”⁴⁵

So then, in contrast to other interpreters, the eschatology of the letter does not relate to the suffering experienced by the readers. Their suffering is tied to their vulnerable sociological status, worsened by the exclusive nature of their new religious affiliation. Elliott does, however, acknowledge the importance of eschatology to Peter’s

⁴¹Elliott, *Home for the Homeless*, 42.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 36.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 47.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 78.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 131–32.

exhortation, particularly as it pertains to the hope he offers his readers. He writes,

The orientation of 1 Peter is indeed eschatological, that is, it encourages a lively hope in the complete realization of salvation yet awaiting the faithful (1:5, 9, 13; 2:12; 4:5, 7, 17–18; 5:1, 10). At the same time, the achievement of that future reward (5:4) is everywhere linked to, and dependent upon, the believers' maintenance of the bonds of their brotherhood here and now.⁴⁶

William J. Dalton. Dalton's work *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits: A Study of 1 Peter 3:18–4:6* marked a breakthrough in scholarly understanding of the meaning behind this enigmatic portion of the letter. Rather than seeing 3:18–4:6 as some complex theological digression, Dalton argues that the meaning of this passage is central to the meaning of the letter as a whole, and any difficulty in understanding the text is due to a lack of consideration of the literary and theological context.⁴⁷ In particular, Dalton suggests that 3:18–4:6 "is the only text in the whole letter which formally gives the theological basis for the victory of Christians in the stress of persecution."⁴⁸ Dalton argues that the spirits in prison refer to fallen angels from Jewish apocalyptic traditions, and Christ's proclamation to them is of the salvation of human beings in the subjection of the demonic realm.⁴⁹ Accordingly, this coheres with the rest of the letter, in that, "Christ's victory over the powers of evil means the Christian's victory over the same powers and their earthly representatives."⁵⁰

Chad T. Pierce. Pierce's work *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ* is also focused on the enigmatic passage in 1 Peter 3:18–22.⁵¹ Building on the work of Dalton,

⁴⁶Elliott, *Home for the Homeless*, 130.

⁴⁷William Joseph Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits: A Study of 1 Peter 3:18–4:6*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), 23.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 105.

⁴⁹Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits*, 186.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 105.

⁵¹Chad T. Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ: 1 Peter 3:18–22 in Light of Sin and Punishment Traditions in Early Jewish and Christian Literature*, WUNT 2/305 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck,

among others, Pierce seeks to discern the identity of the “spirits in prison” mentioned in 3:19 by conducting a comprehensive examination of the sin and punishment traditions for fallen angels, giants, and humans in Second Temple and early Christian texts. Pierce agrees with the conclusions of Dalton and Reicke that the spirits refer to traditions found in works like *1 Enoch* and similar texts.⁵² However, in his extensive survey of sin and punishment traditions Pierce notes a persistent conflation of the traditions concerning the watchers, the giants, and human agents.⁵³ As a result, he argues that it is likely that the writer of 1 Peter might have similarly conflated the identities of these “spirits” so that Christ’s proclamation is directed at all the forces of evil, be they cosmic or human.⁵⁴ He reasons, on the basis of the larger purpose of the letter, “If Christ’s proclamation of victory was intended [to] offer comfort to a marginalized people, the recipients of proclamation would need to include the humans responsible for their ‘persecution’ as well.”⁵⁵ Pierce notes that ancient writers would often draw connections between cosmic beings and human agents. Therefore, Pierce suggests, “If Jesus has subjugated the cosmic powers of evil, he has achieved victory over their human representatives as well.”⁵⁶ In this way, Pierce understands the purpose of the depiction of Christ’s proclamation to be an encouragement to his readers, as Christ’s victory over evil extends to their present enemies and persecutors as well.

Annang Asumang. Asumang’s article examines the significance of the Jewish

2011).

⁵²Bo Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits and Christian Baptism: A Study of 1 Pet. III. 19 and Its Context* (Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1946).

⁵³Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ*, 20.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 213–14.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 214.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 218.

holy war tradition on 1 Peter.⁵⁷ In particular, he explores the significance of the military metaphors utilized throughout the letter, arguing that the exhortation to resist the devil in 5:9 is “a climax to a consistent theme in the epistle, aimed at galvanizing spiritual warriors whose weapons are peaceful non-retaliation, hope, and holiness through Christ’s redemptive work.”⁵⁸ As such, Peter urges the believers not to “passive resignation to their situation,” but to the “weapons” of peaceful non-retaliation.⁵⁹ Asumang surveys the depiction of holy war in the OT, arguing that Peter continues the tradition of holy war as seen throughout the NT, “where believers share in God’s mission by employing weapons of righteousness and peace to wage spiritual war.”⁶⁰ He then surveys the military metaphors utilized throughout 1 Peter, highlighting their connections to the holy war tradition. These metaphors, according to Asumang, include: the warning to resist the devil (5:9); God’s guarding of the believers (1:5); the call to “gird up the loins of your minds” (1:13); the desires of the flesh that “wage war” against the soul (2:11); the exhortation to “sanctify Christ as Lord” (3:14–15); and the admonition to “arm yourselves” with the mindset of Christ (4:1).⁶¹ Asumang concludes his article by suggesting implications for Peter’s exhortation for modern Christians.

Studies on Satan and Cosmic Conflict

The following works represent important contributions to the study of the Jewish and early Christian depiction of cosmic conflict. In addition to these works, several authors have undertaken to present a biblical theology of Satan and the demonic realm by examining and synthesizing the overall biblical teaching regarding these cosmic

⁵⁷Asumang, “Resist him.”

⁵⁸Ibid., 7.

⁵⁹Ibid., 31.

⁶⁰Ibid., 24.

⁶¹See *ibid.*, 25–37.

forces.⁶² These works are not detailed in this history of research, not only due to consideration of space, but also because they do not directly link human suffering with the cosmic conflict between God and Satan. Nevertheless, they remain important works and will be referenced throughout this dissertation at appropriate times.

Elaine Pagels. Pagels has authored several works on the figure of Satan that relate to cosmic conflict. In particular, Pagels' works focus on the origin of the doctrine of Satan, explained in sociological terms.⁶³ She argues that members of dissident, minority sects tended to align their opponents with the forces of evil and so label them with a Satanic affiliation.⁶⁴ These accusations, according to Pagels, are due to an eroding or weakened sense of identity, thus serving to reinforce the sect's distinctiveness by creating an "us vs. them" dichotomy.⁶⁵

⁶²Particularly helpful are the works of Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995) and Stephen Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically About Angels, Satan & Principalities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998). Page's work is an attempt to "provide a comprehensive overview of [the] biblical teaching [of Satan and demons] so that readers will have a base upon which to build their understanding of the demonic." Page, *Powers of Evil*, 9. In so doing, Page offers a discussion and analysis of every explicit reference to Satan and the demonic realm in the Bible. As such, Page's work is not concerned to highlight the theme of cosmic conflict specifically, but rather to bring clarity to the numerous biblical texts involving these powers of evil. His discussion of Satan in 1 Peter is limited to a few brief comments, where he suggests that Peter uses the "roaring lion" imagery of Satan as a portrayal that he is the one behind the persecution experienced by the readers (ibid., 209). Page also discusses the reference to fallen angels in 1 Pet 3:18–22, concluding that the reference to Christ's victory proclamation over the spirits in prison served to assure the readers that the cosmic forces of evil were defeated and had acknowledged their defeat before the risen Christ (ibid., 235). Noll's work is, like Page's, a biblical examination of demons and angels. In it, he seeks to provide a biblical theology of angels and demons. He writes, "I will attempt in the chapters that follow to set forth an angelology that deals with the complexities of the texts while seeking an integrative 'word' about God's spiritual creatures." Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness*, 29. He does acknowledge the influence of the demonic, specifically the principalities and powers, upon human governmental institutions, but does not elaborate at length on the subject. See also Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1984).

⁶³The most comprehensive of these works is Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995). See also her three-part "social history" of Satan: Pagels, "The Social History of Satan, the 'Intimate Enemy': A Preliminary Sketch," *HTR* 84, no. 2 (1991): 105–28; Pagels, "The Social History of Satan, Part II: Satan in the New Testament Gospels," *JAAR* 62, no. 1 (1994): 17–58; Pagels, "The Social History of Satan, Part Three: John of Patmos and Ignatius of Antioch: Contrasting Visions of 'God's People,'" *HTR* 99, no. 4 (2006): 487–505.

⁶⁴Pagels, "Preliminary Sketch," 108.

⁶⁵Ibid.

Pagels goes further to argue that such sociological factors are in fact partly responsible for the development of the doctrine of Satan as the archenemy of God. Therefore, Pagels suggests, the NT authors, in depicting Jesus' cosmic struggle with Satan, are primarily doing so in order to portray human conflict with (primarily) Jews using angelic and demonic imagery.⁶⁶ For example, in her explanation of the spiritual conflict in John's gospel, she argues that the author's intention is to portray "the viewpoint of a radically sectarian group alienated from the Jewish community because they have been turned out of their home synagogue for claiming that Jesus is the Messiah."⁶⁷ In this way, Pagels suggests a close connection between human and cosmic conflict—to the degree that the former actually gives rise to the depiction of the latter.

Walter Wink. Wink's contribution to the biblical concept of cosmic conflict comes by way of a three-volume work exploring the biblical usage of the term "powers." The first volume examines the use of terms related to the "powers" in the Pauline corpus, in particular, where Wink suggests that these terms should generally be understood "*in their most comprehensive sense*" (emphasis original)—that is, they should be understood to refer to "both heavenly *and* earthly, divine *and* human, good *and* evil powers."⁶⁸ Ultimately Wink argues for a demythologized understanding of the powers, saying, "What I propose is viewing the spiritual Powers not as separate heavenly or ethereal entities but as *the inner aspect of material or tangible manifestations of power.*"⁶⁹ Wink further delineates the major terms for powers:

I suggest that the "angels of nature" are the patterning of physical things—rocks,

⁶⁶Pagels, "Social History, Part II," 19.

⁶⁷Pagels, *Origin of Satan*, 61–62.

⁶⁸Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 39.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 104. Emphasis original.

trees, plants, the whole God-glorifying, dancing, visible universe; that the “principalities and powers” are the inner or spiritual essence, or gestalt, of an institution or state or system; that the “demons” are the psychic or spiritual power emanated by organizations or individuals or sub aspects of individuals whose energies are bent on overpowering others; that “gods” are the very real archetypal or ideological structures that determine or govern reality and its mirror, the human brain; that the mysterious “elements of the universe” (*stoicheia tou kosmou*) are the invariances (formerly called ‘laws’) which, though often idolized by humans, conserve the self-consistency of each level of reality in its harmonious interrelationship with every other level and the Whole; and that “Satan” is the actual power that congeals around collective idolatry, injustice, or inhumanity, a power that increases or decreases according to the degree of collective refusal to choose higher values.⁷⁰

His second volume further clarifies these arguments, contending that the influence of these powers is tied to their manifestations in human, physical institutions.⁷¹ In this way, he seeks to avoid adopting the ancient conception of the spiritual and demonic realm, while still not denying their metaphysical reality, as modern interpreters often do. Regarding this fine balance, Wink instead argues for a “reinterpretation” of the ancient view, “These Powers may . . . be understood as symbolic of the ‘wittiness’ of institutions, structures, and systems. People may never again regard them as quasi-material beings flapping around in the sky, but perhaps they will come to see them as the actual spirituality of actual entities in the real world.”⁷² Wink’s understanding of these spiritual beings, therefore, is tied to their manifestation in human institutions. As an example, he suggests that Satan should not be understood as a personality, but “as a profound experience of numinous, uncanny power in the psychic and historic lives of real people. Satan is the real interiority of a society that idolatrously pursues its own enhancement as the highest good.”⁷³

The third volume in Wink’s trilogy pertains to our own response to the

⁷⁰Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 104–5.

⁷¹Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 4.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 172–73.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 25.

manifestation of these powers in human institutions.⁷⁴ In it, he argues that the powers, manifested in human institutions, are not “simply evil,” but can be neutral or even positive. Thus the role of the Christian is not necessarily to confront these powers in some act of counter-violence, but to engage them so that they might be changed.⁷⁵ Wink suggests that the means of engaging these powers, in line with the teaching and example of Jesus, is in active, non-violent resistance, and through prayer.⁷⁶

Paul Middleton. Middleton’s work is concerned with perceptions of martyrdom in the first few centuries of the Christian church. Specifically, Middleton focuses on the intersection of cosmic conflict and “radical martyrdom”—a term he uses to refer to “those Christians who so desired death, that they intentionally sought out arrest and martyrdom.”⁷⁷ In this work, Middleton suggests that early Christians, particularly these radical martyrs, saw themselves as participants in the holy war between God and Satan. Moreover, “Not only did they believe themselves to be *participants* in this war, they actually saw their deaths as *contributing* to the final outcome.”⁷⁸ Middleton notes that though there was no official, universal persecution of the church until the mid-third century, Christians nevertheless were subject to constant localized persecution due to the conflicts between their commitment to Christ and their status as residents of the Roman Empire. He writes, “Christians, however much they may have wished, *could* not be good citizens of the Roman Empire. The standard for even the most nominal display of good citizenship was set far in excess of what the Christians could meet.”⁷⁹

⁷⁴Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989).

⁷⁵Ibid., 10.

⁷⁶Ibid., 175–84, 297–308.

⁷⁷Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict*, 1.

⁷⁸Ibid., 6; emphasis original.

⁷⁹Ibid., 40; emphasis original.

Therefore, Christians were subject to persistent persecution, primarily at the local level, as a result of their faithfulness to Christ. Middleton then moves to an examination of the writings of the NT, as well as early church martyr traditions. Noting the influence of Jewish Apocalypticism on the conception of Holy War, Middleton shows how Christians saw themselves in relation to the cosmic struggle. He writes, “In the eschatological battle between God and the legions of evil, disciples of Christ were principal players, foot-soldiers who could affect the outcome by their earthly actions.”⁸⁰ He concludes, “By reinterpreting the conception of Holy War in late Judaism, the early Christians built a world for themselves into which they could interpret not only their own suffering and death but also the death and resurrection of the Christ.”⁸¹ Specifically, their suffering could be reinterpreted “within the context of an apocalyptic battle waged by Christ against the forces of Satan.”⁸²

Gregory Boyd. Boyd’s monograph on spiritual conflict, *God at War*, represents perhaps the most comprehensive biblical examination of the Jewish and early Christian depiction of cosmic conflict in the Old and New Testaments.⁸³ Boyd argues that the biblical authors understood the cosmos in terms of what he calls a “warfare worldview.” He explains, “Stated most broadly, this worldview is that perspective on reality which centers on the conviction that the good and evil, fortunate and unfortunate, aspects of life are to be interpreted largely as the result of good and evil, friendly or hostile, spirits warring against each other and against us.”⁸⁴ His follow-up volume to this

⁸⁰Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict*, 135.

⁸¹Ibid., 171.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997).

⁸⁴Ibid., 13.

work makes use of this warfare motif as an answer for the problem of evil, arguing that injustice, suffering, and other manifestations of evil are not the result of God's sovereign control, but rather of Satan's hostile power opposed to the will of God.⁸⁵ For the most part, however, his theological conclusions about the sovereignty of God and free will of these malevolent beings are limited to this follow-up volume and are not overly present in *God at War*.

Through the course of his work, Boyd systematically examines the biblical teaching on cosmic conflict, beginning with Old Testament appropriations of Ancient Near Eastern combat myths. Boyd suggests that the Old Testament authors frequently portray Yahweh in conflict with (and in triumph over) forces of chaos, often personified in Canaanite chaos monsters such as Leviathan, Yamm, or Tiamat.⁸⁶ Further, he suggests that "the Israelites could understand their political wars as microcosms of the cosmic wars Yahweh fights. . . . No bifurcation between 'spiritual' and 'physical' realities is envisaged."⁸⁷ By the time of the New Testament, influenced by the rise of an apocalyptic outlook on Satan and the demonic realm in the Second Temple period, these myths about Yahweh's conflict with the chaos monsters are seen in terms of Jesus' conflict with Satan, the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31). Boyd argues, "Almost everything that Jesus and the early church were about is decisively colored by the central conviction that the world is caught in the crossfire of a cosmic battle between the Lord and his angelic army and Satan and his demonic army."⁸⁸ Boyd interprets Jesus' miracles and exorcisms in this light, as well as many of his parables and other teachings. Further, Boyd examines the

⁸⁵Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001).

⁸⁶Boyd, *God at War*, 86–87.

⁸⁷Ibid., 96–97.

⁸⁸Ibid., 172.

themes of cosmic conflict through Acts and the Epistles, suggesting that the NT writers portrayed the resurrection of Christ as, primarily, the pronouncement of God's decisive victory over Satan. He writes, "Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God stripped Satan and all levels of demons of all their power (Col 2:15). Therefore Christ now reigns in the power of God far above all such demonic powers."⁸⁹ Finally, Boyd concludes by claiming that the NT writers picture the role of the Christian in terms of participation in this war as soldiers, arguing that the Christian life is "a life of spiritual military service."⁹⁰ Boyd does not, however, elaborate much on how this participation in the divine war is to play out in the life of the Christian.

Clinton Arnold. Arnold's first contribution to the NT understanding of cosmic conflict comes in *Ephesians, Power and Magic*, where he undertakes to understand the "power-motif" in Ephesians against the spiritual background ancient in Asia Minor.⁹¹ Though his comments are, naturally, limited to the epistle to the Ephesians, they are helpful in that they examine background material regarding the spiritual milieu of the first-century A.D. Hellenistic world. In his conclusion, he notes that a common feature of the spiritual climate of western Asia Minor, in particular, was an "extraordinary fear of the hostile spiritual 'powers.'"⁹² While local pagan magicians and religious leaders might offer some promise of protection from these evil powers, Arnold suggests that a major emphasis of the letter is to encourage the readers by reminding them of Christ's victory over these hostile demonic forces. He writes, "The epistle stresses the close identification of the believer with this cosmic Christ, with the result that they now share in the power

⁸⁹Boyd, *God at War*, 246.

⁹⁰Ibid., 282.

⁹¹Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of Its Historical Setting* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992).

⁹²Ibid., 167.

and authority of Christ over these hostile ‘powers.’”⁹³

Regarding cosmic conflict beyond Ephesians, Arnold’s following work extending this focus to the Pauline corpus in general.⁹⁴ In it he reaffirms his general conclusions about the spiritual atmosphere of the early Christian world. The first several chapters discuss the general spiritual climate of the first-century Roman Empire, detailing magical practices, astrology, and various strands of Judaism. Then, in a chapter about the teaching of Jesus, he calls Jesus’ conflict with the demonic powers “a major theme” of the Gospels.⁹⁵ Arnold continues by demonstrating Paul’s teaching on the powers, again reflecting similar ideas to his earlier work. In his chapter on spiritual warfare, Arnold provides more detail on what the resistance of the Christian toward the demonic realm should be. He suggests that Christians wage spiritual warfare through resistance, proclamation of the gospel, and, ultimately, prayer.⁹⁶

Evaluation

The preceding section served to survey the major works relating to the eschatological outlook of 1 Peter—as well as its depiction of the demonic realm—and the overall biblical motif of cosmic conflict. I contend that more work is needed regarding the intersection of these two fields of study. In general, studies in 1 Peter do not take adequate account of the overarching portrayal of cosmic conflict in both Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity. Conversely, the primary studies done on cosmic conflict pay very little notice to the letter of 1 Peter, save for a few parenthetical references made in passing.

⁹³Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic*, 138.

⁹⁴Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul’s Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 75.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 154–59.

Studies on the eschatological outlook of 1 Peter have, largely, focused on either the general interplay of theology and paraenesis (i.e., Selwyn, Webb, and Parker), or are focused on the source of Peter's eschatological vision and so do not provide adequate explanation for the paraenetic function of the eschatologically charged exhortations throughout the epistle. Both Liebengood's and Dubis' approaches provide potential source material for Peter's eschatological programme, but do not help the reader understand why Peter makes use of such imagery. For example, both writers have sought to explain Peter's depiction of the suffering of his readers as necessary (1:6; 4:12) by pointing to an underlying tradition—either Zechariah 9–14 or the Messianic Woes—of a period of suffering and testing before the eschatological restoration and vindication of God's people.⁹⁷ This suggestion, however, does not adequately explain why Peter depicts suffering as necessary—it merely moves the discussion back to the source material. Why then would these earlier writers depict suffering as necessary before vindication? Liebengood suggests the purpose is “testing,” but again, why is this testing said to be necessary?

Other works, such as those by Elliott and Bechtler, seek to explain the nature of the suffering depicted in the letter. Bechtler frames this suffering in terms of honor and shame, and suggests the purpose of the letter is to set forth Christ as the exemplar of righteous suffering. Bechtler is certainly right in that this example of Christ plays a role in the letter. But he does not adequately account for the eschatological imagery of the letter, in particular the depiction of Satan and the demonic realm, and so the picture of suffering that he portrays is incomplete. Elliott's proposal argues for a primarily sociological explanation for the suffering of the readers; but again, his work is without an adequate discussion of the role of Satan and the spiritual forces of evil.

⁹⁷Other proposals, not surveyed above, include the fire imagery of Mal 3 (see Johnson, “Fire in God's House,” 285–94); and the servant imagery found in Isa 53 (see Sharon Clark Pearson, *The Christological and Rhetorical Properties of 1 Peter*, SBEC 45 [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001]).

The works of Dalton and Pierce represent two attempts to discuss the spiritual realm in 1 Peter—specifically the identification of the “spirits in prison” (3:18–22). However, as they are limited in their scope to the passage regarding Christ’s proclamation to these spirits, they are hindered in their explanation of the letter as a whole. For example, Dalton says that 3:18–4:6 is the only text that provides the theological basis for the victory Christians experience in the midst of persecution,⁹⁸ but this does not give adequate weight to the concluding exhortation of 5:8ff. These verses also contribute to the theological understanding of persecution by picturing it as the work of a roaring lion, seeking to devour the faith of Christians by means of societal pressures and violence in order to produce apostasy. In addition, they provide the eschatological hope that God himself will “restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish” the readers (5:10). In a way, Dalton’s failure to recognize the impact of these verses is indicative of the silence of Petrine scholars on the influence of the Jewish and early Christian depiction of cosmic conflict in general.

Regarding the works on cosmic conflict, these scholars have demonstrated the pervasive nature of this theme, rooted back as far as the Pentateuch. However, none of these have examined the connections between this eschatological worldview and the message of 1 Peter. Given the pervasive apocalyptic perspective of the Second Temple period in Judaism, continuing through the time of the New Testament and early Christianity, it is likely that much of what Peter would have wanted to communicate to his readers would be influenced by this idea.

By and large, these scholars do recognize the connection often found in the New Testament and other Jewish and Christian writings between the spiritual and earthly realm. In particular, all these authors acknowledge, to one extent or another, the

⁹⁸Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation to the Spirits*, 105.

connection between hostile human institutions and hostile cosmic forces. Due to their own theological and sociological considerations, however, this connection as it relates to suffering and persecution is not always fully appreciated. Pagels suggests that physical and political conflict gave rise to depictions of heavenly and cosmic conflict. This line of argumentation downplays the ontological reality of cosmic conflict, a conclusion that is neither supported nor required by a reading of the biblical texts. Similarly, Wink's demythologization of the powers reduces the cosmic forces (including Satan himself) to mere physical manifestations of inner spiritual realities. Yet again, such a demythologization is not required from a straightforward literary reading of the biblical texts.

By contrast, Boyd rightly acknowledges the reality of the cosmic, spiritual war raging in the heavens, but seems to do so at the expense of its connection with events on earth. As such, he is prone to exaggerate the themes of cosmic conflict and make theological conclusions that limit the Scriptural teaching on the absolute sovereignty of God. In part, I believe this theological overreaction is due to a lack of consistent consideration of the interplay between the cosmic conflict between God and Satan and the earthly, physical, and/or political conflict of God's people with hostile human institutions. By keeping both of these realities in mind, one can avoid overstating the biblical teaching on this topic and still explain why the conflict motif is so widespread.

Of all these scholars, the works of Middleton and Asumang are closest to my own thesis. Middleton, however, is more focused on the martyr theology of the early church. As such, his remarks about 1 Peter are limited to a few pages and do not represent anything resembling a full-scale treatment of the depiction of cosmic conflict in the letter. Asumang rightly emphasizes the discussion of Satan in 5:8–9 as the culmination of the exhortation throughout the letter, but his work is more focused on the response of the believers as their means of engaging in holy war, rather than the overall

presentation of suffering caused by persecution. Accordingly, this study represents my attempt to bridge this gap in the research by showing the influence of this Jewish and Christian portrayal of cosmic conflict upon Peter's paraenesis and depiction of suffering.

Summary of Contents

Chapter 1 contains a survey and evaluation of major works on the eschatology of 1 Peter and cosmic conflict, as well as a presentation of my thesis as a contribution to the eschatological understanding of 1 Peter and its paraenesis. In chapter 2, I contribute to the discussion of 1 Peter as paraenesis with an emphasis on the eschatological elements of the letter, in particular, to demonstrate how 1 Peter exhibits aspects of the genre of paraenesis in the paradigm of conflict, whereby the world is depicted as an arena for opposing cosmic and human forces. Finally, I suggest that the goal of Peter's paraenesis is perseverance in the midst of suffering that takes adequate consideration for these cosmic and eschatological emphases.

In chapters 3–5, I explore the origin and development of the doctrine of Satan and the Jewish depiction of cosmic conflict throughout biblical and relevant extrabiblical literature. Whereas the role of Satan in the writings of the New Testament is relatively well defined, the Old Testament is much less clear in this regard. In chapter 3, I examine the references to Satan and the demonic realm in the Old Testament, focusing on the presentation of Yahweh at war with the gods of the surrounding nations. In chapter 4, I explore the writings in the period of Second Temple Judaism, including Jewish apocalyptic texts and the Qumran literature, demonstrating how the developing demonology of these texts provided the framework for the portrayal of cosmic conflict in the NT. In chapter 5, I survey the role of Satan and cosmic conflict in various New Testament passages and the Jesus tradition. I also discuss the involvement of the church in God's conflict with the demonic realm and the influence this conflict has upon believers.

In chapter 6, I examine the nature of suffering depicted in 1 Peter, arguing that it is shown to be the result of persecution that includes verbal, social, economic and legal components. I demonstrate how cosmic conflict influences and shapes this depiction of suffering and subsequent vindication. In chapter 7, I offer a reading of 1 Peter as a whole, with particular attention to how the portrayal of cosmic conflict detailed thus far influences Peter's teaching and exhortation throughout the epistle. Finally, chapter 8 contains a summary of my conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

THE PARAENETIC STRATEGY OF 1 PETER

Before examining depictions of cosmic conflict in Jewish and early Christian writings, it is necessary to examine the paraenetic strategy of the letter as a whole. In particular, I will argue that Peter's epistle exhibits several features of paraenesis in the paradigm of conflict, whereby the author seeks to subvert the perceived social values and structures. I will suggest that an awareness of Jewish and early Christian portrayals of cosmic conflict aids in understanding how Peter portrays this subversion in the life of his Christian readers. In order to make this argument, I will begin by noting important studies that serve to identify the genre of 1 Peter as Greco-Roman paraenesis. Next, I will examine in further detail the paradigm of conflict in paraenesis as set forth by Leo Perdue and others. Third, I will compare characteristics of paraenesis in the paradigm of conflict to the letter of 1 Peter. Lastly, I will show how cosmic conflict relates to the paraenetic strategy of 1 Peter.

First Peter as Paraenesis

Whereas scholarship in the earlier part of the twentieth century sought to discern the homiletic, liturgical, or hymnic sources behind 1 Peter, in recent years most scholars have recognized the genuine epistolary character of the letter, and thus its integrity.¹ Along with this recognition of the integrity of the letter is a growing

¹Adolf von Harnack was the first to propose that 1 Peter was originally a homily to which an epistolary opening and closing was appended. Adolf von Harnack, *Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Irenäus*, 2nd ed, vol. 1 of *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897). Later scholars adopted and expanded on this idea, including Richard Perdelwitz, *Die Mysterienreligion und das Problem des I. Petrusbriefes: Ein literarischer und religionsgeschichtlicher, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 11* (Giessen, Germany: Alfred Töpelmann, 1911); W. Bornemann, "Der erste Petrusbrief: Eine Taufrede des Silvanus?" *ZNW* 19 (1919–1920): 143–65; and

identification of Peter’s letter with the Greco-Roman genre of paraenesis. Indeed, Jacob Prasad went so far as to conclude that the identification of 1 Peter as a paraenetic letter was an emerging “consensus.”² Paraenesis, as a genre, may be defined as a blending of theology and ethics so as to “integrate moral instructions with worldview” in order to create “an all-encompassing picture of reality.”³ Stowers identifies the two main elements of paraenetic letters in that the author is “the recipient’s friend or moral superior (e.g., older, wiser, more accomplished),” and that the writer “recommends habits of behavior and actions that conform to a certain model of character and attempts to turn the recipient away from contrasting negative models of character.”⁴

A defining characteristic of the paraenetic genre is blending ontological statements and imperatival commands.⁵ In particular, Peter’s ontological statements are frequently eschatological in nature. Troy Martin notes that in several passages,

several other German scholars. For the idea that the source material of 1 Peter was an actual baptismal liturgy, see Hans Windisch and Herbert Preisker, *Die katholischen Briefe*, HNT 15, 3rd ed (Tübingen: Mohr, 1951), 152–62. Cross expanded this notion to specify that the liturgy was to be recited as part of an elaborate baptismal Paschal Eucharist celebration. F. L. Cross *1 Peter: A Paschal Liturgy* (London: Mowbray, 1954). Boismard proposed that, based on similarities between 1 Peter and various other NT epistles, the letter was made up of multiple fragments of early hymns, pieced together into a baptismal liturgy. M. E. Boismard, *Quatre hymnes baptismales dans la première Épître de Pierre*, *Lectio Divina* 30 (Paris: Cerf, 1961). For a helpful summary of the scholarly discussion on the genre and integrity of the epistle, see John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB, vol. 37B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 7–12.

²Jacob Prasad, *Foundations of the Christian Way of Life According to 1 Peter 1,13–25: An Exegetico-theological Study*, AnBib 146 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), 1.

³J. de Waal Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter: Paraenetic Strategies for Christian Character Formation*, WUNT 2/209 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 31. See also Martin Dibelus’ description, “Unter Paränese verstehen wir dabel einen Text, der Mahnungen allgemein sittlichen Inhalts aneinanderreihet. Gewöhnlich richten sich die Sprüche an eine bestimmte (wenn auch vielleicht fingierte) Adresse oder haben mindestens die Form des Befehls oder Aufrufs; das unterscheidet sie von dem Gnomologium, der bloßen Sentenzen-Sammlung.” Martin Dibelius, *An die Thessalonicher I/II, An die Philipper*, HNT 12 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1912), cited in Abraham J. Malherbe, “Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament,” in *Light from the Gentiles: Hellenistic Philosophy and Early Christianity: Collected Essays, 1959–2012*, ed. Carl R. Holladay, John T. Fitzgerald, Gregory E. Sterling, James W. Thompson, NovTSup 150 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 2:688.

⁴Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, LEC (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 96. Stowers calls 1 Peter “a complex hortatory letter which resembles those of Paul and the Pauline school in many ways.” *Ibid.*, 97.

⁵ See, e.g., Isocrates, *Demon*. 15, 22, 35.

“eschatological references provide motivation for conduct.”⁶ The reason for this eschatological foundation, according to Martin, is to provide a basis for perseverance. He writes, “The community or communities have experienced manifold temptations and persecutions, and the author is encouraging them by reflection upon their entrance into the group, as well as their future hope, to stand firm.”⁷ Essentially, then, Peter exhorts his readers to stand firm in the faith because of the reality that their suffering is merely temporary. The revelation of Jesus Christ brings with it eschatological blessings and vindication.

In addition to the blending of imperatival and ontological statements, Dryden extensively compared 1 Peter to other examples of Greco-Roman paraenesis and has drawn several similarities.⁸ Dryden explains these similarities, “In terms of form, 1 Peter possesses the hallmarks of a paraenetic epistle: exhortations, virtue and vice lists, moral exemplars, an emphasis on the moral implications of conversion, and theological constructs pragmatically shaped to contextualize moral deliberation.”⁹ As such, Dryden identifies 1 Peter as an example of typical Greco-Roman paraenesis.¹⁰

In summary, as demonstrated by these works and others, 1 Peter exhibits several features typical of Greco-Roman paraenesis. Not all paraenetic letters share the same strategy and function, however. Accordingly, next I will seek to examine further the characteristics and aims of typical Greco-Roman paraenesis and compare these to 1 Peter.

⁶Troy W. Martin, *Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter*, SBLDS 131 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 95. Martin lists as examples 2:2; 3:9; 4:13; 5:4, 6.

⁷Ibid., 107.

⁸These Greco-Roman paraenetic works include, e.g.: Seneca, *Ep.*; Isocrates, *Demon.*; Xenophon, *Oec.*; Plutarch, *Mor.*

⁹Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter*, 39.

¹⁰See, e.g., the similarities in the structure of Peter’s *Haustafel* and Seneca, *Ep.* 94.1, where Seneca highlights the value of advice in relation to conduct between husbands and wives, slaves and masters, and fathers and children.

The Paradigm of Conflict and 1 Peter

To begin to determine the paraenetic strategy of 1 Peter, we must first understand the two broad paradigms that govern Greco-Roman paraenesis. Perdue has undertaken to examine the social character of Greco-Roman paraenesis across a variety of texts. Though Perdue does not focus any of his writings on paraenesis to 1 Peter, his insights are nonetheless helpful in interpreting the epistle.¹¹ He identifies two major social models in Greco-Roman paraenesis: order and conflict. Whereas the model of order sought to “confirm the validity of a prescribed way of life,” thus affirming the existing social structure, the model of conflict, instead, endeavored to “subvert an existing social structure and provide for the formation of a different one.”¹² Perdue further explains the model of conflict presents the world as “an arena of opposing forces which struggle for domination. Gods or forces of order and chaos are in conflict, vying for control. Struggle, not harmony, characterizes social life in the *Gesellschaft*.”¹³ The intent of such paraenesis, therefore, is “to subvert the conventional understanding of reality by undermining its social knowledge and bringing into question its legitimacy.”¹⁴ In addition, this paraenesis of conflict may act in “positing a new, though not fully realized, social order which calls for its own code of behavior (e.g., the ‘Kingdom of God’ in Q and Luke). The new order is either to be more egalitarian or to grant power and position to certain social groups previously denied them.”¹⁵

¹¹Perdue does offer an application of his ideas on paraenetic literature to the epistle of James in “Paraenesis and the Epistle of James,” *ZNW* 72 (1981): 241–56. Given some of the similarities between James and 1 Peter, these observations are particularly applicable to the interpretation of 1 Peter. On the similarities between James and 1 Peter, see, e.g., Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 2nd ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 23.

¹²Leo Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature,” *Semeia* 50 (1990), 6.

¹³*Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

The epistle of 1 Peter represents an example of paraenesis in the paradigm of conflict, meaning that the letter makes use of many features of traditional paraenesis, but with the overarching purpose of subverting the existing social structure to set another in its place—namely, living as God’s holy people. Perdue notes,

This type of paraenesis may reflect a pessimistic outlook in doubting that any real change may be brought about in the larger structures of society. Or the perspective may be more optimistic, looking to initiate significant change that will lead to a new social order. In either case, *Gemeinschaften* (families, clubs, or friendships) may well provide the important context and values for a moral life.¹⁶

In the case of 1 Peter, the outlook is decidedly optimistic, but not through social action or revolution. Instead, Peter’s hope is found in the eschatological vindication of God at the Parousia (5:10).¹⁷ Not all of the social aspects mentioned by Perdue are explicitly present, but many meaningful parallels and examples may be provided. In the following section, I will briefly describe various features and functions of paraenesis in the paradigm of conflict, noting how 1 Peter makes use of these elements.

Social Features of Paraenesis

Perdue identifies several social features typically found in paraenetic works, accompanied by references and citations to ancient examples. In the following section, I will briefly summarize several of these elements that are also present in 1 Peter. Specifically, I will focus on the elements of tradition vs. non-tradition, teacher-student relationship, and the use of *paradeigmata*.

Traditional vs. non-traditional paraenesis. Perdue begins by noting that paraenesis can be either traditional or non-traditional in nature. These categories

¹⁶Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis,” 27.

¹⁷See *ibid.*, 14, on the paraenesis found in Q: “Change was possible, but only through divine intervention, supplemented by human action. A beneficent social order of peace and wellbeing was soon to be established after the return of the rejected Lord to judge the world.”

correspond to the paradigms of order and conflict mentioned in the previous section. In particular, traditional paraenesis affirms older traditions by way of restating them, so as to “preserve existing forms of social institutions and roles.”¹⁸ By contrast, non-traditional paraenesis is designed to repudiate traditional models and values, particularly those propagated by the wealthy and powerful in society.¹⁹ Perdue explains further, “In the context of this type of group, paraenesis has the twofold purpose of subverting the prevailing social paradigm and establishing and maintaining the contours of its own patterns of life.”²⁰ Relatedly, Perdue notes that paraenesis of both types is not most frequently about new information or novel ideas, but is instead a reminder of expected behavior and a repetition of commonly understood values. Abraham Malherbe says of the traditional nature of paraenesis, “Since what is advised is already known, the exhorter disavows the need for further instruction, but merely reminds his listeners of what they already know.”²¹ The author then seeks to encourage his readers on the basis of reminding them either of the existing social paradigm passed down (traditional) or of some other minority source of moral values (non-traditional).

Peter’s letter follows the “twofold purpose” of non-traditional paraenesis in that he rejects and subverts the dominant social structure and establishes another in its place. On the one hand, 1 Peter is traditional in that the letter is replete with OT quotations and allusions. Achtemeier notes this dependence on the OT, “Such is the abundance of references to and motifs from the OT that virtually all of the imagery of 1 Peter is drawn from its writings.”²² Achtemeier concludes, in part from this widespread

¹⁸Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis,” 12.

¹⁹Ibid., 13.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook*, LEC (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 125.

²²Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: a Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 12.

usage of OT symbols and imagery that the nation of Israel functions as the “controlling metaphor” for the letter.²³ As such, Peter bids his readers to find meaning in their present suffering by identifying with the nation of Israel depicted in the OT.²⁴ The use of these repeated allusions and citations thereby functions as a reminder of the true identity of the readers, thus encouraging them “to act on the basis of what [they] know,” as Perdue describes.

Yet, on the other hand, Peter’s exhortation is also nontraditional in that he calls for his readers to break with the existing social order at large. Peter reminds the readers they were “ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers (πατροπαραδότου)” (1:18), thereby exhorting them to separate from that system of thinking. Peter’s repeated use of *πάροικος* and *παρεπίδημος*, whatever else it may mean, surely at least means that he pictures his readers as outsiders to society at large.²⁵ Further, he exhorts them on the basis of their status as *πάροικοι* and *παρεπίδημοι* to live honorable lives in the existing social order (2:11–12). In addition, following his *Haustafel* (2:11–3:12), Peter describes a list of vices—including drunkenness, orgies and idolatry—naming them the things “the Gentiles want to do” (4:3). By closely juxtaposing the *Haustafel* with the exhortation of faithfulness in the midst of suffering (3:13–22) and this vice list, Peter calls for his readers to break with the prevailing moral ideology.²⁶ Again, the lines are drawn sharply between the dominant social structure and that of the people of God.

²³Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 69.

²⁴For a full-scale treatment of the continuity between Israel and Peter’s Christian readers, see also Abson Prédèstin Joseph, *A Narratological Reading of 1 Peter* (London: T & T Clark, 2012). Joseph suggests that Peter invites his readers to “embody the story” of OT Israel to make sense of their current situation. *Ibid.*, 18–19.

²⁵English translations of Scripture, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the ESV.

²⁶In describing the *Haustafel* as a break with the prevailing moral climate, rather than as an acculturation to it, I am following the general argument of John Elliott in his debate with David Balch on the social function of this portion of 1 Peter. See chapter 1n37.

Teacher-student relationship. Another common feature of paraenesis is the relationship between teachers and students. Perdue notes that the teacher is typically thought of as the “moral superior,” typically due to a “higher social position and greater knowledge.”²⁷ Despite this elevation of the teacher, the connection between teacher and student is still said to involve “a close, even an intensely personal, relationship,” often describe in terms of a parent and child.²⁸ While the student may be thought of as young or inexperienced, even those thought to be wise might be similarly exhorted.²⁹

Peter’s instruction clearly sets himself forth as the teacher, as he names himself an apostle in 1:1, but he does not exalt himself as a moral superior, referring to himself instead as a “fellow elder” (5:1). His instruction is also deeply personal in nature, as he calls his readers “beloved” (2:11; 4:12). Peter does not make use of the father-son imagery, but rather perceives all believers grafted into God’s family, so that the Lord is Father, and other believers are brothers (1:14, 17, 22; 3:8; 5:9, 12, 13). Regardless of the change of metaphor, the intimate connection characteristic of paraenesis is retained. Lastly, while Peter does not demean his readers as young or inexperienced, he does exhort them to act as newborn infants (ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη; 2:2).

Use of *Paradeigmata*. Perdue continues by noting the use of *paradeigmata*, which he identifies as “human examples of virtue who embody the type of behavior the teacher admonishes his audience to emulate.”³⁰ Traditional paraenesis makes use of these *paradeigmata* to showcase notable individuals who embody the values of the larger

²⁷Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis,” 14–15. See, e.g., Sir 38:24–39:11; Isocrates, *Ad. Nic.*

²⁸Perdue, “Paraenesis and the Epistle of James,” 246; Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis,” 15.

²⁹See also Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis,” 15.

³⁰Perdue, “Paraenesis and the Epistle of James,” 245. See also Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 135–38.

social order so as to call the readers to imitate them.³¹ Paraenesis of conflict, however, “may present examples or types of morally noble people whose virtue fails to produce the desired results.”³² Alternatively, subversive paraenesis “often points to cases of the wicked who succeed in the *Gessellschaft* either in spite of or because of their vile deeds.”³³ Particularly relevant for 1 Peter, Perdue notes a third type of *paradeigmata* for subversive paraenesis, “antiheroes” who “subvert the social order and may also be used as models for a counter-culture group seeking to establish a new social identity.”³⁴

Peter briefly makes use of Sarah as a *paradeigma* in 3:6, in his exhortation to wives to be submissive to their husbands. However, the far more pervasive and significant *paradeigma* is Jesus himself, particularly in his unjust suffering and subsequent glorification. Peter calls Jesus a “living stone rejected by men” (2:4–5), drawing a parallel between Jesus and the readers, who also found themselves rejected by men, but accepted by God and built up into his household. In exhorting slaves to submit to their masters, Peter again calls attention to Jesus, who suffered unjustly and entrusted himself to God the Father, even naming Jesus an “example” (ὕπογραμμός; 2:21–25). In summarizing his moral exhortation of righteous suffering, Peter again sets forth Christ as a *paradeigma* in 3:18–22, who suffered unjustly, yet was vindicated and exalted to the right hand of God. Lastly, Peter briefly alludes to Christ as the example of righteous suffering in 4:1–2 and 4:13–14. In all things, Peter is calling the believers to look to the pattern set by Jesus himself to shape their moral response to suffering and persecution.³⁵

³¹As Malherbe states, “The moralist therefore reminds (ὕπομιμνήσκειν) his hearers of outstanding figures, taking care to describe the qualities of the virtuous men. This call to remembrance is in fact a call to conduct oneself as a μιμητής of the model.” Malherbe, “Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament,” 692.

³²Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis,” 17. See, e.g., Isocrates, *Demon*. 8.

³³Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis,” 17. E.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Avar*. 13–15.

³⁴Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis,” 17.

³⁵Dryden says of Christ as *paradeigma*: “Christ’s actions and his commitments in his passion (sufferings and death) provide a model of faithful obedience to God in the midst of suffering gross

Bechtler summarizes Peter's use of Christ's example as follows, "The letter superimposes Christ's experience onto that of his followers so that Christ's experience becomes the interpretive lens through (*sic*) which Christian experience is viewed and the template that describes the shape of Christian life."³⁶

Social Context: *Liminality*

As to the social context of paraenesis, Perdue notes that paraenesis is directed to people typically entering either a new stage of life, social role, or social group or community. This social context is referred to as a "liminal" state—that is, the transition period between one stage and the next. The purpose of this exhortation is to remind and reaffirm the readers of the behavior that is expected from them at this new stage. Perdue writes,

In reminding recipients of their moral responsibilities and duties, they were compelled to reflect upon that 'threshold' experience of entrance into the stage, role, or group when paraenesis provided the new *nomos* for expected behavior. Duly reminded, they were then urged to continue to actualize that order within their daily existence.³⁷

As noted in the introductory chapter, Bechtler has argued that 1 Peter seeks to set before the readers "a vision of Christian liminality that would legitimate" their current social status.³⁸ Bechtler suggests that the readers find themselves "in both the old aeon and the new simultaneously yet not completely engaged in either."³⁹ If Bechtler is correct, then the social setting of 1 Peter fits well within the paradigm of conflict. Peter, on multiple occasions, references his readers' transition from their old way of life (1:14,

injustice." Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter*, 191.

³⁶Steven Richard Bechtler, *Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community, and Christology in 1 Peter*, SBLDS 162 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 180.

³⁷Perdue, "The Social Character of Paraenesis," 19. E.g., "Instruction of Khety," in *ANET* 432–34.

³⁸Bechtler, *Following in His Steps*, 21.

³⁹*Ibid.*

18; 2:10, 25; 4:3) into the community of the people of God. They are therefore exhorted to stand firm (5:12), reminded of their new identity in Christ and to live holy lives. Peter reminds his readers of their “threshold” experience into their new life as he reminds them that they have been born again (1:3), ransomed from their former life (1:18), made to be God’s people (2:10), and returned to the Shepherd of their souls (2:25).

Social Function: *Conflict*

The final element of the paradigm of conflict Perdue discusses regards its social function. Perdue suggests four such functions: protrepsis/paraenesis, socialization, legitimation, and conflict. Protrepsis refers to the process of converting an individual to a new lifestyle or social role, whereas paraenesis refers to the process of “confirming the validity of the moral life undertaken.”⁴⁰ Socialization serves to help the individual make sense of their place in society and internalize various norms, beliefs, and customs.⁴¹ This function is the primary function of most paraenetic texts. Legitimation is the process of explaining and justifying the existing social order in the face of potential objections. Perdue notes this function is particularly important when some crisis threatens to undermine the existing social structure.⁴²

The final function is that of conflict, whereby the author “undermines the legitimacy of the prevailing order of the society and competing communities by calling into question the social knowledge undergirding their symbolic universe.”⁴³ Further, Perdue notes, “Conflict with the *Gesellschaft* and other communities was designed to shape identity by establishing social boundaries.”⁴⁴ In this way, the author creates an “us”

⁴⁰Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis,” 23.

⁴¹Ibid., 24.

⁴²Ibid., 25–26.

⁴³Ibid., 26.

⁴⁴Ibid.

vs. “them” dichotomy, showcasing a “different social reality” and seeking to “protect it from the threat of outside worlds.”⁴⁵ In establishing this alternate social reality, Perdue notes that the functions of socialization and legitimation would also be present, though only in establishing the non-traditional social norms of the *Gemeinschaft*.

Although elements of each of these functions are present in 1 Peter, the function of conflict seems to be primary. Consistently throughout the letter, Peter seeks to redefine the social reality of his readers, calling them to understand the truth of their situation in the eyes of God. This redefinition can be seen as early as the prescript to the letter, as Peter names the readers “elect exiles” (ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις; 1:1). Rather than mere social outcasts, Peter names them to be chosen by God. Peter similarly calls his readers to understand their trials and sufferings not as judgments against them, but as refining moments that result in the “tested genuineness” of their faith (1:6). Even the use of OT imagery from the nation of Israel serves to draw the readers into the story of the people of God, thus redefining both their identity and their circumstances.

Peter’s moral exhortation, also, is frequently expressed in contrast to the readers’ previous way of living—and, one might reasonably assume, the predominant moral climate. The exhortation to pursue holiness is contrasted with the readers’ “former ignorance” and the “futile ways inherited from your forefathers” (1:14, 18). The readers are instructed to submit to the governing authorities to “silence the ignorance of foolish people” (2:15). Peter calls the Christians not to behave as the Gentiles do (4:3), listing their vices and calling them a “flood of debauchery” (4:3–4).

Moreover, 1 Peter also frequently portrays the social reality of his readers in an “us” vs. “them” dichotomy. Peter portrays the distinction between the Christians and the surrounding culture as determined in how they respond to the cornerstone, Christ. Those

⁴⁵Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis,” 26.

who believe will not be put to shame (2:6), but those who do not believe are condemned (2:7–8). The call to righteous suffering is frequently depicted as at the hands of hostile opponents, who revile (3:9), slander (3:16), and insult (4:14) the Christian audience. In each case, the lines of conflict are clearly drawn.

Finally, even much of the language Peter uses is laden with conflict imagery, leading his readers to view their present situation as one of conflict. When the audience is described as “guarded” by God (φρουρουμένους; 1:6), the term used has strong militaristic overtones, frequently used with reference to a prison guard or a city garrison.⁴⁶ The passions of the flesh are said to “wage war” (στρατεύονται; 2:11) against the readers’ souls. Peter urges his audience to “arm” (ὀπλίσασθε) themselves with the proper understanding of suffering (4:1). In his concluding exhortation, Peter cautions his readers to beware of their true enemy (ἀντίδικος), Satan, who ultimately stands behind their experiences of suffering and persecution (5:8–9). Each of these elements shapes the readers’ experience in terms of conflict. The Christians in Asia Minor are at war, spiritually speaking, and Peter’s exhortation seeks to subvert the superficial understanding of their situation and their enemies.

Conclusion

The preceding sections have argued that 1 Peter is an example of anti-traditional paraenesis, following the order of the paradigm of conflict. Peter uses several social features of paraenesis, such as an anti-traditional aim, a teacher-student relationship between author and recipient, and the use of *paradeigmata*. Further, 1 Peter is addressed to readers in a liminal social context, depicted as on the threshold of a new social group or role—specifically, those born again as the people of God. Finally, the aim

⁴⁶2 Cor 11:32; Jdt 3:6; Josephus, *Vita* 53, 240. See also BDAG, s.v. “φρουρέω;” LSJ, s.v. “φρουρέω.” Paul uses the term to describe the law as holding the believers captive prior to the coming of Christ (Gal 3:23).

of 1 Peter fits the social function of conflict, as Peter seeks to subvert the existing *nomos* and establish a new one in its place as the readers are reminded to live as the people of God amongst their peers, even in the midst of suffering and persecution. Now that this genre distinction has been established, it remains to explore how the Jewish and early Christian depiction of cosmic conflict impacts this paradigm of conflict in 1 Peter.

Cosmic Conflict and the Paraenetic Strategy of 1 Peter

Perdue describes the worldview pictured within the paradigm of conflict as “an arena of opposing forces,” where “Gods or forces of order and chaos are in conflict, vying for control.”⁴⁷ This worldview is very close to the Jewish and early Christian portrayals of cosmic conflict, wherein God is depicted in struggle and conflict with Satan and the demonic realm. Given these similarities between these two paradigms, and given Peter’s use of many of the tropes listed by Perdue as characteristic of anti-traditional paraenesis in the paradigm of conflict, it is likely that conceptions of cosmic conflict contemporary to Peter would influence his exhortation in the style of anti-traditional paraenesis. I will argue that this influence is felt in the way in which Peter perceives and portrays the earthly conflict experienced by his readers as a product of the cosmic conflict experienced in heaven. In other words, the conflict the readers experience on earth is due to the conflict that is experienced in the heavenly places between the forces of the Lord and the powers of darkness.

Cosmic conflict shapes Peter’s paraenesis because it provides an explanation for the suffering and hostility experienced by the readers. Why, if the letters’ recipients are “born again into a living hope” (1:3), do they experience such “fiery trials” (4:12)? Because they still live in an “arena of opposing forces,” as Perdue describes it. These cosmic forces in conflict can be seen in the conflict the Christians experience at the hands

⁴⁷Perdue, “The Social Character of Paraenesis,” 8.

of these hostile human institutions, and in the conflict against the revilers and slanderers that oppose them in their day to day existence.

Peter's aim, then, is not just to remind them of the conflict that exists in the heavenly places, which serves to explain their current conflict, but to remind them of the certain victory and vindication that will result at the end of the heavenly conflict. By extension, then, Peter assures the readers that they too will share in this vindication (5:10). If Christ will triumph over all heavenly forces in opposition to him, so too will the readers, eventually, triumph over all earthly powers in opposition to them. This confidence is expressed through the particular nuance of cosmic conflict as opposed to the paradigm of conflict. Whereas other paraenetic authors might picture the outcome of their conflict in pessimistic terms, Peter's outlook in 1 Peter is not only optimistic—it is certain.⁴⁸

The paraenetic strategy of 1 Peter then, may be described as follows. The Christian readers ought to expect suffering and mistreatment at the hands of hostile forces that oppose them because the cosmic and evil powers that oppose the Lord will seek to destroy and oppress his people. However, the Christians' ultimate victory over these human opponents is as sure as the Lord's ultimate victory over Satan and the demonic realm. Therefore they must stand firm in confident assurance that God will vindicate them, walking in holiness and faithfulness before him.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the paraenetic strategy of 1 Peter, suggesting it represents an example of paraenesis in the paradigm of conflict, with the purpose of subverting the existing social structure in favor of a new one. I have also argued that Jewish and early Christian depictions of cosmic conflict helps in understanding the

⁴⁸Perdue, "The Social Character of Paraenesis," 27.

overall paraenetic strategy of the letter. I have done this by noting the current scholarly consensus on the genre of 1 Peter as paraenesis, followed by noting the various features of anti-traditional paraenesis present in the epistle. Finally, I have suggested that cosmic conflict does indeed relate to this overall strategy by picturing the world as an arena of heavenly conflict that bears out on the earth.

So then, if one properly understands the influence of cosmic conflict on 1 Peter, one may see how Peter makes use of this depiction in order to explain the current suffering and hostility experienced by the readers and how he can exhort them to persevere in the midst of it. Therefore, the present task is to examine further Jewish and early Christian depictions of cosmic conflict, so as to better understand what elements were prominent within this conception and how they may be seen in Peter's paraenesis. The following chapter undertakes to begin this examination, starting with the writings of the OT.

CHAPTER 3

COSMIC CONFLICT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Compared to the NT and Second Temple literature, the OT has very little to say about Satan and the demonic realm. There are only three instances where Satan is used as a proper name, and his influence in each case is limited and not a major point of emphasis.¹ However, this absence of the figure of Satan does not mean the absence of cosmic conflict. While the OT's portrayal of the heavenly war is different than that of the NT, this conflict may still be observed, albeit often in nascent form. In particular, lacking a solidified figure of Satan under which all evil might be subsumed, the OT authors instead frequently depicted Yahweh at war with the gods of surrounding nations, and saw their conflict with these nations in terms of Yahweh's conflict with (and triumph over) these beings.

In this chapter, I will seek to explore the origin and development of cosmic conflict in the OT. In particular, I will aim to determine how biblical and other ancient authors conceived of the connection between conflict in the heavenly places and human conflict, particularly between the nation of Israel and her enemies. I will argue that the ancient authors made a close connection between Yahweh's conflict with his spiritual enemies in the heavens and Israel's ongoing conflict with other nations on the earth. In depicting Israel's victory over her enemies, the authors frequently portrayed Yahweh in

¹Day goes so far as to suggest that Satan as a proper noun is entirely absent from the OT. Instead, she argues, the noun is used in a more general sense, applied to anyone who behaved in an adversarial role. Peggy L. Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: Satan in the Hebrew Bible* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); Cilliers Breytenbach and Peggy L. Day, "Satan," in *DDD*, 726–32. For a brief rebuttal to Day's thesis, see Antti Laato, "The Devil in the Old Testament," in *Evil and the Devil*, LNTS 481, ed. Erkki Koskenniemi and Ida Fröhlich (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 3–4.

victory over the gods of these hostile nations and other cosmic forces.

I will argue this by discussing the biblical depictions of cosmic conflict in the OT. I will begin by tracing important elements of this theme throughout the OT—namely, the supremacy of Yahweh and the picture of Yahweh as the divine warrior. Next I will examine several texts that portray Yahweh engaged in cosmic conflict with other celestial beings, noting the connections made to Israel’s conflict with her earthly opponents. Since the concerns of this dissertation are to present the connections between cosmic conflict and human suffering as depicted in 1 Peter, I will limit my discussion of OT texts to those that pertain to human conflict.²

Central Elements of Cosmic Conflict in the Old Testament

Most texts in the OT do not reflect every aspect of cosmic conflict, but still contain one or more important elements. In the following sections, I will detail two such elements—the supremacy of Yahweh and the depiction of Yahweh as the divine warrior—where they may be found in the OT, showing their relation to the broader understanding of God.

The Supremacy of Yahweh

In its most basic expression, the portrayal of cosmic conflict asserts that Yahweh is the supreme power in the universe. No other authority, real or imagined, surpasses his greatness. Within the OT, this declaration of the supremacy of Yahweh is frequently seen in contrast to other gods, particularly those associated with neighboring, rival nations. The authors of Scripture frequently declare Yahweh to be greater than all

²I make no attempt at an exhaustive discussion of every OT text related to the demonic realm and its activity in the heavenly and earthly realms. The scope of such a discussion is not only prohibited by space, but also lies outside my specific research interests. While the figure of Satan plays an important role in the story of Job, for example, an understanding of his actions and status in those texts bears no obvious direct impact on Israel’s conflict with other nations and therefore lies outside the scope of this survey.

other gods in his demonstrations of power. In the song of Moses after the parting of the Red Sea, the author declares, “Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?” (Exod 15:11). Shortly thereafter, when Jethro hears of the deliverance the Lord has brought about for Israel, he declares, “Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, because in this affair they [the Egyptians] dealt arrogantly with the people” (Exod 18:11).³ The Psalmist declares, “There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours” (Ps 86:8; see also Pss 97:9; 135:5). The Chronicler records Solomon to declare of the temple, “The house that I am to build will be great, for our God is greater than all gods” (2 Chr 2:5). Further, Moses even commands the cosmic forces in the heavens to bow down in reverence to Yahweh, “Rejoice with him, O heavens; bow down to him, all gods” (Deut 32:43; cf. Ps 97:7).⁴ In each of these instances the emphasis is not only that Yahweh is great, but in particular that he is great in comparison with any other deity worshipped by the nations. Presumably, this is one of the primary motivations for the repeated prohibition against the worship of any other deity or idol. Only Yahweh, as the supreme power in the universe, is worthy of the worship of his creation.

In declaring Yahweh to be greater than all other gods, however, the authors of Scripture are not necessarily validating the existence or authority of these gods. That is, they do not affirm henotheism. Yahweh is not simply one of many gods, or even the best of all the gods—he is the only God. Rather, their mention of these conflicting forces

³It is unclear whether Jethro here affirms a monotheistic Yahwist theology, or whether he simply affirms the greatness of Yahweh among other gods (i.e., henotheism). Childs suggests the former, while Durham argues for the latter. Either understanding complies with the notion that Yahweh is the supreme God over all other gods, real or perceived. See Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 323, 328–29; John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC, vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 244.

⁴The MT omits this phrase, but its inclusion should be accepted. Christensen argues the phrase should be retained, as it “improves the prosodic balance and restores the larger structural design,” and suggests it was omitted as a “‘nomistic correction’ to prevent an angelological or polytheistic interpretation.” Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, WBC, vol. 6B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 813.

serves to illustrate the absolute power of Yahweh. In declaring Yahweh to be the supreme God, they exclude other gods from their claim to deity. Deuteronomy 32:17 is instructive in this regard, “They sacrificed to demons (Heb. דִּימוֹשׁ) that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded.” Here the author acknowledges the existence of these rival powers, but they are not given the status of “gods.” They are merely (falsely) acknowledged as gods by ignorant people. Similarly, Psalm 96 declares that Yahweh is to be feared “above all gods,” giving the explanation, “For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens” (Ps 96:4–5).⁵ The Chronicler remarks that whoever serves as priests for Jeroboam’s golden calves “becomes a priest of what are no gods” (2 Chr 13:9). Jeremiah also notes the false deity of these other gods, “Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit” (Jer 2:11; see also Jer 5:7; 16:20). Isaiah 44:9–20 contains a detailed description of the foolishness of those who serve idols, preceded by the statement, “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god” (Isa 44:6). Oswalt summarizes the thought, “It is not merely that he is the greatest of the gods, but that in comparison to him, there *is* no other god. Whatever the gods may be, they are not in the same category as the Lord. . . . Israel’s God encompasses all of existence from start to finish, and no other being can compete with him.”⁶

At times the biblical authors picture Yahweh’s supremacy by portraying him in victory over mythological figures from surrounding Ancient Near Eastern cultures. In particular, the biblical authors make repeated reference to Yahweh’s supremacy over the

⁵See also Hossfeld, who says that the Psalmist “downgrades the gods of the nations as idols/things of naught . . .” Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, Hermeneia, ed. Klaus Baltzer, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 465.

⁶John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 171; emphasis original.

Canaanite chaos monsters Rahab and Leviathan. Both creatures are described using dragon-like imagery⁷ and are typically associated with the sea, itself perceived as a place of chaos.⁸ The psalmist declares, “You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them. You crushed Rahab like a carcass; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm” (Ps 89:9–10). Job speaks of the judgment of God by saying, “God will not turn back his anger; beneath him bowed the helpers of Rahab” (Job 9:13). Later, Job describes the matchless power of God by declaring, “The pillars of heaven tremble and are astounded at his rebuke. By his power he stilled the sea; by his understanding he shattered Rahab” (Job 26:11–12). Later sections of this chapter will examine additional references to Leviathan and Rahab, particularly as they relate to Israel’s conflict with hostile nations.⁹

In summary, the authors of the OT frequently assert that Yahweh is the only true god, and any other god that is worshipped by the nations (or even by Israel itself) is, by comparison, no god at all. However, the OT does frequently reference these other so-called “gods” to serve as comparison points for the greatness of Yahweh. As van Henten suggests, “The incorporation of pagan traditions belonging to conflict myths in the Bible seems to serve the purpose of discrediting the foreign nations which oppress Israel (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon) and to announce their ruin (Ezek 29; 32; cf. Isa 14; 30:7 and

⁷Job 41:1–34 contains the most detailed biblical description of Leviathan.

⁸See Christoph Uehlinger, “Leviathan,” in *DDD*, 512. Uehlinger suggests that Rahab “seems to be a late exilic adaptation of [Leviathan],” and thus the two may at times been confused by the biblical authors.

⁹Scholarly discussions about the depiction of Yahweh in victory over Rahab and Leviathan, as well as other potential chaos monsters, are frequently tied up with the relationship between these biblical accounts and other ANE myths. This discussion lies outside the direct relevance of this dissertation, and so this connection will not be explored unless explicitly pertinent. For in-depth explorations of this theme, see, e.g., Hermann Gunkel, and Heinrich Zimmern, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Ap Joh 12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895); John Day, *God’s Conflict with The Dragon And The Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Carola Kloos, *Yhwh’s Combat with the Sea: A Canaanite Tradition in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (Amsterdam: G. A. van Oorschot, 1986); Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

Jer 51).”¹⁰ Among all those names worshipped as gods in the world, only Yahweh is to be feared by the demonstration of his power over and against any other rival deity.

Yahweh as the Divine Warrior

Another important element of cosmic conflict is the connection between Yahweh’s supremacy in the heavens and the events on earth. In particular, this connection is shown in the many texts that speak of the Lord as a warrior, fighting on behalf of his people and ensuring their victory. As with the supremacy of Yahweh, a full examination of this biblical theme requires far more space than is possible here. Several excellent monographs exist on the subject already, so my remarks will be brief and the texts to be examined are intended to be selective rather than exhaustive.¹¹

The exodus. Repeatedly in the exodus, as well as in the conquest, the Israelites are reminded that the true power for their victory is the Lord himself. When faced with the apparent defeat of Pharaoh’s army in pursuit at the Red Sea, Moses comforts the people by saying, “The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent” (Exod 14:14). In the celebratory song following the parting of the Red Sea, Moses says that Yahweh is “a man of war” (Exod 15:3). Shortly thereafter, as Israel engages in battle with Amalek, the tide of the battle is directly related to Moses with the staff of God in his hands, symbolic for the power of Yahweh (Exod 17:8–16). When Moses’ hands with the staff are raised, Israel prevails. When his arms falter and lower, Amalek prevails. Only by propping up Moses’ arms so they do not lower does Israel achieve victory. Yahweh alone empowered Israel to win the battle, it is implied.¹²

¹⁰Jan Willem van Henten, “Dragon,” in *DDD*, 265.

¹¹For more in-depth discussions of Yahweh as the divine warrior, see, e.g., Henning Fredriksson, *Jahwe als Krieger* (Lund, Sweden: Ohlsson, 1945); Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1973), 91–99; Patrick D. Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, HSM 5 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1973).

¹²Propp calls the staff of God in this account “the conduit for Yahweh’s power,” and calls the

Later, in Deuteronomy, as Moses recounts the unfaithfulness of the people at Kadesh, he recounts how he said, “The Lord your God who goes before you will himself fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes” (Deut 1:30). Similarly, later Moses exhorts the people to take courage in the coming conquest because the Lord will fight alongside them, “For the Lord your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory” (Deut 20:4).

The conquest. In direct fulfillment of this promise, the depiction of the Lord as a warrior recurs in the conquest. Prior to the battle for Jericho, Joshua meets a figure described as a man with a drawn sword in hand. When Joshua inquires as to his allegiance, he is told that the “man” is the commander of the Lord’s army. At this point the celestial nature of this figure is revealed, as Joshua bows down in reverence. Reminiscent of Moses and the burning bush, he is told to remove his sandals, for the ground where he stands is holy (Josh 5:13–15). The implication is that Yahweh will be warring against the inhabitants of the land with Israel. Woudstra remarks, “Joshua has been made aware of the presence of One greater than man whose drawn sword clearly speaks of combat readiness, and whose arm is nothing less than that of the Lord himself.”¹³

This commander does not make an explicit appearance again in Joshua, but the miraculous nature of many of the Israelites’ victories clearly demonstrate that the Lord is indeed fighting for his people, ensuring the defeat of their enemies. The felling of the walls of Jericho with a shout clearly points to the power of the Lord at work, but even the initial defeat of Israel at Ai, due to the sin of Achan (Josh 7:1–8:29), serves to underline

entire account a “prototypical Holy War” for Israel. William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB, vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 621. See also Durham, *Exodus*, 238.

¹³Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 106. See also Robert G. Boling, *Joshua*, AB, vol. 6 (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 198–99.

that only with the Lord's blessing and power will Israel realize victory. The coalition of kings that comes against Israel in Joshua 10 also illustrates the participation of Yahweh in the fight. After Joshua marches on the army in surprise, it is noted, "the Lord threw them into a panic before Israel," (Josh 10:10), causing the hostile army to flee. In their flight, the Lord "threw down large stones from heaven on them," causing more casualties than those inflicted by the army of Israel (v. 11).¹⁴ Finally, the miraculous account of the sun standing still so that Joshua was able to complete the rout of the army further indicates the Lord's involvement in the battle, punctuated by the final words of the account, "for the Lord fought for Israel" (vv. 12–14).

The era of the kings. In the time of the kings, the Lord continues to fight for his people. When David goes out to fight the Philistines in the Valley of Rephaim, the Lord commands him to attack from the rear upon hearing "the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees." This sound of marching is to signify to David that "the Lord has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines" (2 Sam 5:22–25; 1 Chr 14:13–17).¹⁵ In the following verse, we are told that David did as instructed, and struck down the Philistine army. In these two verses, there is a tight correlation between David's battle and the Lord's. Whereas 2 Samuel 5:24 says the Lord will strike down the Philistines, the next verse indicates David is the one to strike down the army. In other words, the Lord strikes down the Philistines through David—his victory is the Lord's. As Anderson notes, "David's victories are depicted as Yahweh's work, who delivers the enemy into David's power (v 19) and who goes before him to rout the foe (v 24)."¹⁶

¹⁴Boling identifies the stones as an "unusually severe hailstorm." Boling, *Joshua*, 282. So also Woudstra, who notes several other places in Scripture where hail is depicted as an "instrument of judgment in God's hands," including Isa 28:2; 30:30; 32:19; Job 38:22–23. Woudstra, *Joshua*, 173.

¹⁵McCarter notes that wind is "a standard vehicle for theophany" in Scripture, and says the sound here is "an audible token of the divine warrior's involvement." P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel: A New Translation*, AB, vol. 9 (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 157.

¹⁶A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, WBC, vol. 11 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 95. Similarly, Braun writes, "The sounds of the steps in the tree-tops is David's sign that God has marched before him into Holy

Later, when Jeroboam led the northern tribes in war against Abijah and the southern kingdom, Abijah speaks of God himself as the general of his army, “Behold, God is with us at our head, and his priests with their battle trumpets to sound the call to battle against you. O sons of Israel, do not fight against the Lord, the God of your fathers, for you cannot succeed” (2 Chr 13:12). When the battle turns against Abijah, the people cry out to the Lord, and the Chronicler records that “God defeated Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. The men of Israel fled before Judah, and God gave them into their hand” (2 Chr 13:15–16).

Other times the Israelites were delivered in even more dramatic ways by their warrior God. When Jehoshaphat faces a large army from Moab and Ammon, he prays to the Lord and is assured of victory by the prophet Jahaziel. He encourages the king by saying, “The battle is not yours but God’s. . . . You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the Lord will be with you” (2 Chr 20:15, 17). When Jehoshaphat and his army sets out against their enemies, they find the hostile army destroyed, having been beset by an ambush and turning their swords against one another in the confusion (vv. 22–23).¹⁷ Similarly, in the face of Sennacherib’s invading army, Hezekiah encourages the people by saying, “With [Sennacherib] is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord, our God, to help us and to fight our battles” (2 Chr 32:8). After Hezekiah and Isaiah pray for victory, the Chronicler recounts that the Lord sent an angel to strike down the men of the army. In

War and he is to follow.” Roddy Braun, *I Chronicles*, WBC, vol. 14 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 179.

¹⁷Commentators differ on the identity of the ambushers. Japhet suggests human forces that the Chronicler has chosen to interpret as miraculous intervention, while Dillard argues that a heavenly army is depicted. Klein’s summary statement is helpful: “While the Chronicler is not explicit about who staffed these ambushes, it is clear that, in his view, their effectiveness is the result of divine intervention.” Ralph W. Klein, *2 Chronicles: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 292. Also see Raymond B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, WBC, vol. 15 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 159; Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 797–98.

the parallel accounts in 2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37, the authors record that 185,000 men of the Assyrian army were struck down by this angel, leading to a retreat and Sennacherib's eventual death (2 Kgs 19:35; Isa 37:36).

The exile. The OT continues to speak of the Lord as a warrior into the time of the exile. In his prophecy of judgment to the nation, Jeremiah faces persecution from the priest Pashhur, who denounces his prophecy of exile and has him beaten and thrown into the stocks. Upon his release the following day, Jeremiah rebukes Pashhur for his treatment of him and he prophesies his captivity at the hands of Babylon. He says “the Lord is with me as a dread warrior,” and declares that those who persecute him will be put to shame, subject to “eternal dishonor” (Jer 20:11). Here the prophet relies upon the Lord for his vindication in the midst of persecution, calling on the Lord as a warrior to protect him and lift him up from his humiliation. Following the exile, when Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall, he faces similar opposition from Sanballat and Tobiah. He instructs the Israelites, as they rebuild the wall with weapons in hand, to take courage in the midst of possible conflict and battle, promising, “Our God will fight for us” (Neh 4:20).

Summary

In review, not only did the biblical authors describe Yahweh as the supreme and only true God, victorious over all other so-called gods, but they also frequently depicted Yahweh as directly involved in battle on behalf of the nation. Even in the face of impossible odds, Israel might always take courage, knowing that Yahweh was able to rout their enemies. These two ideas, when combined, form the essential elements of cosmic conflict, where the defeat of Israel's enemies is seen as a product of Yahweh's victory and supremacy over other false gods. The following section will explore the instances where this theme may be seen in a more fully developed form.

Yahweh in Cosmic Conflict with Other Gods

In the following examples, I will examine instances where Yahweh is depicted in conflict with (and ultimate victory over) some rival deity or deities, as well as the connection this victory has with the events of Israel's conflict with her neighbors. Since the authors lacked a full conception of Satan as a unified source of cosmic evil (as in the Second Temple era and the NT), at times this conflict was between Yahweh and the so-called deities of the surrounding nations, and at times Yahweh's supremacy is demonstrated by his victory over Canaanite chaos monsters, such as Rahab and Leviathan. In this section, I will begin by examining the issues of cosmic conflict in the plagues in Egypt and the exodus. Next, I will detail the account of the ark of the covenant in the Philistine temple of Dagon, followed by selected texts from the time of the kings, and finally the prophetic literature.

Cosmic Conflict and the Exodus

The earliest, and perhaps clearest, example of Yahweh's conflict against foreign gods is found in the exodus. Boyd agrees, "Nowhere is [the] inextricable connection between earthly and spiritual battles more evident in the Old Testament than in the paradigmatic military deliverance of Israel by the power of God—the exodus."¹⁸ This connection between cosmic and human conflict is present not only in the account of the Red Sea, but also in the ten plagues before it. On one level, these plagues may be seen as punitive judgments against Pharaoh and the people of Egypt for the enslavement and mistreatment of the Hebrews as God's chosen people. But the author of Exodus also makes clear that the plagues serve a theological purpose as well. In the establishment of the Passover, the Lord reveals to Moses the recipients of his judgment in the final plague on the firstborn: "For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all

¹⁸Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), 134.

the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and *on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord*” (Exod 12:12, emphasis added). It is clear that these judgments are meant to display the unsurpassed power of Yahweh over against the so-called gods of the Egyptians.

Some scholars have observed several allusions within the plague narratives that point to an even more specific understanding of these judgments. In particular, these scholars frequently note that many elements of the plagues correspond to Egyptian deities, and therefore these miraculous acts of Yahweh take on a polemical tone. Indeed, they argue, such an interpretation helps to make sense out of some confusing elements in the plague narrative. While certain plagues would certainly be devastating in their own right (boils, hail, death of the firstborn, etc.), others are significantly less menacing (frogs, gnats, etc.). If, however, even these seemingly innocuous plagues were seen as judgments and triumphs over specific Egyptian deities, the literary impact of such a narrative becomes clearer.

For example, Currid suggests that the first plague, the transformation of the Nile into blood, is a polemic of the river god Hapi.¹⁹ He writes of the death of the fish resulting from this plague, “The river and its god could no longer supply the people’s needs. This disaster was a demonstration that true sustenance came only from the hand of Yahweh and not from a false pagan deity of the Egyptians.”²⁰ Similarly, the plague of darkness is said to be directed at Amon-Re, the sun god.²¹ Currid calls Amon-Re the Egyptians’ “chief deity,” and their “creator-god.”²² Aling elaborates on the polemical

¹⁹John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 108. So also George A. F. Knight, *Theology as Narration* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 59; Charles F. Aling, *Egypt and Bible History: From Earliest Times to 1000 B.C.* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 106.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 110.

²¹Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, 112; John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 133–34; Aling, *Egypt and Bible History*, 106–7; Knight, *Theology as Narration*, 79.

²²Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, 112.

effect of the plague, “The sun god was powerless to shine through the darkness.”²³

Several scholars have likewise attempted to explain the remaining plagues as targeted towards specific deities.²⁴

However, it is difficult to conclude from Egyptian mythology or the Exodus text itself that the plagues are targeted against specific Egyptian deities. For example, regarding the first plague and the polemic against Hapi, Exodus does not make explicit in any way that this plague is to be seen as an attack upon Hapi or any other deity. It is only mentioned as a sign of the power of Yahweh (“By this you shall know that I am the Lord,” Exod 7:17). Given the importance of the Nile in daily Egyptian life, the transformation of the water into blood would serve as a display of immense power and a sign of an angry deity bringing judgment upon the Egyptians. In addition, some scholars have challenged the notion that the Egyptians perceived Hapi as a river god at all. David argues that Hapi was “a personification of the inundation and not of the Nile.”²⁵ Thus, Garrett suggests, “An attack upon [Hapi] should have been a failed inundation, not the turning of the Nile blood-red.”²⁶ Such a failed inundation would have meant an insufficient harvest, but the exodus account makes no such mention of failed crops. Other suggestions made regarding other plagues and the specific deities they supposedly target are not supported by the evidence either from the exodus account itself or Egyptian

²³Aling, *Egypt and Bible History*, 106.

²⁴For a more detailed argument of this thesis, see, e.g., Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, 108–13; Aling, *Egypt and Bible History*, 106–9; Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, 98–153.

²⁵Rosalie David, *Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 9. This citation was brought to my attention in Duane A. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2014), 292. See also Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, 109; and Peter Enns, *Exodus*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 200. Contra Aling, who says, “The god and the river were synonymous” (Aling, *Egypt and Bible History*, 106). Enns and Currid both state that the Nile was personified and worshipped as the god Hapi, but then correctly notes that Hapi more accurately represented the inundation of the Nile and not the river itself. However, neither elaborates on the potential problem this distinction poses for their thesis, as the plague is against the Nile itself and involves the inundation in no explicit way.

²⁶Garrett, *Exodus*, 292.

mythology. While space does not permit a detailed examination of each plague and potential deities targeted therein, an additional example may illustrate the overall point.

In regard to the plague of darkness, while the sun was certainly venerated in Egyptian society, an intended recipient of a plague of darkness is not so easily discerned. Davis, in his discussion of the ninth plague, mentions as possible recipients of the plague the sun god Ra, Aten, Atum, Khepre, Horus, and Hathor before mentioning that this list “could be greatly extended involving a number of other deities associated with the sun, stars, and light.”²⁷ Yet with such a wide net of potential deities in view by this plague, it is difficult to see how the Egyptians might have interpreted the plague as a polemic against any one of their gods in particular. A better interpretation is offered by Garrett, who suggests, “These Egyptians associated blindness or darkness with the wrath of a god, and thus they thought their inability to see the light was not a sign that Re or some other god had failed, but a sign that they were being punished by an angry deity.”²⁸ Again, the point of the plague is not to point out the impotence of one particular god, but the impotence of any god but Yahweh.

If, then, the plagues are not directed against specific Egyptian deities, how can the author mention in 12:12 that the judgments are directed at the gods of Egypt? Garrett explains, “The point is not that each plague is directed against a specific god. Rather, Egypt was closely associated with her gods, so that a defeat of Egypt was in effect a defeat of her gods. . . . When a nation is defeated, its gods are defeated.”²⁹ David’s prayer in 2 Samuel 7, reflecting on the exodus, also highlights this connection, “And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving

²⁷Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, 133–36.

²⁸Garrett, *Exodus*, 301.

²⁹Ibid.

out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods?" (2 Sam 7:23). Numbers 33, likewise, in recounting the story of Israel's journey thus far, makes explicit the connection between the plagues on the Egyptians and on their gods. After mentioning the plague of the death of the firstborn, the text reads, "On their gods also the Lord executed judgments" (Num 33:4b). This close connection between a nation and its gods lies at the heart of the depiction of cosmic conflict, whereby the battle between Yahweh and the forces of darkness is paralleled by the battle between nations upon the earth. In the instance of the plagues and the exodus, the judgments from Yahweh are against the gods of Egypt in that he is bringing about the triumph of his people over the Egyptians through a display of his might. Thus, in defeating Egypt, Yahweh defeats her gods, and vice versa.

The crossing of the Red Sea brings the defeat of Egypt to consummation. In recounting the narrative, the text of Exodus does not directly relate this event to a divine judgment of the gods of Egypt. However, later texts would recount this story with a cosmic dimension to it. The Psalmist recounts the victory of the Red Sea in these terms, "You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters. You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness" (Ps 74:13–14). The poetry of the psalm thus holds in parallel the parting of the waters with the crushing of the Canaanite chaos monster Leviathan, often described as a dragon. Similarly, Isaiah recounts the deliverance of the Red Sea by saying, "Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?" (Isa 51:9b–10). Just as the psalmist identified Israel's triumph over Egypt as Yahweh's triumph over Leviathan, so Isaiah pictures the same victory as a triumph over Rahab.

The Ark of the Covenant and Dagon

Early in the narrative of 1 Samuel, the army of Israel is defeated by the Philistines at Aphek. In keeping with the portrayal of the Lord as the source of military victory mentioned in previous sections, the people wonder, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?” (1 Sam 4:3). They propose to bring the ark of the covenant into battle with them so as to bring the Lord’s power to bear on their enemies. When the ark enters the camp, the text recounts that a great shout rose up in the camp, such that the Philistines began to be afraid, recognizing the power of Israel’s God. “A god has come into the camp,” they note in dismay (1 Sam 4:7). After this initial display of fear, however, the Philistines ready themselves for battle again and emerge victorious, even more so than previously. In addition to their military victory, they capture the ark itself and transport it back to Ashdod to the temple of Dagon (1 Sam 4:11; 5:1–2). This act is significant for the broader Near Eastern conception of cosmic conflict. Supposing that their victory over the Israelites is a symbol of their god’s victory over Yahweh, the Philistines place the ark of the covenant inside the temple of Dagon and place it near his image. The symbolic nature of this act is transparent—Yahweh is under the power of Dagon, just as Israel is under the power of the Philistines. McCarter writes,

It was the custom of the peoples of the ancient Near East to carry off the ‘gods’ of a conquered enemy and deposit them in places of worship at home. . . . Clearly a captured god was the final proof of the subjugation of a victim. . . . Furthermore a captured god ensconced in the temple of a rival, insofar as earthly events were believed to mirror decisions made in heaven, might be regarded as palpable evidence of the subordination of one divine being to another, thus imputing authority to the claims of one people upon another.³⁰

However, even this instance of Yahweh’s supposed defeat at the hands of

³⁰P. Kyle McCarter, *1 Samuel: A New Translation*, AB, vol. 8 (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 125. So also Tsumura, who writes, “It was understood that a people whose gods were in enemy hands was completely conquered.” David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 203–4. See also John F. Healey, “Dagon,” in *DDD*, 218. Klein suggests that the Philistines placed the ark in the temple of Dagon in honor of Yahweh’s abandonment of his people. Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, 2nd ed., WBC, vol. 10 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 49. Klein’s suggestion is possible, as this practice did occur in ANE cultures, but given the ensuing imagery of Dagon humbled and defeated before the ark, the former connotations of Yahweh depicted in submission to Dagon is preferable.

Dagon becomes a symbol of his power over the god of the Philistines. The narrative preceding the battle at Aphek makes clear that Yahweh is pronouncing his judgment on the house of Eli the priest. The battle and the ensuing capture of the ark, therefore, are portrayed by the biblical author as a means of bringing about this judgment, as it ultimately results in the death of Eli, his two sons, and even his daughter-in-law (1 Sam 4:11, 18–20).

Yet, in bringing about this judgment on the house of Eli, Yahweh is not willing to let his power and supremacy be maligned by the Philistines. The account continues in 1 Samuel 5, where the Philistines find that the image of Dagon has fallen to the ground overnight before the ark of the covenant, clearly symbolizing submission and perhaps even reverence by this mute statue (1 Sam 5:3).³¹ The following account details how the Philistines reset the statue of Dagon, only to find the next morning the statue fallen over again, yet this time with its hands and head both cut off (v. 4). Klein writes, “His lying on the ground was the posture of a badly beaten, former champion.”³² Following these heavily symbolic events, the narrative recounts how the Lord brought pestilence upon the Philistines. Here the text makes clear that the Philistines recognize this as the judgment of Yahweh, and resolve to send the ark away. Significantly, they note that Yahweh’s “hand is hard against us *and against Dagon our god*” (2 Sam 5:7; emphasis added). Here, as in Egypt, the judgment the Lord brings upon a people is seen as a reflection of his triumph over their gods. McCarter summarizes the account, “This is a contest of national deities: Yahweh the god of Israel against Dagon the god of Philistia and, insofar as the Philistines were the quintessential enemy, of every hostile nation. . . . The result is clear: the god of Israel has triumphed. His rival is humbled.”³³

³¹Klein proposes, “Dagon’s first prostration before the ark would seem to indicate his worship of Yahweh and the acknowledgment of his superiority.” Klein, *1 Samuel*, 49.

³²Ibid., 52.

³³McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 125.

Cosmic Conflict in the Era of the Kings

Several passages from the time of the kings serve to illustrate the principles behind the biblical portrayal of cosmic conflict. Even more clearly than in previous passages, the biblical authors in many places make clear the connection between the gods of a nation and its victory in battle. King Ahab faced the collected might of the Syrian army, led by Ben-hadad, but was told by a prophet of the Lord that Ahab would be delivered by the power of the Lord. Here, despite Ahab's considerable idolatry and rebellion against the Lord, Yahweh acts on his behalf for his own glory, so that Ahab might see and know his power (1 Kgs 20:13). After being routed, however, Ben-hadad is persuaded to retry his attempt at conquering Samaria when his servants offer him an explanation of why his superior army was defeated. He is told, "Their gods are gods of the hills, and so they were stronger than we. But let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they" (1 Kgs 20:23). Here the biblical authors demonstrate the belief that the power of the gods determined the outcome of battles. Even though Ben-hadad incorrectly surmises that Yahweh's power is limited to the hills, his reasoning helps the reader to see the ways in which Israel's pagan neighbors perceived the power of the gods in human conflict.

The account of Israel and Mesha, the king of Moab, in 2 Kings 3 presents a curious twist on this portrayal of cosmic conflict. A united front of Jehoshaphat in Judah and Jehoram in Israel comes against the king of Moab, resulting in a decisive victory against Moab (2 Kgs 3:24–25). The Israelite army pursued the Moabites back to the city of Kir-hareseth and lay siege to it. The king of Moab, after failing to break through the Israelite army, resorts to his gods. The biblical author recounts how the king sacrificed his oldest son as a burnt offering on the wall, with the result that "there came great wrath against Israel," leading to the withdrawal of the Israelite army (v. 27).

This puzzling statement has spawned several different lines of interpretation. Cogan calls this description of wrath coming against Israel "one of the most perplexing

items in Scripture.”³⁴ The phrase may refer to the wrath of Chemosh, the Moabite deity, which turned the battle against Israel and resulted in their withdrawal. The theological implications of such an interpretation are difficult to square with the rest of the narrative, where the oracle of Elisha promised victory (vv. 18–19), much less the larger biblical worldview. Nor does a reference to the wrath of Yahweh make sense in the context, as no wrongdoing of the Israelite army is mentioned in the text that might incur his anger. Against these unsatisfactory explanations, Sweeney argues that the wrath refers to Israel’s own wrath, “That is, Israel became angry at the sight of Mesha’s sacrifice of his son, and consequently withdrew from Kir Haresheth. Israel/Jehoram—and not YHWH—would be responsible for the failure to achieve victory over the Moabites.”³⁵ Such an understanding of “wrath,” however, goes against its typical biblical usage, where Yahweh’s wrath comes upon evildoers in judgment.³⁶ Further, it seems highly unlikely that the Israelite army would withdraw in disgust or contempt in the middle of the bloodshed of battle.

The biblical author, however, makes no further comment on the narrative, so it is not clear how the original readers may have interpreted this account in light of the supremacy of Yahweh. Regardless, it is apparent that the biblical authors assume the connection between the power of a nation’s gods and that nation’s victory in battle. Mesha’s intention in offering the sacrifice was to incite Chemosh to come to the aid of his army to repel the attackers. Indeed, the Moabite Stone, which contains an account of Mesha’s reign from his own perspective, is replete with attributions of victory in battle to

³⁴Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB, vol. 11 (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 47.

³⁵Marvin A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 284.

³⁶Sweeney himself admits this general understanding of the Hebrew phrase (*ibid.*). See also Cogan, *II Kings*, 47.

Chemosh.³⁷ Therefore, despite the interpretive difficulties in this passage, the elements of cosmic conflict are nevertheless present.

Later in the nation's history, King Ahaz chooses to worship the "gods of Damascus" after being defeated in battle by the king of Syria. He reasons, "Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me" (2 Chr 28:23). In a striking contrast, King Amaziah of Judah, after achieving a victory over the Edomites in the Valley of Salt (2 Chr 25:5–11), brings up the gods of Edom back to Israel, that he may worship them. This act is condemned by a prophet of the Lord, who asks Amaziah, "Why have you sought the gods of a people who did not deliver their own people from your hand?" (2 Chr 25:15). Though both accounts demonstrate a negative response to Yahweh's supremacy, they each reinforce, in their own way, the connection between a nation's gods and its victory (or defeat) in battle. Ahaz's idolatry is condemned because it demonstrates his lack of understanding of Yahweh's sovereignty even in the midst of judgment and defeat, whereas Amaziah's decision is rebuked for being inherently foolish.³⁸

One final instance of cosmic conflict in the time of the kings may be seen in the extended account of Sennacherib of Assyria and King Hezekiah of Judah. Sennacherib's messenger calls out to the people of Judah, seeking to undermine Hezekiah's exhortation to trust in the Lord. He says,

And do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying, 'The Lord will deliver us.' Has any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the

³⁷See *ANET*, 320–21.

³⁸Dillard notes that Amaziah's actions may be explained by the ANE motif of divine abandonment. He writes, "In the religious apologetic of the ancient Near East, not only did the royal deity assist the king in his battles, but also the deities of the opposing nation were often described as abandoning their people and coming to the aid of the attacking force." He suggests, accordingly, that Amaziah's worship of these gods "may have represented his own gratitude that they had helped him." Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 201. Klein notes this motif as well, but concludes, "Amaziah should have destroyed these images as David did (1 Chr 14:12) in the spirit of Deut 7:5 and 12:3. It is one thing to bring back these idols as trophies but quite another to recognize them as gods and even worship them." Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 359.

hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? (2 Kgs 18:32–35; cf. Isa 36:18–20; 2 Chr 32:13–15).

Again the military victory of the Assyrians is seen as a function of the weakness of the gods of the nations conquered. Sennacherib’s boasting reveals that he considers Yahweh to be no more powerful than any of these false gods, as the Chronicler makes explicit, “And they spoke of the God of Jerusalem as they spoke of the gods of the peoples of the earth, which are the work of men’s hands” (2 Chr 32:19). Hobbs writes of this boast, “In the mouth of Rab-shakeh, with the support of his arguments, it is mockery of Yahweh. In the context of the deuteronomistic history it is the supreme irony. . . . 2 Kings began with this contrast and established the premise that the gods of the nations were inferior.”³⁹

Cosmic Conflict in the Psalms and Prophetic Literature

The poetic writings found in the wisdom and prophetic literature make further reference to portrayals of cosmic conflict. Specifically, they do so frequently by picturing Israel’s enemies in terms of Canaanite chaos monsters, such as Rahab and Leviathan. The writers in these passages are not so much acknowledging the ontological existence of these cosmic creatures, but using the imagery of Yahweh in triumph over them to symbolize the victory that Israel has (or will have) over her earthly enemies.

Isaiah 26 contains a song of praise for the day when Yahweh vindicates his people and brings vengeance upon the enemies of Israel. The song of praise concludes, “Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by. For behold, the Lord is coming out from his place to *punish the inhabitants of the earth* for their iniquity . . .” (Isa 26:20–21a; emphasis added). In the verse immediately following, the prophet writes, “In that

³⁹T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, WBC, vol. 13 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 259.

day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will *punish Leviathan* the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea” (Isa 27:1; emphasis added).⁴⁰ The prophet restates the judgment of the Lord, but the second time his punishment falls on the chaos monster Leviathan, whereas the previous verse indicated the object of his wrath was the human opponents of Israel (“the inhabitants of the earth”). In punishing Leviathan, therefore, the Lord punishes the inhabitants of the earth—Israel’s human opponents—and vice versa. As Uehlinger asserts, “Leviathan’s disaster will coincide with the restoration of the vineyard Israel (v. 2), which implies that ‘Leviathan’ here works as a metaphor for an historical-political entity, too, unnamed but identified with mere chaos.”⁴¹

A few chapters later, Isaiah warns the people against relying upon an alliance with Egypt for protection from Babylon. The prophet rebukes the people for their plan to “take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt” (30:2b). He promises that their reliance upon Egypt will not result in their deliverance, because “Egypt’s help is worthless and empty; therefore I have called her, ‘Rahab who sits still’” (30:7).⁴² Here again, while not referring to a direct enemy, the prophet speaks of the nation of Egypt—and Pharaoh in particular—in terms of the chaos monster Rahab. Ezekiel speaks similarly of Pharaoh, calling him “the great dragon that lies in the midst of his streams” (Ezek 29:3; cf. 32:2–3). The imagery of Pharaoh as a dragon is expanded in

⁴⁰Childs suggests that chapter 27 is to be regarded as “a discrete unit, both in form and content, and separated from what precedes and follows.” Brevard Childs, *Isaiah*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 196. Childs’ argument here fails to persuade, as there are plenty of connections between the two passages that warrant treating them together. For the integrity of the passage, see John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 490.

⁴¹Uehlinger, “Leviathan,” 514. Day suggests the referent is likely Egypt, but acknowledges other possibilities before ultimately labeling it as an unnamed political reference. Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon*, 112.

⁴²Day suggests the last phrase should be translated “the silenced Rahab,” based on his proposed emendation to the MT’s vocalization. If Day’s suggestion is correct, the prophet’s words not only equate Egypt and Pharaoh with the chaos monster Rahab, but also imply Yahweh’s victory and supremacy over it. See Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon*, 89.

verse 4, where the prophet speaks of scales upon his body and threatens to put hooks in his jaws. Here, while the prophet does not explicitly name Pharaoh as Leviathan or Rahab, the sea dragon imagery that is typically used of both cosmic beings is transparent. Indeed, the connection of Egypt with the Canaanite chaos monsters was pervasive enough that the Psalmist substitutes the name Rahab for Egypt without further comment (Ps 87:4; cf. 74:14).⁴³

Isaiah and Ezekiel both use cosmic imagery to describe the kings of the nations in conflict with Israel. Isaiah pronounces judgment on the king of Babylon (Isa 14:1), speaking of him as being “fallen from heaven” and calling him “Day Star, son of Dawn” (v. 12). Due to these images, many interpreters have seen Isaiah’s prophecy as a reference to the fall of Satan himself. Isaiah’s own preface in verse 4, however, signifies that a direct reference to Satan in these verses is unlikely. More likely, the prophet, as in other places, is using this cosmic imagery as a means to connect Israel’s conflict with Babylon with Yahweh’s own heavenly conflict. Boyd notes connections between the text of Isaiah’s prophecy and certain Near Eastern conflict myths, such as the Canaanite god Athtar—whose name, Boyd notes, means “Shining One, Son of Dawn.”⁴⁴ Boyd writes, “Isaiah portrays the arrogant activity of the king of Babylon as representing and reenacting the arrogant activity of a cosmic rebel . . . We can therefore concede that Isaiah’s prophecy is from beginning to end about none other than the man Sennacherib while also affirming that this prophecy has a cosmic dimension to it.”⁴⁵ Similarly, Ezekiel’s pronouncement of judgment against the king of Tyre uses imagery beyond that

⁴³So also Hossfeld, *Psalms*, 383; Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, WBC, vol. 20 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 391; Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, in vol. 5 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 656; Klaas Spronk, “Rahab,” in *DDD*, 684–85.

⁴⁴Boyd, *God at War*, 159. See also Forsyth, *The Old Enemy*, 135.

⁴⁵Boyd, *God at War*, 160.

of mere humans. The king of Tyre is called “the signet of perfection” (v. 12) and a “guardian cherub” (vv. 14, 16), and is said to have resided in Eden (v. 12). Again, the significance is to tie the human conflict against Tyre to the cosmic conflict of Yahweh against all other so called gods and forces of darkness.⁴⁶

In the midst of exile, Jeremiah speaks of the destruction of Babylon in terms of Yahweh’s conflict with the chaos monsters. Jeremiah writes of the destruction of Israel at the hands of Babylon, “Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon has devoured me; he has crushed me; he has made me an empty vessel; he has swallowed me like a monster” (Jer 51:34). The word “monster” in the ESV is the Hebrew תַּנִּין and is best understood in this context as “dragon” or “sea monster,” at times associated with Rahab and Leviathan.⁴⁷ Further, in verse 44, Jeremiah equates Babylon with the god Bel, saying, “And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and take out of his mouth what he has swallowed.” The lexical connection of Israel being “swallowed” (בָּעַל) demonstrates that the prophet conflates the identities of Nebuchadnezzar, the chaos monsters of the sea, and Babylon’s god Bel, i.e., Marduk.⁴⁸ Israel has suffered defeat, temporarily, at the hands of the cosmic monsters, but their future liberation at the hands of Yahweh mirrors his own supremacy over these false gods. As Lundbom concludes, “Yahweh here is asserting his superiority over the Babylonian god (or his idol), now seen to be the powerless deity he really is.”⁴⁹

In Daniel 10, the prophet is visited by an angel,⁵⁰ who notes that he was

⁴⁶See also Boyd, *God at War*, 160–62.

⁴⁷See, e.g., Job 7:12; Ps 74:14; George C. Heider, “Tannin,” in *DDD*, 835–36. Day agrees that תַּנִּין should be understood as a sea monster here because of the imagery in v. 36 where Yahweh declares that he will “dry up her sea and make her fountain dry.” Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon*, 109.

⁴⁸So also J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 765; Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52*, AB, vol. 21C (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 479; William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 26–52*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 430.

⁴⁹Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 479.

⁵⁰This angelic figure is often identified as Gabriel (cf. 8:16; 9:21), though this conclusion is not certain. See Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, AB, vol. 23 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978), 279.

delayed in coming to Daniel for twenty-one days because the “prince of Persia” opposed him. Only the appearance of Michael, described as a “chief prince,” allowed the angel to complete his mission to come to Daniel. Further, after briefly encouraging Daniel, the angel departs again, stating he must fight again against the prince of Persia as well as the prince of Greece. These “princes” are typically understood to be angelic beings in conflict with one another. Collins calls them “patron angels,” while Di Lella offers the name, “tutelary spirits” or “guardian angels.”⁵¹

For the purposes of my argument, it is important to note that these angelic figures are associated with certain earthly territories and nations.⁵² This understanding of the connection between cosmic beings and nations is present as early as Deuteronomy 32:8, where Moses reminds the people that the nations were divided “according to the number of the sons of God.”⁵³ These “sons of God” here are best regarded as angels (cf. Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), suggesting that cosmic beings are associated with the nations of the earth, in some sense. Di Lella explains that these patron angels acted as heavenly representatives, “either by defying the divine will (as apparently the angels of Persia and Greece have done in Daniel 10–12), or by acting explicitly as God’s agents.”⁵⁴ Von Rad suggests the passage in Deuteronomy is “unmistakably intended to be etiological; it is asking how the direct relationship between Yahweh, the God of the whole world, and Israel came about? What is the explanation of the fact that Israel is subordinated not, like all other nations, to one of these sons of God but to Yahweh directly?”⁵⁵

⁵¹John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 374; Di Lella, *Daniel*, 282.

⁵²See Collins, *Daniel*, 374, who calls this belief “widespread” in the ancient world.

⁵³On the reading “sons of God,” Collins writes, “The MT reads ‘sons of Israel’ but the LXX reading ἀγγέλων θεοῦ is now supported by a Hebrew fragment from Qumran Cave 4 [4QDeut^f] which reads בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים.” John J. Collins, “Prince,” in *DDD*, 663.

⁵⁴Di Lella, *Daniel*, 283.

⁵⁵Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 197. See also Sir 17:17; *Jub.* 15:31–32; *1 En.* 89:59.

Summary

In this section, I have examined several instances of Yahweh's direct conflict with the gods of other nations throughout the OT, showing their connections to Israel's own earthly conflicts with the surrounding nations. Consistently, the biblical authors portrayed their victory over surrounding nations as a direct result of Yahweh's supremacy in the heavenly realms. Goldingay aptly summarizes,

Like other ancient Near Eastern writings, the OT assumes that the results of battles on earth reflect the involvement of heaven. Usually the picture is of heavenly forces aiding Israel and enabling them to win against otherwise overwhelming earthly forces. . . . A few passages, however, suggest that there are heavenly armies that oppose Yahweh, so that earthly battles reflect battles in heaven; whichever side wins in heaven, its equivalent wins on earth.⁵⁶

Di Lella further notes, "The heavenly battle was what really mattered, the earthly counterpart being a mere by-product."⁵⁷ Therefore, in the absence of a unified cosmic force of evil, Israel's conflict with her neighbors, both in victory and defeat, was always seen with a cosmic dimension to it as well.

Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that although the figure of Satan is largely absent in the OT, the basic elements that make up the depiction of cosmic conflict are still prominently seen. Part of the Israelite insistence on the supremacy of Yahweh involved a polemic against the other so-called gods of other nations, declaring them to be no gods at all. I have also noted in brief many of the depictions of Yahweh as the divine warrior in the narratives of the OT. Finally, I have surveyed many of the accounts of Yahweh in cosmic conflict with the gods of Israel's enemies. I have argued that in picturing Yahweh in triumph over these rival deities in the heavenly realms, Israel experienced victory over their human opponents on earth.

⁵⁶John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, WBC, vol. 30 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 291–92.

⁵⁷Di Lella, *Daniel*, 284.

These examples of cosmic conflict in the OT are not intended to be presented as exhaustive, but rather representative. My aim in this section is simply to demonstrate that the connection between Yahweh's conflict with other gods and the conflict of the people of God with their enemies begins in the earliest pages of the canon and would likely have exerted considerable influence over any Jewish and early Christian writings. To further demonstrate this claim, our attention must now turn to a similar examination of the writings from the Second Temple period of Judaism.

CHAPTER 4

COSMIC CONFLICT IN SECOND TEMPLE JEWISH LITERATURE

Jewish writings in the Second Temple period, particularly those apocalyptic in nature, greatly expanded upon the role and nature of Satan. Whereas Satan as a proper name scarcely occurs in the OT at all, his presence is much more greatly felt in texts from the mid-second century BC through the NT period. These Jewish authors conceived of a host of demonic spirits in opposition to Yahweh and his people, with a single evil cosmic force at their head. The names for this cosmic opponent of God—Sammael, Azazel, Mastema, Beliar, Semihazah, Satan, etc.—varied among authors, and even within the same texts. This adversary was consistently portrayed as the enemy of God and his people, with a demonic force and even human beings under his control. Whereas the OT tended to depict Yahweh in conflict with a multitude of gods of other nations, literature in the Second Temple period reflects the notion of Satan as the unified cosmic figure of evil. It is this development that sets the stage for the much more overtly stated cosmic conflict that may be observed in the NT.

In this chapter, I will continue to examine the development of depictions of cosmic conflict, as reflected in Second Temple Jewish writings. I will note how these authors maintained a close connection between conflict in the heavenly realm and human conflict on earth. I will describe how these authors perceived of the figure of Satan as the unified source of evil and enemy of Yahweh and his people. I will also note how human opponents of God's people could be described with satanic imagery, or depicted as under the influence of Satan and the demonic realm. I will also examine texts that do not explicitly detail the activity of Satan and the demonic realm, but nonetheless contribute to

our understanding of divine agency in the midst of suffering. Finally, I will explore how these writers also anticipated a day of eschatological judgment, which would signal the ultimate defeat for the cosmic (and human) forces of evil, and ultimate salvation and deliverance for Yahweh and his people.

Satan and Cosmic Conflict in Second Temple Judaism

In the following sections, I will survey several important writings from the Second Temple era as they represent the general perception and expectation of Jewish thought from this time period. As with my discussion of the OT, I will focus my discussion on texts that pertain to the connection between the cosmic and human realms and not just the demonic realm in general. Most of these texts predate the Christian era, but even those that do not are helpful in understanding the general understanding of the demonic realm in the first century AD. This survey is not intended to be an exhaustive discussion of cosmic conflict in the Second Temple period, but rather a representative sample of the general apocalyptic outlook.

1 Enoch

One of the most significant works in the Second Temple period for the understanding of Satan and the demonic realm is the apocalyptic book of *1 Enoch*. Early Jewish understanding of the origin and function of demons reflects the traditions found in this work, particularly the section within *1 Enoch* known as the *Book of Watchers* (*1 En.* 1–36).¹ The *Book of Watchers*, generally regarded as a product of the third century BC,

¹The book of *1 Enoch* is composite in nature, generally regarded to be composed of five major sections, combined by a later editor into the book in its current form. These major sections are known as *The Book of Watchers* (1–36), *The Book of Parables* (37–71), *The Astronomical Book* (72–82), *The Book of Dreams* (83–90), and *The Epistle of Enoch* (91–105 or 108). For more on the text and dating of these works, see J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 4–58. The dating of certain sections of *1 Enoch*, especially *The Book of Parables*, is debated. Milik views the *Parables* as a Christian work, dating to the late third century AD, where others view it as a product of the first century AD. See *ibid.*, 91–96; Michael Knibb, “The Date of the *Parables of Enoch*: A Critical Review,” in *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions*, SVTP, vol. 22 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 143–60. My comments are confined to sections of the work generally regarded to be a product of early Judaism rather than these possibly later texts.

retells the story of Noah and the flood.² In particular, the *Book of Watchers* expands on the enigmatic account in Genesis 6:1–4 of the “sons of God,” who took wives among the “daughters of man” and bore children by them. The text of Genesis makes no further comment on the identity of these “sons of God,” but the remark from the Lord that his spirit “shall not abide in man forever” in v. 3 implies that this action was not pleasing in his sight. The *Book of Watchers* makes explicit that these “sons of God” were angelic beings originally created as good (15:3, 6), called Watchers (1:4; 10:9, 15; 12:4; etc.), who became sexually desirous of human women and had intercourse with them. The instigator of this act—clearly perceived as sinful even by the Watchers themselves (6:3)—is named Semyaz,³ said to be the leader of these angelic creatures. The offspring of these sexual encounters are giants, said to be 300 cubits in height (7:2), who spread destruction upon the earth, killing humans and animals alike for food. In addition, other Watchers (including Semyaz), led by Azaz’el, are said to have incited wickedness in mankind by teaching them acts of violence, warfare, and magical incantation, among other vices (8:1–3).

This calamity, brought about by the sin of the Watchers, is the catalyst for the widespread wickedness of mankind seen in Genesis 6:5–6, ultimately resulting in the Noahic flood (10:1–2). The *Book of Watchers* also makes clear that the judgment in the flood is not only upon sinful humanity, but also upon the Watchers and their giant offspring. The response from the Lord is not only to send the deluge upon the earth, but also to bind and destroy the Watchers and the giants they bore. The archangel Raphael is ordered to bind Azaz’el and cast him into darkness to await eschatological judgment,

²On the date of this section of *1 Enoch*, see Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 22; Ryan E. Stokes, “Watchers, Book of the (1 Enoch 1–36),” in *Eerdman’s Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 1334; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 7; Ephraim Isaac, “1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in *OTP*, 1:5–7.

³Or, in some versions, Semihazah.

“that he may be sent into the fire on the great day of judgment” (10:6).⁴ Semyaz and the other Watchers who had intercourse with human women are sentenced to watch as their offspring, the giants, are destroyed, and then similarly bound to await judgment “for seventy generations underneath the rocks of the ground until the day of their judgment and of their consummation, until the eternal judgment is concluded” (10:12; see also 19:1). Until this judgment, however, the spirits of the slain giants will remain on the earth as evil spirits, continuing to oppress and seeking to cause harm to mankind (15:8–12). The end of their activity will come at the “day of the great conclusion” (16:1), when final and eternal judgment will fall upon these evil spirits and the Watchers alike. The *Book of Watchers*, thus, contains an etiology for the nature of demons and an expectation of their ultimate defeat.

First Enoch also preserves evidences the connection between the nations of the earth and angelic figures. In particular, the author at times alludes to the idea of patron angels found in Daniel 10 and Deuteronomy 32. In a list of archangels, Michael is said to be “over the people and the nations,” while Saraqa’el is “over the spirits of mankind who sin in the spirit” (20:5–6).⁵ In the section known as the *Animal Apocalypse* (85–90),⁶ the author pictures Israel under the care of seventy “shepherds,” who are seen as responsible for the suffering experienced by the nation (89:59ff). These “shepherds” are best understood as angelic figures, as in 20:5–6, functioning similarly to the patron angels mentioned in the OT.⁷ Tiller aptly states that these angelic shepherds are

⁴English translations of Second Temple texts, unless otherwise noted, are taken from *OTP*.

⁵So also Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 295–96.

⁶The *Animal Apocalypse* is generally dated to the mid-second century BC. For a helpful discussion of the issues and scholarship related to the dating of the work, see Patrick A. Tiller, *A Commentary on the Animal Apocalypse of “1 Enoch,”* Early Judaism and Its Literature, vol. 4 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 61–79.

⁷For a brief argument on understanding the shepherds as angels, see Tiller, *The Animal Apocalypse of “1 Enoch,”* 51–54; Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 390.

one of the primary means . . . by which we are meant to understand the troubles and dangers of this life from the perspective of the ancient, mythical past. Just as the tremendous evil and violence that led up to the Deluge was at least in part caused by demonic forces, so the troubles that beset exilic (and postexilic) Israel are caused in part by demonic forces.⁸

From the traditions within *1 Enoch*, therefore, there are certain spirits (Watchers) who are imprisoned in some temporary holding place, whereas members of the demonic realm currently active on the earth find their origin in the spirits of the slain giants. These spirits exert influence, both on an individual and a national level, over the inhabitants of the earth. This understanding of angels and demons was pervasive in early Jewish and Christian texts, and many other such apocalyptic works made use of this tradition, or at least reflected a similar understanding of heavenly and demonic spirits.⁹

Jubilees

The book of *Jubilees* (mid-second century BC) is written as a revelation from the Lord to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Exod 24:18), consisting mostly of a retelling of the history of the nation of Israel up to the giving of the Law.¹⁰ *Jubilees* builds upon the tradition of the Watchers, expanding the role of the evil spirits and their leader—here called Mastema and Satan—beyond the era of the flood into the history of Israel. The account of the fall of the Watchers and the birth of the giants is retold (4:15; 5:1–2; 7:21), as well as the account of their binding until the eschatological day of judgment (5:6–11).¹¹ As in *The Book of Watchers*, evil spirits remain on the earth following the flood,

⁸Tiller, *The Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch*, 52–53.

⁹For more on the influence of the Enochic corpus in Jewish and Christian texts, see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 71–106.

¹⁰The prevailing view of the date of *Jubilees* is that of Vanderkam, who suggested a date of composition between 163–152 BC. See James C. Vanderkam, *Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees*, HSM, vol. 14 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 283. For a full discussion on the dating of *Jubilees*, see *ibid.*, 207–85. A slightly later date than Vanderkam’s (though still within the Second Temple Jewish period) has also been proposed. see Michael Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology, and Theology*, JSJSup, vol. 117 (Leiden: Brill, 2007) 35–40, 319–22.

¹¹Kugel suggests this binding of the wicked angels serves to rectify the exegetical “problem” of Gen 9:11, where God promises never to flood the earth again. “Why should He have promised such a thing? . . . It must have been that God did something—restrained the wicked angels—that would prevent humanity as a whole from going astray again.” See James L. Kugel, *A Walk through “Jubilees:” Studies in*

spreading sickness and disease (10:12–13) and oppressing the sons and grandchildren of Noah (10:1–2), causing him to cry out to the Lord for protection. Here *Jubilees* differs slightly from *The Book of Watchers*, as the Lord empowers Noah to bind the evil spirits, but relents when Mastema pleads that the Lord leave a tenth of the evil spirits under his control, while the rest are bound in judgment (10:8–9). Thus the presence of evil spirits on the earth is seen as an allowance by the Lord so Satan may exercise his limited authority on the earth through them. The presence of this small remnant of wicked angels also serves to explain the persistence of evil after the flood.¹²

Mastema continues to exert his influence throughout the narrative, acting as the primary opponent to God’s people and an instigator of sin and wickedness (11:4). In the retelling of the call to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Mastema is pictured as the instigator of this trial, much akin to the role of Satan in the early chapters of Job.¹³ Mastema accuses Abraham before God that he loves Isaac more than Yahweh himself, thereby enticing the Lord to allow the testing in the commanded sacrifice (17:16). When Abraham proves himself obedient, the text notes, “Prince Mastema was shamed” (18:12). In *Jubilees*’ account of the call of Moses and the exodus, Mastema again plays an expanded role. In the account of Moses returning to Egypt to begin the process of deliverance, Exodus states that the Lord met him along the path and sought to put him to death on account of his failure to circumcise his son (Exod 4:24–26). *Jubilees* retells this account with Mastema as the one sent to execute Moses, because “he saw that [Moses was] sent to execute judgment and vengeance upon the Egyptians” (*Jub.* 48:2–3). The presence of Mastema here serves to smooth out the interpretive difficulties in Exodus, as it is not obvious why the Lord would seek to put Moses to death shortly after

the “*Book of Jubilees*” and the *World of its Creation*, JSJSup, vol. 156 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 52.

¹²So also Kugel, *A Walk through “Jubilees,”* 83n149.

¹³So also Segal, *Jubilees*, 190–91.

commissioning him to return to Egypt to liberate his people.¹⁴ Similarly, Mastema is pictured as the one who empowers Pharaoh's magicians in their dark arts as they attempt to replicate the miracles performed by Moses and Aaron.¹⁵ Finally, Pharaoh's decision to pursue Israel to the Red Sea, following the tenth plague, is also said to be incited by Mastema. In each case, the Lord delivers his people from the attacks of their cosmic enemy.

Jubilees, therefore, continues the solidification of Satan as the ultimate cosmic enemy of Yahweh and his people, building and expanding on traditions seen in *I Enoch*. Mastema is the explicit leader of the demonic realm and opposes the people of God, but his power is limited and his plans are frequently thwarted by the Lord. Whereas the OT might depict Israel's trials and struggles at the hands of human opponents (such as the Egyptians), their enemies now are conflated into their singular cosmic enemy. The OT narrative of the exodus portrays Yahweh's deliverance as a judgment and victory over the gods of Egypt, yet *Jubilees* makes no mention of these pagan deities at all, instead picturing the victory as won over Satan himself. Satan's work, therefore, is pictured in terms of the opposition to Israel by their earthly enemies.

Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* are pseudepigraphical accounts of the last utterances of the twelve sons of Jacob prior to their death, containing both retellings of significant events in their lives as well as statements about the future of their descendants, similar to the testament of Jacob found in Genesis 49.¹⁶ The dating of these

¹⁴Segal notes that in this change of agency from Yahweh to Mastema, coupled with the explanation given, "The rewriter thus transformed the independent story of Exod 4:24–26, which has no direct connection to the surrounding story, into an integral part of the general narrative sequence." Segal, *Jubilees*, 206.

¹⁵Kuger suggests the implication of Mastema's power at work in the magicians helps to explain how these servants of Pharaoh could have supernatural capabilities. Kuger, *Jubilees*, 196. So also Segal, *Jubilees*, 214–15.

¹⁶As to the nature of the work, Hollander and de Jonge write, "The Testaments are obviously a

writings has been the subject of much debate, with some scholars arguing for a Jewish origin in the second century BC with some Christian interpolations likely made around the second century AD, while most today suggest the work is a product of early Christianity.¹⁷ Like *Jubilees*, these texts reflect traditions found in *1 Enoch*, while also expanding on the role of Satan—most frequently called Beliar (cf. “Belial” in 2 Cor 6:15)—as the cosmic archenemy of God and his people. The tradition of the Watchers is present, their fall being connected with the “will of Beliar” (*T. Naph.* 3:1, 5). The worldview of the testaments is more explicitly dualistic than that of the OT, as the angels of the Lord and of Beliar are seen in direct conflict with one another (*T. Ash.* 6:4), and turning away from the Lord is seen as turning to Beliar (*T. Ash.* 1:8–9; 3:2).

Human sin is also frequently pictured as instigated by Beliar and his angels. Anger, pride, sexual promiscuity, deceit, and murder all find their source in Satan.¹⁸ As Hollander and de Jonge note, “Several times, we notice that (personified) vices and the spirits of these vices are mentioned together, and are virtually interchangeable.”¹⁹ Additionally, specific sins and conflicts are also incited by the will of Beliar. The attack on Joseph by his brothers was sparked by Beliar (*T. Dan* 1:7), as was the solicitation for sexual immorality by Potiphar’s wife (*T. Jos.* 7:4).²⁰ Those who apostatize in the last

literary composition, for which the author used traditions from various sources. He was particularly interested in haggadic details concerning the sons of Jacob which he could use to illustrate his work.” H. W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary*, SVTP, vol. 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 27.

¹⁷For a Jewish origin, see H. C. Kee, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in *OTP*, 1:777–78; R. H. Charles, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Translated from the Editor’s Greek Text and Edited, with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1908). Hollander and de Jonge treat the work as essentially a Christian work. While acknowledging that a Jewish form of the Testaments may have existed prior to their Christian redaction, they suggest that making such a determination is “practically impossible.” Hollander, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, 85. For a comprehensive treatment of the history of scholarship, see H. Dixon Slingerland, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical History of Research*, SBLMS, vol. 21 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977).

¹⁸See, e.g., *T. Reub.* 3:2–7; 4:7–11; *T. Sim.* 5:2–3; *T. Dan* 1:7; 3:6; 5:6; *T. Benj.* 6:1–7:2.

¹⁹Hollander, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, 50. See, e.g., *T. Dan* 1:3, 8; 2:2, 4; 3:1, 6.

²⁰See Hollander, who notes, “The ‘spirit of Beliar’ cannot be separated from the ‘passion of the evil desire’ [v. 8] which is effected by it.” Hollander, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, 385. Twelftree

days are described as those who “ally themselves with Beliar” (*T. Iss.* 6:1).

The influence of Beliar is also manifested in conflict and oppression between humans on earth. The author of the Testament of Benjamin exhorts the readers towards love of neighbor and good deeds, claiming,

Even if *the spirits of Beliar* seek to derange you with all sorts of wicked oppression, they will not dominate you, any more than they dominated Joseph, my brother. *How many men* wanted to destroy him, and God looked out for him! For the person who fears God and loves his neighbor cannot be plagued by *the spirit of Beliar* since he is sheltered by the fear of God. Neither *man’s schemes* [nor] those of animals can prevail over him. (*T. Benj.* 3:3–5, emphasis added)

Note the ease with which the author moves between the agent of oppression as Beliar and men. Further, Beliar is also identified with the nation of Egypt as a whole. In the Testament of Joseph, the author speaks of the time of the exodus, when Israel is oppressed by Egypt and promises, “The Lord will be with you in the Light, while Beliar will be with the Egyptians in the dark” (*T. Jos.* 20:2). Like in Jubilees, then, the author pictures Israel’s conflict with Egypt in terms of Yahweh’s conflict with Satan himself, rather than merely over the gods of Egypt (cf. Exod 12:12). Conversely, those who turn from sin and error and draw near to the Lord are said to experience victory over Beliar. After an exhortation to repent from “envy and hardness of heart” (*T. Sim* 6:2), the promise is given, “Then all the spirits of error shall be given over to being trampled underfoot. And men will have mastery over the evil spirits” (6:6).²¹

The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* also contain several references to the eschatological defeat of Satan. Dan’s sons are exhorted to be on guard against “Satan and his spirits” because “the enemy is eager to trip up all who call on the Lord, because he knows that on the day in which Israel trusts, the enemy’s kingdom will be brought to an

notes that *T. Jos.* 3:6 describes Potiphar’s wife’s persistent “annoying” of Joseph using the word ἐνοχλέω, which is used in other literature (including Luke 6:18) to refer to the activity of spirits in oppressing humans. Graham Twelftree, “Exorcism and the Defeat of Beliar in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” *VC* 65 (2011): 176–77.

²¹See also Twelftree, “Exorcism and the Defeat of Beliar,” 178–79.

end” (*T. Dan* 6:1–4). This doom is made more explicit elsewhere, “There shall no more be Beliar’s spirit of error, because he will be thrown into eternal fire” (*T. Jud.* 25:3). The Lord “will make war against Beliar; he will grant the vengeance of victory” (*T. Dan* 5:10). The line of Levi, in particular, is said to play a prominent role in this eschatological victory, where a priest will emerge in the last days, “And Beliar shall be bound by him. And he shall grant to his children the authority to trample on wicked spirits” (*T. Lev.* 18:12).²²

In addition to the reaffirmation of the Watcher tradition, therefore, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* contributes to the Jewish cosmic conflict portrayal by depicting Satan as the source and instigator of all evil and deceit, both in individuals and corporately in nations. The identification of Beliar with Egypt demonstrates how the earthly conflict of Israel finds its parallel in the heavenly conflict between Yahweh and his cosmic enemy, Satan. Further, the Testaments show an eschatological expectation that Satan would be bound and vanquished in the last days through a messianic figure.

Qumran

The writings of the Qumran community contain some of the clearest expressions of the role and activity of Satan, as well as cosmic conflict. Satan is called Belial most frequently, but also has other titles such as the “Angel of Darkness” and the “Angel of Malevolence,” often contrasted with the “Prince of Light” and the “Angel of Truth.” This kind of spiritual dualism is one of the Qumran community’s most defining characteristics. Belial and his angels are pictured as the cosmic counterpart to Yahweh and his angels. These spiritual forces of darkness are depicted as the enemies of Yahweh and his people, and are seen as the instigators of all evil and persecution upon the earth.

²²Judah also is mentioned in association with Satan’s eschatological defeat (*T. Jud.* 1:6; 24:1–6; *T. Dan* 5:10), as is God himself (*T. Zeb.* 9:8). See also Kee, “Testaments,” 1:779. Hollander and de Jonge call *T. Lev.* 18 and *T. Jud.* 24 “clearly Christian in their present form.” Hollander, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, 63.

The following excerpt from the Community Rule (1QS) serves to illustrate these themes well:

He has created man to govern man to govern the world, and has appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of His visitation: the spirits of truth and injustice. Those born of truth spring from a fountain of light, but those born of injustice spring from a source of darkness. All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light, but all the children of injustice are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness. The Angel of Darkness leads all the children of righteousness astray, and until his end, all their sin, iniquities, wickedness, and all their unlawful deeds are caused by his dominion in accordance with the mysteries of God. Every one of their chastisements, and every one of the seasons of their distress, shall be brought about by the rule of his persecution; for all his allotted spirits seek the overthrow of the sons of light. But the God of Israel and His Angel of Truth will succour all the sons of light. For it is He who created the spirits of Light and Darkness and founded their every action upon them and established every deed [upon] their [ways]. (1QS 3.17–25)²³

In addition, several references exist to the tradition of the Watchers from *1 Enoch*, both of their sexual union with human women as well as their giant offspring.²⁴

The most important text of the Qumran literature for the Jewish depiction of cosmic conflict is found in the *War Scroll* (1QM).²⁵ This document, likely composed in between mid-second century BC and mid-first century BC, details the eschatological expectation of the war between the “sons of light” and the “sons of darkness.”²⁶ Collins

²³D. Barthélemy, and J. T. Milik, *Qumran Cave I*, DJD I:107–30 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955). For the sake of readability, English translations of this and following Qumran texts are taken from Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2004). Collins notes that this section is partly influenced by the sapiential tradition of Ben Sira and others, but there is also an apocalyptic dimension to it as well. He concludes, “The dualism is simultaneously psychological, moral, and cosmic. There is a synergism between the psychological realm and the agency of the supernatural angels or demons.” John J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in The Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Routledge, 1997), 41.

²⁴E.g., 4Q1801.5–10; CD 2.14–20, where giants are not mentioned by name, but it is said that the offspring of the Watchers “were tall as cedar trees and whose bodies were like mountains.” J. M. Baumgarten, *Qumran Cave 4.XIII: The Damascus Document (4Q266–273)*, DJD XVIII (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). In the *Genesis Apocryphon*, Lamech wonders whether his son, Noah, is really his offspring or that of the Watchers (1QapGen 2.1–10).

²⁵Milik, *Qumran Cave I*, 135–36.

²⁶For a discussion of the dating of the *War Scroll*, see Jean Duhaime, *The War Texts: 1QM and Related Manuscripts*, Companion to the Qumran Scrolls, vol. 6 (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 64–101. Yigael Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*, trans. by Batya and Chaim Rabin (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 243–46.

rightly notes that, unlike other apocalyptic works, “Its purpose is not to disclose what will happen, . . . but to prescribe the appropriate actions in the light of what is known to be at hand.”²⁷ The *War Scroll* portrays the battle as between spiritual forces as well as earthly forces, and most significantly, the spiritual forces are depicted as closely related to the earthly forces. The opening verses of the scroll pictures the conflict between the “sons of light against the company of the sons of darkness, the army of Belial: against the hand of Edom, Moab, and the sons of Ammon, and . . . the Philistines, and against the bands of the Kittim of Assyria” (1QM 1.1–2). The army of Belial is therefore depicted in the armies of these hostile nations surrounding Israel.²⁸ Similarly, the sons of light are aided by heavenly forces as well. No soldier may participate in the battle if he is ritually impure, “for the holy angels shall be with their hosts” (1QM 7.6). The names of the archangels—Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Sariel—are written on shields in battle towers, symbolizing their presence with the army (1QM 9.15). Further, in line with the OT tradition of God as the divine warrior, the *War Scroll* recognizes that the ultimate power and means of victory are through the hand of Yahweh. The author writes, “Truly the battle is Thine and the power from Thee! It is not ours. Our strength and the power of our hands accomplish no mighty deeds except by Thy power and by the might of Thy great valour” (1 QM 11.5). Yadin explains the sect’s hope of victory, “Israel will overcome her enemies because God Himself and His angels fight in Israel’s ranks.”²⁹

All these elements point toward the central theme of the eschatological battle depicted in the *War Scroll*—these earthly and cosmic forces are intertwined and the victory of one is implied in the victory of the other. In the opening passage of the *War*

²⁷Collins, *Apocalypticism in The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 93.

²⁸See also 1QM 11.8–9, where the “hordes of Belial” are described as “the seven nations of vanity.” Collins argues that the *War Scroll* envisions war with Rome, which ultimately resulted in the destruction of the community at the hands of the Roman armies. *Ibid.*, 108–9.

²⁹Yadin, *Scroll of the War*, 237. See also Duhaime, *The War Texts*, 106–10.

Scroll, the author depicts the great battle, frequently shifting between a description of a battle between spiritual forces and between earthly forces:

On the day when the Kittim fall, there shall be battle and terrible carnage before the God of Israel, for that shall be the day appointed from ancient times for the battle of destruction of the sons of darkness. At that time, the assembly of gods and the hosts of men shall battle, causing great carnage; on the day of calamity, the sons of light shall battle with the company of darkness amid the shouts of a mighty multitude and the clamour of gods and men to (make manifest) the might of God. And it shall be a time of [great] tribulation for the people which God shall redeem; of all its afflictions none shall be as this, from its sudden beginning until its end in eternal redemption.

On the day of their battle against the Kittim [they shall set out for] carnage. In three lots shall the sons of light brace themselves in battle to strike down iniquity, and in three lots Belial's host gird itself to thrust back the company [of God. And when the hearts of the detach]ments of foot-soldiers faint, then shall the might of God fortify [the hearts of the sons of light]. And with the seventh lot, the mighty hand of God shall bring down [the army of Belial, and all] the angels of his kingdom, and all the members [of his company in everlasting destruction]. (1QM 1.9–15)

Thus this battle is depicted as a time of great suffering for the sons of light, but ultimately ushers in the eschatological blessing of God and final victory against the spiritual and earthly forces of darkness. Other passages within the *War Scroll* reinforce this idea of the battle as the eschatological defeat of Satan, leading to “everlasting destruction for all the company of Belial,” but “a time of salvation” and “an age of dominion” for the people of God (1QM 1.5).³⁰

The writings of the Qumran community, therefore, continue to develop the traditions of the demonic activity begun by the Watchers and their offspring, using a dualistic framework to picture their activity in contrast to Yahweh and his angels. The spirits of Belial cause destruction and wickedness upon the earth, but the sons of light are guarded by Yahweh, ultimately resulting in a climactic and eschatological battle whereby the forces of darkness are forever defeated. This battle will be a time of great tribulation for the sons of light as they suffer momentary defeats at the hands of the sons of

³⁰See also 1QM 13.11–12; 15.2–3; 18.1–3.

darkness, but ultimately the power of God at work among them results in victory and eschatological blessing.

Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah

The *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* is an account of the end of Isaiah's life, executed at the hands of Manasseh, son of Hezekiah. Scholars today generally agree that the work is a Christian product of the early second century AD.³¹ The author pictures the work of Satan in the heart of king Manasseh, who sentences Isaiah to death and carries out his sentence with a wood saw (5:1). Repeatedly in the text, Satan—also called Beliar and Sammael—is said to dwell in Manasseh's heart, giving rise to his wickedness (1:8–9; 2:1; 3:11–12; 5:1). Beliar is called “the angel of iniquity who rules this world” (2:2–4; cf. 4:2), and his influence results in a rise of wicked behavior, including “sorcery and magic, augury and divination, [and] fornication and adultery” (2:5).

The *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* also contains one of the most explicit connections between the heavenly and earthly realms. Starting in 6:1, the author describes a vision that Isaiah saw, wherein he travels through the seven heavens. In the beginning of the vision, in the “firmament,” Isaiah sees Sammael and his demons engaged in “a great struggle” (7:9). The author then states, “And as above, so also on earth, for the likeness of what (is) in the firmament is here on earth” (7:10). When Isaiah asks about what he sees, he is told by his angelic guide, “So it has been ever since this world existed until now, and this struggle (will last) until the one comes whom you are to see, and he will destroy him” (7:12). The struggle in the firmament is thereby connected

³¹Charles suggested that the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* was a composite work put together in the early Christian era, containing three different works: The Testament of Hezekiah, the Martyrdom of Isaiah, and the Vision of Isaiah. While the Ascension was a Christian document, therefore, it contained traditions that could be dated to the second century BC. See R. H. Charles, *The Ascension of Isaiah* (London: A & C Black, 1900), xxxvi–xliii. See also M. A. Knibb, “Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah,” in *OTP*, 2:147–50. For a discussion of the dating of the work in modern scholarship, see Jonathan Knight, *The Ascension of Isaiah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 9–26. Despite its composition in the second century BC, the work still reflects traditions which are likely common to first-century Christians (e.g., Isaiah's execution in being sawn in two in 5:1; cf. Heb. 11:37).

to struggle upon the earth, both of which will be brought to an end by the awaited Messiah in the eschaton.

Of particular importance to this study, this struggle informs the connection the author makes between the sinful actions of Manasseh and other human actors and the influence of Satan. The text does not portray the conflict between nations as the result of this cosmic struggle as do some other texts, but instead the conflict between these wicked rulers and the righteous individuals within the kingdom. After describing the sins brought about through the work of Satan in the heart of Manasseh, the author says, “the persecution of the righteous increased,” ultimately culminating in the dramatic martyrdom of Isaiah himself (2:5). McKnibb writes, “Behind Isaiah, his fellow prophets and followers, stands God himself; over against them are ranged Manasseh and his court, and Belkira and the other false prophets, the earthly representatives of the spiritual forces of evil.”³² In this way, the cosmic conflict pictured in the Ascension of Isaiah is closer to that of 1 Peter and the NT rather than earlier portrayals.³³ Thus, for the author, the influence of Satan was not just felt on earth between kings who served either Yahweh or Satan, but in the oppression and persecution from a wicked king upon the righteous even within his own kingdom.

Sibylline Oracles

The *Sibylline Oracles* provide a helpful glimpse at the relationship of eschatology and cosmic conflict with suffering in the first century, although most likely the work postdates the composition of 1 Peter. Sections of the oracles date back to the mid-second century, but Christian interpolations throughout date sometime after AD 70

³²Michael A. McKnibb, “The Martyrdom of Isaiah,” in *Outside the Old Testament*, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish And Christian World: 200 B.C. to A.D. 200, vol. 4, ed. M. de Jonge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 181.

³³Knight suggests that the author was familiar with 1 Peter, at least 1 Pet 3:22, as evidenced by the direct parallel in *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 1:3. See Knight, *The Ascension of Isaiah*, 48.

at the earliest.³⁴ The oracles are highly eschatological in nature; Collins says they are “dominated by eschatology.”³⁵ This eschatological focus often serves the function of political propaganda, using apocalyptic imagery to describe an end-time kingdom inhabited by the righteous (e.g., 2:174–186). Book 3 of the oracles contains one such prophecy, speaking of the return of Beliar, who will “perform many signs” and “lead men astray,” even of the faithful Hebrews. Yet at the time of judgment, Beliar and those who follow him will be condemned by a “burning power” from God (3:63–74). Collins suggests this is a Christian interpolation sometime after AD 70, alluding to Nero, personified in the satanic figure of Beliar, returning with a conquering army.³⁶ Though this satanic identification with a hostile ruler is most likely later than 1 Peter and the NT, its presence serves to indicate an unbroken chain of the depiction of cosmic conflict, nascent in the early OT and now widespread in the time of the composition of the NT.

Suffering in Other Second Temple Texts

The above examples show the influence and activity of Satan as it relates to conflict on earth and human suffering. Other texts in the Second Temple period also provide an explanation and backdrop for human suffering, but in different terms. Rather than picturing the defeat of the nation as a product of the cosmic conflict between heavenly forces, these texts highlight the purposes of the Lord in bringing judgment and chastisement upon the nation for its sins. Here, suffering is a result of the effects of the sin of the nation before a time of eschatological vindication for Israel and judgment upon

³⁴John J. Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1983), 1:322. For an extended discussion of the date of the third sibyl, cited below, see John J. Collins, *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism*, SBLDS 13 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974), 21–33.

³⁵Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” 323.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 1:360. See also, e.g., 5:93–110, 214–27, 361–85; 8:68–73, 139–50. For a larger discussion of the identification of Nero with Belial, see Collins, *Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism*, 80–87.

the nations. These texts, therefore, do not emphasize the role of Satan and the demonic realm, but are helpful nonetheless in observing the overall understanding of suffering in the time of 1 Peter. In the following sections, I will examine the writings of 2 and 4 Maccabees, 2 *Baruch*, and 4 *Ezra* and detail their presentation of the purposes of the Lord in suffering and the hope of eschatological vindication.

Maccabean literature. The writings of 2 and 4 Maccabees depict events that took place in mid-second century BC Palestine in the time of Seleucid rule. Second Maccabees was likely composed between the late-second century BC and mid-first century BC, whereas 4 Maccabees is typically dated to the late-first century AD to the early-second century AD.³⁷ Both writings serve, in part, as an exhortation to the Jewish people to live in obedience to the law of God rather than capitulate to the social pressures of the day. Both works present the steadfastness of martyrs in the face of torture and death, and record their defiance of their Greek oppressors. The Jews in the Maccabean literature, therefore, experienced suffering and violent persecution on account of their religious convictions, in similar fashion to the Christians addressed in 1 Peter (although the sufferings in Maccabees are markedly more violent).

In contrast to other Second Temple literature, the Maccabean works make no mention of Satan or demonic forces in relation to their suffering and oppression. Instead, for these authors, the ultimate cause for their suffering was found in God himself as a

³⁷The precise dating of these works is a subject of much debate. For the present purpose, however, the range of dates offered above is sufficient, since my intention is merely to discuss the development of traditions relating to suffering and cosmic forces. For discussion of issues related to dating 2 Maccabees, see Robert Doran, *2 Maccabees: A Critical Commentary*, Hermeneia, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 14–15; Daniel R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 11–15; Jonathan A. Goldstein, *2 Maccabees*, AB, vol. 41A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 71–83; Jan Willem van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees*, JSJSup, vol. 57 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 50–56. For the dating of 4 Maccabees, see Elias Bickerman, “The Date of Fourth Maccabees,” in *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, pt. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 266–71; H. Anderson, “4 Maccabees,” in OTP, 2:533–34; David A. deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, Septuagint Commentary Series (Leiden: Brill, 2006), xiv–xvii; van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours*, 73–81.

reaction to and punishment for their own sin. After detailing the first martyrs in 2 Maccabees 6:10–11, the author breaks from the narrative briefly to exhort the readers to take courage, writing,

Now I call upon the readers of this book not to be depressed due to the sufferings, but rather to consider that the punishments were not to destroy our nation, but, rather, to edify it. For not to allow evildoers a free hand for a long time, but, rather, immediately to bring down punishments upon them, is a sign of great benefaction. For whereas concerning other peoples the Sovereign long-forbearingly awaits them until they reach the plentitude of sins, whereupon He punishes them, He did not deem it appropriate to handle us this way, so as not to take vengeance upon us later, after our sins are complete. Therefore He never removes His mercy from us, and while edifying us with suffering He does not abandon His own people. (2 Macc 6:12–16).³⁸

This suffering is therefore not only seen as a chastisement of the nation for its sins, but as a mercy. In framing the suffering thus, the author portrays God as in full control, despite the seemingly helpless position of the Jews. In the following chapter, the author details the martyrdom of seven sons and their mother. The sixth of these brothers cries out before his death, “We are suffering these things on our own account, having sinned against our God” (2 Macc 7:18; see also v. 38). Similarly to the OT, then, the oppression of the Jewish people must not be attributed by the failure of the Lord to act, but as a direct result of his chastisement of the nation (see Deut 32:27–30; 2 Kgs 17:7–23; Isa 10:5–7).

The author of 4 Maccabees makes use of the same historical events as 2 Maccabees, though with a more explicitly philosophical purpose of demonstrating that “devout reason is absolute master of the passions” (4 Macc 1:1).³⁹ In recounting the same martyrdoms detailed in 2 Maccabees, the author also hints at the same explanation of the suffering and persecution experienced by the Jewish people. In the account of Eleazar’s death, the author recounts his words as he cries out to the Lord, “You know, O God, that

³⁸English translations from 2 Maccabees taken from Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*.

³⁹English translations of 4 Maccabees taken from Anderson, “4 Maccabees.”

though I could have saved myself I am dying in these fiery torments for the sake of the Law. Be merciful to your people and let our punishment be a satisfaction on their behalf. Make my blood their purification and take my life as a ransom for theirs” (4 Macc 6:27–29; cf. 2 Macc 6:31). deSilva writes, “Eleazar offers his obedience to the law to the point of death as a manifestation of that return to obedience that would invite God’s compassion upon the nation.”⁴⁰ Later, as the author reflects on these martyrs, he writes, “The tyrant was punished and our land purified, since they became, as it were, a ransom for the sin of our nation. Through the blood of these righteous ones and through the propitiation of their death the divine providence rescued Israel.” (4 Macc 17:21–22). In declaring these martyrs to atone for the sins of the nation, therefore, the author writes in accord with the notion in 2 Maccabees that the sin of Israel is responsible for the present suffering.

2 Baruch. The apocalyptic work of *2 Baruch* was composed in the late-first to early-second century AD, and is similar in nature and content to *4 Ezra*.⁴¹ The work was written in response to the destruction of the temple at the hands of the Romans in AD 70, but the setting within the book is shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC.⁴² The author portrays Baruch struggling to understand the purposes of the Lord in the midst of the suffering of the Jewish people in the wake of their defeat at the hands of their enemies. The book of *2 Baruch*, then, seeks to provide a reason for suffering, but does not rely upon the cosmic figure of Satan.⁴³ Rather, the explanation for the suffering of the

⁴⁰deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 147.

⁴¹On the date of *2 Baruch*, see Gwendolyn B. Sayler, *Have the Promises Failed? A Literary Analysis of 2 Baruch*, SBLDS 72 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 103–10; A. F. J. Klijn, “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch,” in *OTP*, 1:616–17. On the similarity between *2 Bar.* and *4 Ezra*, see Sayler, *Promises*, 123–34; Tom W. Willett, *Eschatology in the Theodicies of 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra*, JSPSup, vol. 4 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 121–24.

⁴²Klijn, “2 Baruch,” 615.

⁴³Note, however, the isolated reference to the “angel of death” in 21:23: “Therefore, reprove the angel of death, and let your glory appear, and let the greatness of your beauty be known, and let the

people is found in the chastisement of God himself, similar to 2 and 4 Maccabees. In response to Baruch's lament that the enemies of Jerusalem profane the name of the Lord in their conquest, the Lord responds, "My name and my glory shall last unto eternity. My judgment, however, shall assert its rights in its own time. And you shall see with your eyes that *the enemy shall not destroy Zion and burn Jerusalem, but that they shall serve the Judge for a time*" (5:2–3, emphasis added).⁴⁴ In destroying Jerusalem, therefore, the Babylonians (and, therefore, the Romans) are not pictured as the agent of Satan, but of the "Judge," God himself.

This judgment is not given arbitrarily, but rather is the just chastisement by the Lord for the sins of the people. The book of *2 Baruch*, then, places a strong emphasis on human responsibility and on resulting judgment. So great is this emphasis on human sin and responsibility that in *2 Baruch's* preservation of the myth of the Watchers, it is the humans who corrupted the Watchers rather than vice versa (56:10–16). The book begins by recording the words of the Lord to Baruch, "Have you seen all that this people are doing to me, the evil things which the two tribes which remained have done? . . . Therefore, I shall bring evil upon this city and its inhabitants. And it will be taken away from before my presence for a time." (1:2–4). Later Baruch himself prays,

Those who do not love your Law are justly perishing. And the torment of judgment will fall upon those who have not subjected themselves to your power. For, although Adam sinned first and brought death upon all who were not in his own time, yet each of them who has been born from him has prepared for himself the coming torment. . . . Adam is, therefore, not the cause, except only for himself, but each of us has become our own Adam. (54:14–19)

Present suffering is, therefore, the righteous judgment on the sin of the nation and of individuals.

The author of *2 Baruch*, however, also holds out an eschatological hope for the

realm of death be sealed so that it may not receive the dead from this time, and let the treasuries of the souls restore those who are enclosed in them."

⁴⁴English translations taken from Klijn, "2 Baruch."

end of suffering and vindication for the people of God. Baruch prays concerning the coming judgment, “At the end of the world, a retribution will be demanded with regard to those who have done wickedly in accordance with their wickedness, and you will glorify the faithful ones in accordance with their faith. For those who are among your own, you rule; and those who sin, you blot out among your own” (54:21–22). The apocalypse in chapters 26–30 tell of a time of even greater suffering, divided into twelve parts (27:1–15), followed by the advent of the Messiah (29:3), who brings about destruction for the wicked (30:4–5) and vindication and resurrection for the righteous (30:1–3). The readers are therefore encouraged to take hope, because suffering is necessary before the coming of the Messiah and ultimate vindication. As Willett writes, the emphasis on eschatology in *2 Baruch* is not present “to supply esoteric data about the eschaton, but rather to offer help to the person struggling with the problem of evil. . . . Retribution will occur; the wicked will be punished for their wickedness and the righteous will be rewarded for their righteousness.”⁴⁵

4 Ezra. Like *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra* was written around the end of the first century AD in response to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70, but the literary setting of the book takes place in sixth-century BC Babylon.⁴⁶ In the book, the pseudonymous author Ezra questions the Lord’s faithfulness and justice in the midst of the fall of Jerusalem. The first vision recorded in the book is in response to Ezra’s complaint as he lay “troubled” because of the “desolation of Zion and the wealth of those

⁴⁵Willett, *Eschatology in the Theodicies of 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra*, 118–19.

⁴⁶On the date of *4 Ezra*, see Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 9–10; Bruce W. Longenecker, *2 Esdras* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); Bruce M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” in *OTP*, 1:520. Some scholars have suggested that *4 Ezra* is composite in nature, with various segments pieced together by a redactor, but most scholars today argue for the basic unity of the work. For an in-depth survey of the history of scholarship on the integrity of *4 Ezra*, see Karina Martin Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra: Wisdom Debate and Apocalyptic Solution*, JSJSup, vol. 130 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 9–35; Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 11–23.

who lived in Babylon” (3:1–2).⁴⁷ Ezra acknowledges that judgment comes upon the nation because of its sin, in line with *2 Baruch* and Maccabees. However, Ezra’s complaint runs deeper, as he despairs that things will ever be different, since humanity is now cursed with an “evil heart” inherited from Adam. Of Adam, Ezra says, “For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him. Thus the disease became permanent” (3:21–22). Elsewhere he laments, “O Adam? What have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants. For what good is it to us, if an eternal age has been promised to us, but we have done the deeds of death?” (7:118–119).

The author of *4 Ezra*, then, agrees that the suffering of Israel comes about as a chastisement for sin. This issue of judgment is pressed further, however, on two fronts: (1) other nations do not appear to be punished for their sins in the same way as Israel; and (2) since sin is persistent in the hearts of fallen mankind, ultimate hope of redemption seems to be fleeting and unattainable. The Lord, often through the angel Uriel, responds to both problems by looking to the eschaton. Similarly to *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra* anticipates an intensification of suffering and evil until the time of the end (5:1–13), but which eventually results in the destruction of evil and vindication of the righteous (6:18–28). This turn in fortune coincides with the arrival of the Messiah, who will usher in the time of judgment when the wicked nations will be cast into hell. In this way, the first problem relating to the wickedness of the nations who oppress Israel is answered—their judgment is yet to come. As to the persistence of sin, Ezra’s only hope is found in his appeal to the mercy of God. In his third vision, Ezra prays, “For in truth there is no one among those who have been born who has not acted wickedly, and among those who have existed there is no one who has not transgressed. For in this, O Lord, your righteousness and goodness

⁴⁷English translations of *4 Ezra* taken from Metzger, “Ezra.”

will be declared, when you are merciful to those who have no store of good works” (8:35–36). Willett rightly calls this only a “partial answer,” since this hope is only subtly stated.⁴⁸ By the end of the work, however, Ezra is much more confident in his admonitions to the people, as he now plays the role of comforter to the people, saying, “Take courage, O Israel; and do not be sorrowful, O house of Jacob; for the Most High has you in remembrance, and the Mighty One has not forgotten you in your struggle” (12:46–47).

For the author of *4 Ezra*, therefore, God’s judgment upon sin is the reason for present suffering, and because of the “evil heart” that man inherits from Adam, only the mercy of God can enable Israel to stand in the final judgment. Similar to *2 Baruch* and the Maccabean literature then, the cause of suffering is found in God himself, rather than in demonic enemies opposed to his people. Each of these works, however, holds out hope for future vindication, either through the deaths of the martyrs (*4 Macc*), or in the eschatological judgment following a period of intense suffering upon the earth (*4 Ezra* and *2 Bar.*).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have surveyed the continuation and expansion of the OT themes of cosmic conflict into the Second Temple period, noting the emergence of a unified source of cosmic evil in the figure of Satan. From the time of *1 Enoch* through the early Christian period in the *Sibylline Oracles* and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, these Jewish writers increasingly recognized all cosmic evil subsumed in Satan and the various other names given to him. I have also argued that Satan’s influence was not limited to the heavenly realm, as the conflicts between peoples and nations was linked to Satan’s activity. I examined instances in which these writers either reinterpreted

⁴⁸Willett, *Eschatology in the Theodicies of 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra*, 71.

biblical events or applied this apocalyptic framework to their own times. For the author of *1 Enoch*, the rebellion in Noah's day was instigated by the sinful activity of the Watchers and their offspring. For the Qumran community, their coming struggle against the "sons of darkness" was a struggle not merely against their human opponents, but against Belial and his hordes of darkness. Further, I discussed various writings that do not mention the activity of Satan directly, but attribute suffering through foreign oppressors as the just chastisement of God upon the nation for its sins. Lastly, I noted the frequent expectation that Satan would face final judgment and destruction in the eschaton, while the righteous would experience vindication and victory over their enemies.

This brief survey is helpful in understanding the theological framework around Satan and cosmic conflict leading into the early Christian period. In order to gain further insight into this portrayal as it influences 1 Peter, however, we must now continue to explore the development of the doctrine of Satan and cosmic conflict in the NT writings.

CHAPTER 5

COSMIC CONFLICT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

By the time of the NT, the biblical authors have continued to expand on the nature and role of Satan as the cosmic archenemy of God and his people. Further, the NT authors frequently connect the conflict between heavenly beings with the conflict between human opponents. The major shift in the NT theology of cosmic conflict is marked by a redefinition of God's people—namely, a shift from the nation of Israel to the church. No longer is Yahweh depicted only as the deity of a particular nation, but the deity of all nations, from which his true people are called. Whereas the previous chapters argued that the connection between the cosmic and earthly realms was primarily viewed between Israel and the surrounding, hostile nations, here I intend to illustrate how the biblical authors instead depicted this conflict as occurring between the new people of God—the church—and those who stand against her, whether individuals or institutions. In this way, particularly in their portrayal of Jesus in victory over Satan and the demonic realm, the NT authors depict the church in ultimate—though as yet not fully realized—victory over their foes, whether from pagan oppressors of Rome or from Jewish opponents. Conversely, in depicting the suffering inflicted on Christians from their persecutors, the NT authors viewed the source of such activity as demonic in origin.

In this chapter, I will begin with a brief examination of the nature and function of Satan and the demonic realm in the NT. I will show how Satan is identified as the ultimate cosmic enemy of God and the ruler of this world, who oppresses humans and seeks to destroy the people of God by causing them to apostatize. I will then survey texts that depict Jesus' ministry in terms of conflict against Satan and the demonic realm,

ultimately resulting in his victory and exaltation through his death and resurrection. I will also suggest that the NT authors perceived a connection between the cosmic and human realms, both in how the enemies of God's people were depicted with Satanic imagery as well as how the church participates in this heavenly conflict. As with the previous chapters, this survey does not represent an exhaustive discussion of every text that mentions Satan and the demonic realm, but rather is intended as a representative study of passages that illustrate the above themes.

The Nature and Role of Satan in the NT

The development of the nature and role of Satan begun during the Second Temple period of Judaism is more solidified by the beginning of the NT era. In place of the deities of the surrounding nations depicted in the OT, the NT authors view Satan as the dualistic embodiment of evil and the source of temptation, who seeks to oppress and ultimately destroy the people of God in Christ. In place of the multiple names used for this cosmic archenemy in the Second Temple literature, the NT almost exclusively uses the labels *διάβολος* and *Σατανᾶς*.¹ Nevertheless, many aspects of the description of Satan remain consistent with these early Jewish depictions.

Satan is often held in parallel with God himself as the dualistic embodiment of evil. In place of the gods of the nations hostile to Israel, or the Canaanite chaos monsters Rahab and Leviathan, Satan and his demons are the cosmic alternative to Yahweh and his angels. Paul dismisses the legitimacy of idols by declaring, “what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God” (1 Cor 10:18–21; cf. Deut 32:17; Ps 95:5 LXX; Isa 65:11 LXX). The idols, then, have no ontological existence as gods, but are “really supernatural beings exercising their powers and knowledge for sinister aims.”² Likewise,

¹Though note Βεελζεβούλ in Matt 10:25; 12:24, 27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:14–19 and Βελιάρ in 2 Cor 6:15.

²F. C. Conybeare, “The Demonology of the New Testament,” *JQR* 8 (1896), 584. See also David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 481; Gordon D. Fee, *The First*

in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, he contrasts believers with unbelievers by using the three-fold imagery of light and darkness, Christ and Belial, and the temple of God and idols (2 Cor 6:14–16).³ Revelation, similarly, closely identifies the worship of “idols of gold” with the worship of demons (Rev 9:20). In the Pastoral Epistles, the author warns that those who depart from the faith will devote themselves “to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons” (1 Tim 4:1–3).⁴ And lastly, when Paul describes his ministry in Acts 26, he says that he was called to go to the Gentiles, “so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18). Therefore, those not in Christ are instead in the power of Satan.

Relatedly, the NT writers frequently refer to Satan as the “ruler of this world.” The Fourth Gospel uses this specific label three times, all in reference to Satan (12:31; 14:30; 16:11). In the Fourth Gospel, *ὁ κόσμος* is typically used symbolically of “fallen humanity in opposition to God.”⁵ Satan, then, as the ruler of the world, represents the ultimate cosmic opponent to Yahweh. Implied in this label, however, is the considerable influence that Satan exerts over the earth. As the ruler of the world, in some sense he holds sway over its inhabitants and their actions. This is seen in the Fourth Gospel by the identification of Jesus' greatest opponents, the religious leaders and Judas, as the

Epistle to the Corinthians, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 520–21.

³Second Corinthians 6:14–7:1 is disputed in its authenticity, with some arguing it is not original to Paul. See, e.g., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Qumran and the Interpolated Paragraph in II Cor. 6:14–7:1,” *CBQ* 23 (1961): 271–80; Hans Dieter Betz, “II Cor. 6:14–7:1: An Anti-Pauline Fragment?” *JBL* 92 (1973): 88–108; Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB, vol. 32A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 375–83. Against this position, see Gordon D. Fee, “II Corinthians 6:14–7:1 and Food Offered to Idols,” *NTS* 23 (1977): 140–61; Murray J. Harris *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 15–25. Due to the conceptual similarities with other passages cited in this paragraph, the authenticity of the passage is not determinative for my current purposes.

⁴Mounce rightly notes, “*διδασκαλίας δαιμονίων* does not mean that the opponents themselves are demon possessed . . . Rather, the phrase is saying that the opponents are the agents of demons.” William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 237. So also Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 290.

⁵Jason Alan Mackey, “The Light Overcomes the Darkness: Cosmic Conflict in the Fourth Gospel” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 74. For a more detailed examination of the usage of *ὁ κόσμος* in the Fourth Gospel, see *ibid.*, 105–20.

offspring of Satan and as under his influence. These texts will be examined in greater detail below.

The influence of Satan upon the earth as its ruler may also be observed in the temptation narrative in Matthew and Luke, when Satan takes Jesus to a high mountain to show him “all the kingdoms of the world and their glory” (Matt 4:8; par. Luke 4:5). Satan offers to give Jesus these kingdoms in exchange for his worship. Implicit in this offer is that the kingdoms are actually his to give. There is no indication in the text that Satan’s offer is illegitimate, as Jesus’ response centers around his refusal to bow down to anyone but the Lord rather than any insistence that those kingdoms were not actually under Satan’s control anyway. This is not to say that the NT authors limit God’s sovereignty in any kind of dualistic sense, but only that Satan is permitted influence of some kind over these earthly kingdoms. France’s summary captures the idea well: “[Satan] is understood to have real power in the present age, though always under the perspective of the ultimate victory of God. And as such he can offer power and glory, but not ultimate fulfillment, still less in accordance with the will of God.”⁶ In the same way that Deuteronomy 32 pictured different spirits as “patron” angels over the nations of the earth, so here the NT acknowledges that the kingdoms of the earth are ruled by the prince of the demons—Satan himself. Satan’s aims are not just the corruption of individuals, therefore, but of entire societal structures. Noll refers to Satan in this regard as a “backroom politician whose goal is to corrupt not only the human heart but human society as well,” ultimately bringing about “a terrestrial version of *pandemonium*, the city of darkness ruled over by a demonic prince.”⁷

⁶R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 135. Cf. Bock, who says the devil’s offer is best seen as “a mixture of truth and error” and an “oversell” at best. Darrell L. Bock *Luke 1:1–9:50*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 376.

⁷Stephen Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan & Principalities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 108; emphasis original.

Jesus' ministry—and particularly his death and resurrection—is the means by which the nations are freed from Satan's power. In foretelling his death, Jesus says, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out” (John 12:31).⁸ Prior to his betrayal, as Jesus speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit, he proclaims, “the ruler of this world is judged” (John 16:11). As Boyd writes,

In “this world,” in this present evil age, the “evil one” (17:15) exercises an illegitimate tyranny over the King's creation. Thus it is no surprise to discover that, according to John, the central reason why the Son of God appeared was to “destroy,” “drive out” and “condemn” this evil ruler (1 Jn 3:8; Jn 12:31; 16:11). Jesus has come quite literally to exorcise Satan out of the world, to restore God as the rightful ruler over humanity and humanity as the rightful ruler of the world.⁹

Other NT authors reflect this same understanding of the influence of Satan upon the earth as its ruler. Paul refers to Satan using the term τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος (Eph 2:2). For Paul and his readers, the “air” referred not so much to the atmosphere, but to the “dwelling place of evil spirits.”¹⁰ The ἄρχων this realm (ἐξουσία), then, is the ruler of the evil spirits, i.e., Satan. Significantly, Paul says that prior to Christ, the Ephesians walked under the power of (κατὰ) this “prince.”¹¹ For Paul, then, it is not merely the explicit enemies of God portrayed under the influence of Satan, but every person on earth apart from the grace of God in Christ. The author of 1 John explicitly states, “The whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19; see also 3:8–10).

⁸Brown rightly notes that the reference to the devil being cast out is “not a reference to Satan's expulsion from heaven but to his loss of authority over this world.” Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I–XII)*, AB, vol. 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 477. While this loss of authority is seen in part in Jesus' ministry (Luke 10:18), Carson writes, “The fundamental smashing of his reign of tyranny takes place in the death/exaltation of Jesus.” D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 443.

⁹Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), 229.

¹⁰Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of Its Historical Setting* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 60, citing PGM 1.97–194; IV.2699; *T. Benj.* 3:4. See also Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 125, citing Diogenes Laertius (*Vit. phil.* 8.32) and Plutarch (*Mor.* 274b).

¹¹Thielman describes the meaning of κατὰ here as living according to the standards of Satan. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 123.

The writer of Revelation describes a vision where he sees a woman seated on a scarlet beast (17:3), identified with Babylon. The angel explains that the woman represents “the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth” (v. 18). She, by extension, represents the power of all the kingdoms of the earth (v. 15). As Beale states, “She includes the entire evil economic-religious system of the world throughout history.”¹² The beast, identified with Satan, receives power from these nations. Aune contends, “Ten different autonomous kings surrendered their power to the beast, not because they were forced but because they found themselves in full agreement with the beast.”¹³ Yet the readers are not to despair, because in even this act the angel explains the sovereign plan of God that is at work, “For God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast” (v. 17). In this vision, therefore, the author sees the kingdoms of the earth, unified under the name “Babylon,” as under the authority of the great beast who makes war on Yahweh and his people (Rev 12).

In keeping with his status as the evil ruler of this world, Satan functions throughout the NT as the source of temptation to various sins including pride (1 Tim 3:6–7), sinful anger (Eph 4:25–27), greed and dishonesty (Acts 5:3), and sexual immorality (1 Cor 7:5; 1 Tim 5:14–15). Further, oftentimes human suffering and sickness is attributed to the oppression of the devil and the demonic realm. In Peter’s summary of Jesus’ ministry to Cornelius, he says that Jesus “went about doing good and healing (*ἰώμενος*) all who were oppressed by the devil” (Acts 10:37–38). Many instances in the Gospels of demon possession are accompanied by a description of physical symptoms such as muteness or deafness (*κωφός*; see Matt 9:32–33; Luke 11:14), blindness (Matt 12:22), and even more complex symptoms, such as seizures (Matt 17:14–18; Mark 9:14–27;

¹²G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 888.

¹³David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, WBC, vol. 52C (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 952.

Luke 9:37–42).¹⁴ Luke describes a woman who was bent over and unable to straighten herself as possessing “a disabling spirit” (Luke 13:10–11). When Jesus defends his decision to heal her on the Sabbath to the ruler of the synagogue, he describes her as one “whom Satan bound for eighteen years” (v. 16).¹⁵ In each of these instances, Jesus’ exorcism of the demon also restores the physical health of the oppressed individual.

Beyond mere physical oppression and temptation to sin, however, the biblical authors portray the devil as seeking opposition to the gospel and the apostasy of believers above all else. In Jesus’ parable of the sower, the bird that snatches the seed sown along the path, representing the word of God, is identified with Satan (Matt 13:19; Mark 4:15; Luke 8:12). Paul speaks of those not in the faith, saying, “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor 4:4; see also Eph 2:2). Page writes, “Here the apostle mentions Satan to explain why some do not benefit from the illumination of the gospel. The failure is not due to some deficiency in the gospel, but to a problem within those who hear and reject it. They are blinded by the devil.”¹⁶ Satan’s influence is also felt in the temptation of Christians to apostatize. Prior to the crucifixion, Jesus warned Peter that Satan “demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat” (Luke 22:31–32). As Green writes, “Satan is not only the accuser, as though his only aim were to detect faithlessness; rather, he inspires faithlessness.”¹⁷ Luke thus pictures Satan

¹⁴Scholars and translators typically refer to the affliction in these passages as epilepsy, though with spiritual and demonic overtones. See, e.g., W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 2:722. France cautions, however, that this is best understood primarily as a spiritual affliction of demon possession, since first-century writers were aware of epilepsy and did not use *σεληνιαζομαι* to describe its symptoms. France, *Matthew*, 659–60.

¹⁵Green notes in this account Luke’s perspective on “the inseparability of physical malady and diabolic influence and, thus, on the inseparability of healing and liberation.” Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 521.

¹⁶Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 184.

¹⁷Green, *Luke*, 772.

at work in Peter’s betrayal and denial of Jesus, ultimately seeking the destruction of his faith, whereas Jesus prays that his “faith may not fail” even after his betrayal (v. 32). Paul warns the church at Corinth that Satan “disguises himself as an angel of light,” and that his servants likewise disguise themselves, preaching a message contrary to the true gospel (2 Cor 11:12–15). The “lawless one” of 2 Thessalonians seeks to work deception in performing false signs and wonders, ultimately leading to condemnation, being empowered by “the activity of Satan” (2 Thess 2:9–12; see also 2 Tim 2:24–26; 1 John 4:2–3; Rev 16:12–14). As Malherbe notes, “The Man of Lawlessness is neither a demon nor Satan, but is the tool through whom Satan achieves his ends, someone of satanic power (v 9).”¹⁸

Believers, however, are encouraged to take hope, for though the devil seeks their destruction, those in Christ are shielded by the Lord’s own power. Jesus asks of the Father, concerning his disciples, “I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15). Paul encouraged the believers in Rome that nothing in all creation—including ἄγγελοι, ἀρχαί, and δυνάμεις—may separate them from the love of Christ, even in the midst of suffering and persecution (Rom 8:38–39).¹⁹ Additionally, Paul speaks of opposition to his ministry by “wicked and evil men,” because “not all have faith” (2 Thess 3:2), but promises his readers, “[The Lord] will establish you and guard you against the evil one” (v. 3). The writer of 1 John, similarly, writes that for those born of God, “the evil one does not touch him” (1 John 5:18). Yarbrough comments on this verse, “[Satan’s] malevolent touch will be no more lasting

¹⁸Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, AB, vol. 32B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 431.

¹⁹For the identification of these terms with hostile cosmic beings, see Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul’s Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 119–20; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC, vol. 38a (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 513; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 465. Moo suggests the angels depicted could be good angels; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 545. The context of these forces seeking to separate the believer from God, however, implies they are most likely thought of as evil.

than the blow that send ‘the one born of God’ from the cross to a tomb that was shortly emptied.”²⁰

The logical end of this protection by the Lord is manifested in the eschatological expectation of the defeat of Satan. As in several of the Second Temple texts surveyed in the previous chapter, the NT authors understood the influence of Satan upon the earth to be temporary. In the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, Jesus condemns those who did not show compassion on the “least of these” (Matt 25:40), saying, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (v. 41). This eternal fire is called a place of “eternal punishment” (v. 46). Revelation 20 describes the fulfillment of this punishment of the forces of evil, where Satan (here pictured as a dragon and a serpent) is bound and thrown into the pit (*ἄβυσσος*), which is shut and sealed (v. 3). The image of Satan bound and shut up in a pit recalls the Watchers of *1 Enoch*, similarly bound until their day of judgment. Later, the devil is “thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur,” where he is “tormented day and night forever and ever” (v. 10).²¹ The authors of the epistles picture this eschatological day of victory in the imminent future. Paul ends his letter to the Romans, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (16:20), whereas 1 John describes this defeat as taking place in the present, “The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining” (1 John 2:8; cf. 2:17).²²

²⁰Robert W. Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 317.

²¹The timing of the binding of Satan is a subject of much debate, tied to the interpretation of the millennium. Beale, e.g., suggests the binding of vv. 2–3 occurs during the church age as the “heavenly effect of Christ’s death and resurrection on earth.” Beale, *Revelation*, 993. The casting of Satan into the lake of fire, then, refers to the future final judgment (as in 19:11–21). *Ibid.*, 972. Osborne, e.g., however, suggests that both events, including the millennium, are future. Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 702–16. I favor Beale’s interpretation, but the timing of the events is immaterial to my argument here, except insofar as there is an anticipated future, eschatological destruction of Satan.

²²Smalley comments, “For [John] the ‘end’ is present as well as future; salvation and judgment are immediate, and not only ultimate, in their effect.” Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, WBC, vol. 51, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 83.

In summary, the major themes noted in our examination of the portrayal of Satan and the demonic realm in the Second Temple literature appear again in the NT. All cosmic forces in opposition to Yahweh are subsumed under the category of the archenemy of God and his people, Satan. He is the ruler of this world and the source of sin and suffering, seeking to physically oppress the people of God and cause them to apostatize and thus be destroyed. However, God's people may be encouraged, because the Lord protects them from Satan's schemes. The assurance of this protection is certain because the Lord himself has triumphed over Satan through the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The following section will examine the biblical texts that portray this heavenly conflict.

Cosmic Conflict in the Gospels and Acts

The Gospels frequently depict the ministry of Jesus in terms of cosmic conflict against Satan. Pagels notes, "Each of the gospels *frames* its narrative, first at its beginning and then at its climax, with episodes depicting the clash of supernatural forces that the evangelists see played out through Jesus' life and in his death."²³ In the Synoptic Gospels, this conflict begins in the wilderness temptation, is further explained in the Beelzebul controversy, and continues throughout Jesus' healing and exorcistic ministry. The Fourth Gospel makes no mention of Jesus' exorcistic ministry, and yet the entire gospel is framed in terms of the struggle between light and darkness (1:5). Satan's activity is perceived more in the actions of Jesus' earthly opponents than through direct demonic confrontation. In Acts, the ongoing effects of Jesus' conflict with and mastery over the demonic realm continue in the ministry of the apostles, as they further spread the kingdom of God ushered in by Jesus. In each instance, as the NT authors describe the

²³Elaine Pagels, "The Social History of Satan, Part II: Satan in the New Testament Gospels," *JAAR* 62, no. 1 (1994), 17; emphasis original.

coming of the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus, they picture Christ in conflict with Satan. Boyd similarly notes, “Warring against Satan and building the kingdom of God are, for Jesus, one and the same activity.”²⁴

In this section, I will survey texts in the Gospels and Acts that describe Jesus’ conflict with Satan. I will begin by examining important passages—the wilderness temptation and the exorcism accounts—in the Synoptic Gospels and explaining how they contribute to the NT portrayal of Jesus triumphing over Satan through his life, death, and resurrection. I will then examine how the Fourth Gospel presents Jesus’ ministry as cosmic conflict, albeit in different terms and with different emphases. Next, I will examine the various instances where the biblical authors depict the enemies of Jesus and the church with demonic imagery. Finally, I will discuss the role of the church in this conflict with Satan by considering Jesus’ statement to Peter about the “gates of hell” and the church.

The Wilderness Temptation

In the Synoptic tradition, the conflict between Jesus and Satan begins in the wilderness temptation narrative. In each of the Synoptics, all of Jesus’ acts of healing and exorcism occur after this dramatic encounter with the devil. Matthew and Luke record the encounter nearly identically, with the only significant variation being the order of the last two temptations. Jesus enters the wilderness, led by the Spirit of God, and faces temptations by Satan to reveal his divine power. Matthew’s account ends with the devil offering to hand over all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus will fall down in worship before him. Jesus responds with a rebuke (ὑπάγε) and Satan departs. Luke, however, records the final temptation as Satan tempting Jesus to throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple, citing Psalm 91:11–12. The dramatic climax of Matthew’s account is more

²⁴Boyd, *God at War*, 186.

obvious, as the temptations gradually increase in significance, from the relatively innocuous turning of a stone into bread to the outright worship of the cosmic archenemy of Yahweh. Jesus' refusal to give in to temptation amounts to his victory in this conflict between Yahweh and Satan. Why then would Luke structure his account as he did?

The reference to Psalm 91 is likely not coincidental, but instead helps shed light on the dramatic nature of the temptation and the conflict implied therein. Henze argues that "the overwhelming majority of premodern interpreters read Psalm 91 as an apotropaic hymn believed to possess antidemonic powers."²⁵ Henze demonstrates that vv. 5-6 in the LXX and the Peshitta both include terms most commonly used for evil spirits, and ancient commentators such as Cassiodorus recognized the psalm's use in exorcisms.²⁶ By claiming the promise of protection found in these verses, the exorcist could utilize the psalm as a defense, reminding the demon that the power of God was against it. Luke seems aware of this tradition, as he alludes to the psalm in 10:19, after the disciples report that the demons are subject to them in the name of Jesus.²⁷ Given that Luke elsewhere makes usage of the exorcistic connotations of this psalm, it is intriguing that his only other reference to the psalm comes at the climax of the temptation narrative and is uttered by Satan.²⁸ Henze suggests that this account is not merely an example of Satan distorting Scripture by taking it out of context. He writes, "The force of the temptation lies precisely in the implied context of the quote, i.e., its antidemonic

²⁵Matthias Henze, "Psalm 91 in Early Interpretation and at Qumran," in *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran*, Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature, ed. Matthias Henze (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 169. Specifically, Henze notes that most interpreters from antiquity have understood the metaphors in vv. 5-6 to refer to demonic spirits (ibid., 183).

²⁶Henze, "Psalm 91 in Early Interpretation," 169. See also Craig A. Evans, "Jesus and Evil Spirits in the Light of Psalm 91" *Baptistic Theologies* 1, no. 2 (2009): 43-58.

²⁷See also Evans, "Every significant element in this dominical utterance reflect Jewish demonology." Evans, "Jesus and Evil Spirits," 55. Cf. Ps. 91:13; *PGM XVII.1*

²⁸Given that Matthew does not utilize the psalm elsewhere in his gospel, it is possible that he does not choose to capitalize on the exorcistic background of the psalm, and may explain why he places Satan's quotation as the second rather than the final temptation.

connotations which undoubtedly would have been known to Luke and his original audience.”²⁹

If this usage by Luke is intentional, what is the significance? The temptation of Jesus is, at least in part, an attempt by Satan to cause Jesus to exalt himself through a display of power, rather than humbly submit himself to God’s plan of exaltation through death and subsequent resurrection. In light of the antidemonic background of the psalm, the statement is ironic and is perhaps intended as a sarcastic or mocking barb from Satan. Beyond that, it is feasible that it is an attempt by the devil to manipulate Jesus, who has thwarted all his attempts thus far. If this suggestion is true, it helps us to see that the confrontation in the wilderness was not a mere moral temptation to see if Jesus would compromise his holy character, but a battle of wills between the Spirit-anointed Son of God and the ruler of this world (Luke 4:6).

In contrast to Matthew and Luke, Mark’s temptation narrative is brief and lacking explicit details. Mark does not narrate the temptation, but simply states that Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days, “being tempted by Satan” (Mark 1:13). He does not state in what way Jesus was tempted, nor does he indicate whether Satan’s temptations were successful. He merely adds, “And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him” (v. 13). With such scant details, it may appear that Mark intends his readers to interpret the account as a stalemate, with no clear victor. Some scholars suggest that the outcome was left open intentionally, to indicate the persistence of the conflict throughout Mark’s Gospel. Mauser argues that the brief mention of temptation serves to “set the stage” for what follows, where Jesus and Satan “are going to be the main actors in the commencing drama.”³⁰ Similarly, Gieschen compares Matthew and

²⁹Henze, “Psalm 91 in Early Interpretation,” 185–86.

³⁰Ulrich Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness: The Wilderness Theme in the Second Gospel and Its Basis in the Biblical Tradition*, SBT (Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1963), 130. For an argument against this position, see Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 57.

Luke's mention of three distinct temptations with Mark's relatively bare account and proposes that the wilderness confrontation is merely the introduction to three main temptations throughout the book – the only other places where Mark uses a form of *πειράζω*.³¹ Several factors, however, incline towards reading Mark's account as a test of opposing powers, where Jesus emerges as the clear victor.

While some clues as to the nature of this struggle are present in vv. 12–13, significant factors in the interpretation of this account lie in the events immediately preceding and following the temptation narrative itself. After an opening statement that explicitly identifies Jesus as the Son of God (v. 1), Mark describes the ministry of John the Baptist, heralding the *ισχυρότερός μου* (v. 7) who was to come. After being baptized by John, Mark describes the Spirit descending on Jesus “like a dove” and records the voice of the Lord giving his approval of Jesus. Significantly, Mark uses the word *εὐθύς* to closely tie this event, with the Father's blessing and the Spirit's anointing, to the temptation narrative, which follows directly after.

In contrast to Matthew and Luke, who use the more natural term *ἄγω*, Mark describes the Spirit “driving out” (*ἐκβάλλει*) Jesus into the wilderness. This term is comprehensible in the current context, but carries with it a much more forceful tone, indicating the presence or nearness of conflict. Most of the occurrences of *ἐκβάλλω* in Mark are in reference to casting out demons. Where the referent is a person, there is still a degree of force involved. In Mark 5:40, when the people in the house laugh at Jesus' suggestion that Jairus' daughter is not dead, he “put them outside” (*ἐκβαλὼν*). Similarly, in the parable of the tenants in 12:8, the wicked *γεωργοί* seize and kill the master's son, then *ἐξέβαλον* him out of the vineyard. In each case, a forceful removal is implied. While

³¹The temptation in all three accounts comes from the Pharisees: the request for a sign (8:11), the question about divorce (10:2), and the question of loyalty to God or Caesar (12:15). Charles A. Gieschen, “Why Was Jesus with the Wild Beasts (Mark 1:13)?” *CTQ* 73, no. 1 (2009), 77n1. See also Richard Dormandy, “Jesus' Temptations in Mark's Gospel: Mark 1:12–13,” *ExpTim* 114, no. 6 (2003): 183–87.

it is inappropriate to transfer too much of this semantic range of the word to Mark 1:13, some recognition must be given to the force of the verb.³²

Mark's purpose in using such forceful terminology to describe the Spirit's influence on Jesus is made clear by what awaits Jesus in the wilderness, namely, Satan.³³ Sinclair Ferguson notes that the forcefulness of ἐκβάλλει is an indication of Jesus' purpose in this wilderness conflict. He writes, "'Driving out' expresses the energy and power of the Spirit as the Lord who advances the kingdom of God into enemy-occupied territory."³⁴ Further, Ferguson describes this conflict as part of a "holy war, in which he entered the enemy's domain, absorbed his attacks and sent him into retreat."³⁵ Thus Jesus enters the wilderness, into the presence of Satan, as an "assault force", and as the "divine warrior", securing victory for the kingdom of God on behalf of the people of God.³⁶ Similarly, Eugene Boring claims that Mark sees the temptation of Jesus not as a moral temptation, but a testing of opposing power. Jesus, after the Spirit descends upon him, does battle with Satan for 40 days.³⁷

The scene is further detailed by the presence of two additional parties. Mark mentions that Jesus was "with" (μετὰ) the wild animals, and angels "ministered"

³²So also James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 39. Edwards further suggests that this language is reminiscent of the scapegoat in Lev 16, though this is not convincing.

³³Stein argues that since Jesus' baptism was already in the wilderness, ἔρημος should be taken as a reference to a description of a desolate place, rather than an echo to vv. 3–4. Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 68. Stein is correct that one should not be too quick to automatically connect these ideas, but given the eschatological connotations of Jesus' confrontation with Satan, a link to John's preaching in the wilderness is perfectly reasonable.

³⁴Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 48.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., 48–49.

³⁷M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 48. Stein rightly argues that the forty days do not carry any theological significance (such as a reference to the forty years of wandering in the exodus or Moses on Mt. Sinai), but instead just indicate a round number, meaning a long period of time. Stein, *Mark*, 63.

(διηκόνουν) to him. While the presence of the angels seems unavoidably positive, scholars are divided over the mention of the wild animals. Some commentators see Mark's use of *μετὰ* as positive, and argue that Jesus is thus described as living in harmony with the animals in an Eden-like paradise.³⁸ This coheres well with the presence of Satan, they argue, as Jesus is tempted in much the same manner as Adam, only Jesus triumphs where Adam fails.³⁹ Although the Edenic imagery is theologically tempting, such a typological reference is doubtful.

Other scholars argue instead that the wild animals represent hostile forces in contrast to the angels.⁴⁰ Thus Jesus is driven to a foreboding and inhospitable place where he must withstand the testing of Satan and thus “bind the strong man” (3:27). Collins has noted the association of “wild animals” with demons, citing exorcism accounts in extra-biblical literature.⁴¹ Perhaps of more importance to Mark's account, Collins further notes the mention of wild animals in Isaiah 13:20–22 (LXX),⁴² where the *θηρία* are clearly to be viewed negatively:

It will never be inhabited for all time, and no one will enter it for many generations; the Arabs will not pass through it, and shepherds will not rest there. Wild animals (*θηρία*) will rest there, and the houses will be filled with howling, and Sirens will

³⁸Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, WBC, vol. 34a (Dallas: Word, 1989), 39. France rebuts this line of thinking when he writes, “Guelich suggests that *μετὰ* with the genitive indicates that Jesus was living peacefully with the animals’, but that is far from obvious; Indeed, his appeal for support to BDF §227(2) rather backfires, since the first of the examples there given of ‘expressions of association’ is *πολεμεῖν μετὰ!*” R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 86.

³⁹“Whereas Adam succumbed to his tempter resulting in hostility within creation and hardship in his own life, Jesus overcame the tempter, restored harmony within the creation, and lived by God's sustenance as a sign of the new creation. Jesus is the second Adam, the obedient one.” Guelich, *Mark*, 39. Cf. Richard Bauckham, who agrees that Mark depicts Jesus at peace with the animals, but downplays the Edenic imagery, instead arguing that his peaceful coexistence refers to Messianic texts like Isa 11. Richard Bauckham, “Jesus and the Wild Animals (Mark 1:13): A Christological Image for an Ecological Age,” in *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 3–21.

⁴⁰E.g., John Paul Heil, “Jesus with the Wild Animals in Mark 1:13,” *CBQ* 68, no. 1 (2006): 63–78.

⁴¹Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 151–53.

⁴²Collins, *Mark*, 153.

rest there, and demons will dance there, and ape-demons will dwell there, and hedgehogs will build their nests in their houses. It is coming quickly and it will not delay.

Given this background, it seems more likely that Jesus is depicted in a desolate and hostile environment for his confrontation with Satan. Given the few details provided, the mention of wild beasts, as contrasted with the angels, serves to highlight the harshness of the wilderness where Jesus is driven. Accordingly, Lane writes, “Jesus confronts the horror, the loneliness and the danger with which the wilderness is fraught when he meets the wild beasts. Their affinity in this context is not with paradise, but with the realm of Satan.”⁴³

As noted above, Mark does not explicitly indicate the outcome of the temptation within the narrative itself. The following actions, however, shed important light on the power struggle depicted in the wilderness. Immediately following the temptation, Jesus emerges proclaiming the “gospel of God” in Galilee. In verse 15, Jesus declares that the kingdom of God is at hand (ἤγγικεν). Jesus’ positive declaration on the presence (or at least imminence) of the kingdom would not be expected if Mark intended his readers to perceive Jesus at a stalemate with Satan, in an ongoing conflict where the outcome is unclear. Further, in Jesus’ first public appearance in Capernaum, immediately following (εὐθὺς) his teaching, a demon-possessed man confronts him. Without prompting, the demon approaches Jesus and asks, “Have you come to destroy us?” (v. 24). This is significant for two reasons. First, the demon recognizes Jesus and acknowledges that Jesus has the power to destroy him. If the conflict between Jesus and Satan were ongoing, one would not expect such a ready admission of defeat. As it stands, both here and elsewhere (3:11; 5:7), there is an immediate fear from demons with which Jesus comes in contact, because they recognize his authority over them.⁴⁴ Second, the

⁴³William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 61. See also Mauser, *Wilderness*, 100–101.

⁴⁴As Heil writes, “These unclean spirits know the more profound identity of Jesus as God's

demon's question is significant for his use the plural ἡμᾶς rather than the expected με.⁴⁵ It appears as though the demon's question is in reference to all demons rather than just himself. Chilton writes, "The unclean spirit of 1:24 speaks as a representative of a force, or group of forces, which fears for its very existence ... The demons here seem to tremble before an eschatological destruction, not simply a displacement from the person they occupy."⁴⁶ With such an admission, it does not appear as though the outcome of the conflict with Satan is in doubt. To be sure, his decisive victory is not realized until the cross and his subsequent resurrection, but the events in the wilderness serve as a prolepsis of Satan's ultimate defeat.⁴⁷

Similarly, in each of the Synoptics' accounts, this encounter with Satan is followed by a proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God. In Mark and Matthew, Jesus proclaims the coming of the kingdom and commands his hearers to repent. Both Gospels contain brief accounts of Jesus healing the sick and casting out demons, thus undoing the work of Satan mentioned in the previous section. Luke significantly includes the account of Jesus reading the Isaiah scroll in Capernaum, with its promises of "liberty to the captives." Luke then recounts stories of healing and exorcism as well. Therefore, the surrounding context of the Gospels' accounts of the temptation narrative make

beloved and favored Son empowered with the Spirit (1:10–11) to expel them from Israel, God's Son, because Jesus overcame his testing by Satan, leader of the unclean spirits." Heil, "Jesus with the Wild Animals," 77. See also Frank J. Matera, "The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel," *JSNT* 34 (1988), 9.

⁴⁵While it is possible that the use of ἡμᾶς is an indication of a plurality of demons, as in Mark 5, this is unlikely. The demoniac in Mark 5 makes explicit that he represents a host of demons (πολλοί ἔσμεν), whereas the demoniac in the synagogue nowhere else implies such a plurality. Further, when the Gerasene demoniac similarly begs for mercy, he uses the singular με (μή με βασανίσῃς, v. 7).

⁴⁶B. D. Chilton, "Exorcism & History: Mark 1:21–28," in *The Miracles of Jesus, Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 6, ed. David Wenham and Craig Blomberg (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1986), 258.

⁴⁷Gundry argues that Mark does not present an account of Jesus' eschatological or moral victory, but "purely and simply a dignifying of Jesus as God's Son in accordance with Mark 1:1 and in a follow-up on what happened at Jesus' baptism." Gundry, *Mark*, 59. While the main thrust of the account may be Christological, it does not follow that this is all Mark has in mind. Perhaps Mark presents Jesus in victory over Satan and the demons *as a means* of dignifying him as God's Son. Other accounts in Mark function similarly, such as the miracle accounts of the calming of the sea.

explicit that Jesus emerges from his conflict with Satan victorious and sets about to liberate those under Satan's oppression in healing the sick and casting out demons.

Exorcism and the Beelzebul Controversy

Jesus' exorcistic ministry eventually results in a conflict with the Jewish religious leaders over the source of his authority. In a controversy recorded in each of the Synoptics, Jesus' ability to cast out demons is attributed to Satanic power, as Jesus is accused of being possessed by Beelzebul, called "the prince of demons" (Mark 3:22; Matt 12:24; Luke 11:15).⁴⁸ In their record of Jesus' defense to this accusation, the gospel writers cast Jesus' ministry in terms of conflict with Satan. Jesus responds first by pointing out the absurdity of suggesting that Satan's power would work against itself, for if Satan were at work through Jesus in driving out demons, he would effectively be working towards the end of his own kingdom. Matthew and Luke make explicit what Mark merely implies—it is the "Spirit of God" (Matt 12:28) and the "finger of God" (Luke 11:20) that gives Jesus authority over demons.

Jesus continues his defense by picturing his ministry in a different way—namely, the binding of the "strong man" and plundering his goods (Mark 3:27; Matt 12:29; Luke 11:21–22). The context makes clear that the "strong man" is Satan himself, and the "goods" he seeks to protect are the innocent sufferers oppressed by demons.⁴⁹ Therefore, in casting out demons and healing the sick, Jesus is not merely giving proof of his divinity or messianic status, nor is he merely showing compassion on the weak and downtrodden. Instead, Jesus' ministry of exorcisms is an attack on Satan and the demonic realm, that he may rescue those in his grasp and thus "plunder his house" (Mark 3:27;

⁴⁸France relates the charge to that of sorcery, where sorcerers were thought to gain their power through a "familiar spirit." France, *Matthew*, 478. So also Lane, *Mark*, 142, who notes the charge of sorcery against Jesus is found both in the Talmud and the early Patristic era.

⁴⁹On the identification of the strong man's possessions with the demon possessed, see, e.g., Allison, *Matthew*, 2:342; Green, *Luke*, 458; Stein, *Mark*, 184; France, *Mark*, 173.

Matt 12:29). Lane writes, “The expulsion of demons is nothing less than a forceful attack on the lordship of Satan. . . . The heart of Jesus’ mission is to confront Satan and to crush him on all fields, and in the fulfillment of his task he is conscious of being the agent of irresistible power.”⁵⁰ Matthew and Mark merely speak of Jesus “binding” the strong man, but Luke makes the conflict language even more explicit, “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil” (Luke 11:21–22). France rightly suggests, “The imagery of ‘binding the strong man’ relates not to Jesus’ exorcistic methods, but rather to the eschatological salvation which he now brings, as God’s kingship renders Satan ultimately powerless to oppose God’s will or to harm his people.”⁵¹

The binding of the strong man, therefore, describes both Jesus’ conflict with the demonic realm as well as his mastery over it. His statements here help the reader to understand what is taking place in the numerous exorcism accounts littered throughout the Synoptics. Specifically, Jesus’ description of exorcism as the binding of the strong man paints his entire healing and exorcistic ministry as an earthly reflection of the cosmic conflict between Yahweh and Satan. Understood in this way, certain common elements of the exorcism accounts in the gospel come into sharper focus—in particular, the complete mastery Jesus possesses over the demonic realm and the fearful response of the demons to the presence of Jesus. These themes will be examined in greater detail below. Due to the relative prominence of exorcistic material in Mark’s gospel, the majority of the exegesis below will follow the Markan accounts, though the contributions of Matthew and Luke will be considered when appropriate.

⁵⁰Lane, *Mark*, 143.

⁵¹France, *Mark*, 173–74.

The mastery of Jesus over the demonic realm. One indication of conflict in the exorcisms of Jesus is the complete mastery Jesus demonstrates over the demonic realm. In extrabiblical exorcism accounts, the vast majority of exorcists employed some strategy to gain control over demons, whether a naturally exorcistic substance or an invocation formula. Twelftree lists a sample of these devices, “In the Babylonian Talmud amulets, palm tree prickles, wood chips, ashes, pitch, cumin, dog’s hair and thread are used; Lucian tells of the use of iron rings and the Magical Papyri tells of exorcists using amulets, olive branches, marjoram and special sounds.”⁵² The *Testament of Solomon* describes a ring given to him by God to grant control over demons, and Josephus mentions the exorcistic properties of the *baraas* root.⁵³ By contrast, nowhere in the Gospels is Jesus portrayed as using any kind of aid. Jesus often casts out demons with a mere word. Further, no incantation formula is found on Jesus’ lips.⁵⁴ Whereas the Greek Magical Papyri prescribe the exorcist to invoke greater spirits to expel lesser ones and seek to bind a demon through adjurations, Jesus gives short and simple commands and the demons obey.⁵⁵

Some scholars have noted parallels between Jesus and the exorcists of his day in some of his strategies, but these connections do not lessen the uniqueness of Jesus’ mastery over the demons in his exorcisms. Twelftree, for example, suggests that the presence of *φιμώθητι* in Mark 1:25 is typical of exorcists who would seek to bind a

⁵²Graham H. Twelftree, “Devil, Demon, Satan,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 167–68.

⁵³*T. Sol.* 5–6; Josephus, *J.W.*, 7.180–85.

⁵⁴Amanda Witmer, *Jesus, the Galilean Exorcist: His Exorcisms in Social and Political Context*, Library of the Historical Jesus Studies 10 (New York: T & T Clark, 2012), 162.

⁵⁵E.g., Mark 1:25 – *φιμώθητι και ἔξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ*; 5:8 – *ἔξελθε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*; 9:25 – *τὸ ἄλαλον και κωφὸν πνεῦμα, ἐγὼ ἐπιτάσσω σοι, ἔξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ και μηκέτι εἰσέλθῃς εἰς αὐτόν*. For examples of adjurations in the Greek Magical Papyri, see *PGM* IV.1227–1264; IV. 3007–3086; V.116–120; VIII.6–13.

demon, citing p. Oslo 1.161-162.⁵⁶ However, the incantation found in the papyri contains no meaningful parallel to the gospel accounts outside of the lexical connection to *φιδώ*. There the reader is instructed to hold his thumbs in a certain manner and recite a long formula three times. The contrast to the gospel account is stark; Jesus merely commands the demon to be muzzled and to come out.⁵⁷

Similarly, Witmer argues that Jesus' request for the name of the demon in Mark 5 indicates an unsuccessful first attempt to exorcise the spirit. After the demon approaches and Jesus commands him to come out, the demon responds by adjuring Jesus not to torment him. Witmer sees this resistance as evidence that Jesus' initial command was not effective, so Jesus resorts to the familiar exorcistic technique of demanding a name to gain mastery over the demon.⁵⁸ However, especially since this marks the only account of Jesus asking the name of a demon, Witmer's conclusion is unwarranted. The more likely reason for the inclusion of this question is due to the unusual nature of demon possession in this instance. Without the request for a name and the demon's subsequent reply (*λεγιών ὄνομά μοι , ὅτι πολλοί ἐσμην*), the reader would not fully appreciate the dramatic nature of this exorcism.⁵⁹ Jesus here is not confronted by a single, solitary demon but by a host of them, and yet this demonic army is the one pleading for mercy.⁶⁰

⁵⁶Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: a Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*, WUNT 54 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 69.

⁵⁷“Be silent” (ESV) is not the best translation here since the demon cries out with a *φωνή μεγάλη* before leaving its host. See also *ibid*.

⁵⁸Witmer, *Jesus the Galilean Exorcist*, 205. See also Twelftree, “Devil, Demon, Satan,” 166–67. For examples in ancient accounts, see *T. Sol.* 9, 15, 21; *PGM* VIII.13.

⁵⁹It is also possible that the reply clues Mark's readers into the politico-social aspect of this exorcism. See Richard Dormandy, “The Expulsion of Legion: A Political Reading of Mark 5:1–20,” *Expository Times* 111 (2000): 335–37. Contra Dormandy, see Graham Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 111.

⁶⁰Elder suggests that this pericope is informed by the Watchers myth from *1 Enoch* 1–36, suggesting that Mark depicts Jesus with an authority over the spirits that was reserved for Yahweh alone in Second Temple Judaism. Nicholas A. Elder, “Of Porcine and Polluted Spirits: Reading the Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 5:1–20) with the Book of Watchers (*1 Enoch* 1–36),” *CBQ* 78, no 3 (2016): 430–46.

The Gospels portray Jesus to be effective in exorcism even at a distance. These accounts highlight the emphasis on Jesus's command over demons through simple commands rather than complex formulae. When approached by the Syrophenecian woman in Mark 7, Jesus is asked to cast out the demon troubling her daughter who is at home (v. 30). After engaging the woman briefly in dialogue, Jesus declares that the demon has left her daughter. Upon returning home, the woman finds that the spirit is indeed gone. This account is significant in that not only is Jesus not physically present with the demoniac, but he is not recorded to give any audible command to the demon at all. He merely declares that the demon is gone, and it is so. No prior exorcistic story could have prepared Mark's readers for this level of authority over the demonic. Even the most simple exorcistic stories would have required some command given to the demon.⁶¹

This remote authority over the demonic is also seen in the commissioning of the disciples in Luke 10:1-20 (par. Mark 6:7-13). After the apostles are sent out to heal the sick and preach the good news of the kingdom (v. 9), they return rejoicing, "even the demons are subject to us in your name!" (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου, v. 17). Hans Bietenhard notes that ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί can mean "with invocation of" or "in the power of," suggesting that the usage of Jesus' name by Paul and the apostles reflects an extension of authority, rather than a mere incantational formula.⁶² Luke alone records the details of the disciples' return to Jesus with their report. He writes, "The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!'" (Luke 10:17). Jesus replies by saying, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (v. 18), and describing the authority they possess over the demonic realm (v. 19).⁶³ This authority in the name of Jesus

⁶¹E.g., "Come out!," *b. Me'ilah* 17b.

⁶²Hans Bietenhard, *ὄνομα*, in *TDNT*, 5:271.

⁶³This "fall" of Satan should not be seen as the primordial fall and corruption of Satan, nor of some prophetic declaration wholly belonging to the future (see Green, *Luke*, 419), but instead as a depiction of the defeat of Satan through the exorcistic ministry of the disciples. So also Darrell L. Bock *Luke 9:51–24:53*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1006–7. Just as Jesus described his exorcistic ministry as the

broadens in the narrative of Acts, where the apostles continue to possess great power over demonic spirits (5:16; 8:7; 16:18; 19:11–12). Thus the authority of Jesus extends remotely even to the disciples, whose exorcisms are not successful on their own account, but because of the power of Jesus' name.⁶⁴

The name of Jesus is not merely some simple formula to guarantee success, however. When Paul is confronted by the demon-possessed soothsayer in Philippi, he commands the spirit to leave ἐν ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Acts 16:18). By contrast, a few chapters later, when the Sons of Sceva similarly try to invoke the name of Jesus (ὀρκίζω ὑμᾶς τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν Παῦλος κηρύσσει), their efforts are met with derision as the demon scoffs at their attempts and overpowers them (Acts 19:13-16).⁶⁵ The name of Jesus, therefore, is not merely an incantational tool to be used at whim (unlike what we see in the Magical Papyri), but an extension of the radical authority which the living Christ demonstrates over the demonic realm, given to those who follow him and place their faith in him.

The fearful response of demons. A further element of conflict in the exorcism accounts is the initial response of demons to the presence of Jesus. Most extrabiblical exorcistic narratives relate the confrontation to be initiated by the exorcist.⁶⁶ The demon is typically nonplussed until the exorcist successfully employs some strategy to gain control.⁶⁷ By contrast, in the Gospels it is frequently the demon that initiates the

binding of the strong man (Mark 3:27; Matt. 12:29; Luke 11:21–22), so here the disciples' ministry effects the fall of Satan.

⁶⁴As France, *Mark*, 248, states, “What has hitherto been a special mark of the ἐξουσία of Jesus (1:27; 3:11) is now to be shared with those who have been μετ’ αὐτοῦ (3:14–15).”

⁶⁵Cf. Mark 9:38–40, where the so-called “unknown exorcist” uses Jesus' name, apparently with success, though the disciples complain that he “does not follow us.” This exorcist was likely effective because, as Jesus states, he is not against (κατὰ) Jesus, whereas the sons of Sceva are presented in a more hostile manner.

⁶⁶But cf. *b. Pesah* 112b, where the demon Igrath initiates contact with R. Hanina b. Dosa.

⁶⁷E.g., Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.20; *b. Me'ilah* 17b.

encounter with Jesus (e.g., Mark 1:23; 3:11; 5:7). Furthermore, the demon usually approaches Jesus already in a state of submission and fear. The demoniac in the synagogue in Mark 1 approaches Jesus and cries out (*ἀνέκραξεν*) to him. The only other occasion Mark uses this verb comes in ch. 6, where the disciples see Jesus walking upon the sea of Galilee and “cry out,” thinking they were seeing a ghost (*φάντασμα*). In context, this verb indicates more than just the intensity of the cry; it is an expression of fear.⁶⁸ This fearfulness is confirmed by what the demon actually says. Before a recorded word of Jesus in the encounter, the demon asks, “Have you come to destroy us?” Such instant fear and submission is nearly entirely absent in the extrabiblical accounts.⁶⁹ Similarly, the Gerasene demoniac in Mark 5 sees Jesus from afar, runs to meet him, and falls before him (*προσεκύνησεν αὐτῷ*). While the language does not suggest the demon “worshipping” Jesus, the presence of the term is certainly unexpected, and as Witmer proposes, “suggests that it was understood to be overcome by Jesus’ power.”⁷⁰ Likewise, this demon also begs for mercy, even though Mark has gone in detail to describe the superhuman strength portrayed by the demoniac (5:3-4).⁷¹

Another indication of the fearful disposition of demons in these accounts is the enigmatic saying *τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί* (Mark 5:7; cf. 1:24). This statement is difficult to translate and has been rendered variously across major English translations.⁷² From its usage in the LXX, the term is typically used as a statement of opposition, in an attempt to

⁶⁸Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 111, calls it “a cry of extreme consternation.”

⁶⁹But see Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.20.

⁷⁰Witmer, *Jesus the Galilean Exorcist*, 178.

⁷¹Other pleas for leniency from demons occur in *1 En.* 12–14 and *Jub.* 10:4–5, but as Witmer notes, “These examples are not entirely comparable, since the demons are pleading with God and the context is not exorcism but God determining to bind up the entire population of demons.” Witmer, *Jesus the Galilean Exorcist*, 181.

⁷²“What have you to do with me?” (ESV, RSV, HCSB); “What business do we have with each other?” (NASB); “What do you want with me?” (NIV). Hugh Anderson suggests, “Why are you bothering me?” Hugh Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark*, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1976), 91. See also NLT; Witmer, *Jesus the Galilean Exorcist*, 158.

deflect the presence or suggestion of the other party.⁷³ Jephthah utters the phrase against the messengers of the Amorites in an attempt to avoid battle (Judg 11:12). The widow of Zarephath speaks the phrase against Elijah after the death of her son, whom she blames for causing her such pain (1 Kgs 17:18). David also speaks these words against the sons of Zeruah when they seek to convince him to strike down Shimei.⁷⁴ Therefore, in the context of the exorcisms, the demons' usage of these words implies an attempt to ward off Jesus from the defeat they know is imminent.⁷⁵ No prior extrabiblical exorcistic account would have given Mark's readers reason to expect such a defensive posture on the part of the demons.

Summary. The exorcisms of Jesus are expressions of Jesus' conflict against—and victory over—Satan and the demonic realm. When the religious leaders call the source of his power over demons into question, Jesus defines his ministry in terms of the binding of the strong man. This statement reshapes the accounts of individual exorcisms in cosmic terms, as a part of his struggle and victory over Satan. When interpreted in this light, the utter control Jesus possesses over demonic spirits, as well as their apprehension at his presence, is easily explainable as the earthly manifestation of the coming of the kingdom of God.

⁷³See also John 2:4, where Jesus utters the expression to his mother after her request that he do something about the lack of wine at the wedding in Cana.

⁷⁴Josephus' parallel account is informative, as he replaces the phrase with *ὁ πάνσεσθ'* ("Will you never stop?"); *Ant.* 7.265. So also Graham Twelftree, "ΕΙ ΔΕ ... ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ ΤΑ ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ..." in *The Miracles of Jesus*, Gospel Perspectives, vol. 6, ed. David Wenham and Craig Blomberg (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1986), 374.

⁷⁵O. Bauernfeind, *Die Worte der Dämonen im Markusevangelium*. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1927), 3–28. See also Chilton, "Exorcism & History", 260; Witmer, *Jesus the Galilean Exorcist*, 158. Bauernfeind argued that the phrase was a magical formula to ward off evil spirits, similar to expressions in Philo (*Deus.* 138) and the *PGM*. Pierre Guillemette has criticized this conclusion, arguing that the parallels drawn by Bauernfeind are superficial and not suggestive of a recognizable formula. Pierre Guillemette, "Mc 1:24 est-il une formule de défense magique?" *ScEs* 30, no. 1 (1978): 81–96. Guillemette's critiques are well noted, but these words used by the demons still reflect a defensive, fearful posture.

Light and Darkness in the Fourth Gospel

The presentation of cosmic conflict in the Fourth Gospel takes on a different tone than that of the Synoptics. Whereas the synoptic authors feature Jesus' exorcistic ministry prominently, the Fourth Gospel is noticeably silent in this regard. In fact, the only mentions of demons occur when Jesus himself is accused of being possessed.⁷⁶ However, the role of Satan in the Fourth Gospel remains prominent. As Mackey suggests, "Even though he has no speaking role in the FG as he does in the Synoptics, Satan's power and influence is felt in the FG more often and more powerfully than in the others."⁷⁷ Therefore, Jesus' cosmic conflict with Satan is often present in the narrative of the Fourth Gospel, though often it is depicted through Jesus' conflict with his human opponents.

The motif of cosmic conflict begins in the prologue of the Fourth Gospel, where the author refers to Christ as *ὁ λόγος* and *τὸ φῶς* (1:1–4). The author then writes, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome (*κατέλαβεν*) it" (v. 5). Typical of the dualistic imagery throughout the gospel, John pictures Christ in opposition to the "darkness," and ultimately victorious over it. John frequently uses the metaphor of darkness to refer to Satan and the forces of evil as opposed to Jesus.⁷⁸ In this way, those opposed to Jesus as "the light" find themselves—whether deliberately or not—in step with the forces of darkness, with Satan at their head.

Central to this understanding of 1:5 is the meaning of the verb *καταλαμβάνω*. In this context, the term can be understood to mean either "understand, grasp" or "seize w[ith] hostile intent, overtake."⁷⁹ Much debate exists over which meaning is to be

⁷⁶See 7:20; 8:48–52; 10:20–21. For further discussion of these passages, see Mackey, "The Light Overcomes," 59–62.

⁷⁷Ibid., 63.

⁷⁸E.g., 3:19–21; 8:12; 12:35–36, 46; see also Isa 5:20; Job 24:13–17. Note also the frequent identification of evil with darkness in the Qumran literature: 1QS 3.17–25; 1QM 1.1–2, 9–15, etc.

⁷⁹Glosses taken from BDAG, s.v. *καταλαμβάνω*. BDAG lists the latter definition for 1:5.

preferred, and space prohibits an in-depth evaluation of the issue, but I will argue here that “overcome” is to be preferred, though it is possible John here intends a double meaning.⁸⁰ The only other occurrence of *καταλαμβάνω* in the Fourth Gospel occurs in 12:35, where Jesus warns the disciples, “Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake (*καταλάβῃ*) you.”⁸¹ Here the subject of the verb is again “darkness,” and the context prohibits any meaning other than that of “overtake” or “overcome.” Further, the nature of the narrative of the rest of the Fourth Gospel demonstrates how Jesus, the light of the world, engages in conflict with Satan, ultimately resulting in his climactic victory through his death and resurrection.⁸²

If this interpretation of 1:5 is correct, the author of the Fourth Gospel sets the stage for the action to follow as a portrayal of the conflict between the light and the darkness. Boyd refers to this statement in the prologue as a “proleptic summary statement of Jesus’ ministry” as a battle between the competing kingdoms of Yahweh and Satan.⁸³ He writes, “The Jesus of John’s Gospel, we see, is a Jesus who has entered into a war zone between light and darkness, between the ‘ruler of this world’ and the King of the earth, between what is ‘from above’ and what is ‘from below,’ between what is ‘of this world’ and what is ‘not of this world’—in short, between God and Satan.”⁸⁴ As Köstenberger notes, however, “In John, light and darkness are no equally matched duality, but in the battle between Jesus and Satan, ‘the light,’ is the overwhelming

⁸⁰So also Carson, *John*, 138. Also in favor of a meaning of “overcome,” see, e.g., Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 31; Brown, *John I–XII*, 8. As possible support for an intended meaning of “understand,” see the parallel statement in 1:10, “the world did not know (*ἔγνω*) him.”

⁸¹I am excluding the occurrence of the verb in 8:3, where a woman is “caught” in adultery, due to its absence from the earliest manuscripts of the Fourth Gospel. However, even this usage does not support a reading of “understand” or “comprehend” in the prologue.

⁸²For further discussion of the light and darkness motif, see Mackey, “The Light Overcomes,” 174–200.

⁸³Boyd, *God at War*, 228.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 231.

victor.”⁸⁵

This ongoing theme of cosmic conflict is present throughout the Fourth Gospel, particularly in Jesus’ conflict with the religious leaders and, eventually, Judas and the Romans. As Mackey describes, Satan in the Fourth Gospel “is shown to be the mastermind behind all the other antagonists.”⁸⁶ Below I will examine the specific opponents of Judas and the religious leaders, but for my present purposes and in the interest of space, the arrest narrative (18:1–11) in the Fourth Gospel is indicative of the ongoing conflict between Jesus and Satan. The author mentions that as Judas approaches, he brings with him “some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees” and a “band of soldiers” (*σπεῖρα*).⁸⁷ Prior to leaving for the garden, however, Jesus had warned his disciples that the “ruler of this world is coming” (14:30), a name frequently used by John to refer to Satan (see below). The presence of Judas and the Roman *σπεῖρα*, then, is unexpected and points to the cosmic dimensions present in the narrative.

The cosmic elements in the arrest narrative are further intimated in the exchange that takes place between Jesus and the soldiers. When Jesus asks whom they seek and they reply, “Jesus of Nazareth,” Jesus responds, “I am he” (*ἐγώ εἰμι*). In this intentionally ambiguous statement, Jesus both positively identifies himself and claims the divine name (cf. John 8:58). The author then records the response of the soldiers, who draw back and fall to the ground, implying a frequent response in Jewish writings to a divine revelation.⁸⁸ Here John does not intend us to see the soldiers worshipping Jesus,

⁸⁵Köstenberger, *John*, 32.

⁸⁶Mackey, “The Light Overcomes,” 236.

⁸⁷Technically, a *σπεῖρα* (or “cohort”) was a tenth of a legion, i.e., 600 soldiers, though it could be numbered at as many as 1,000 men or fewer than 200 (a “maniple”); BDAG, s.v. “*σπεῖρα*,” Carson, *John*, 577. The presence of such a large arresting force (cf. Matt. 26:47, “a great crowd”; Mark 14:43, Luke 22:47, “a crowd.”) may be indicative of a conflict beyond the human realm, but as Köstenberger notes, “The Romans could use surprisingly large numbers of soldiers even in dealing with a single person (like the 470 soldiers protecting Paul in Acts 23:23), especially when they feared a riot.” Köstenberger, *John*, 505.

⁸⁸So also Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII–XXI)*, AB, vol. 29A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 818; Köstenberger, *John*, 507–508, who cites Ezek 1:28; 44:4; Dan

but recoiling in fear at the power and authority of Christ. As representatives of darkness, the presence of the true light (1:9) causes them to momentarily draw back in trepidation. It seems likely, then, that the author intends his readers to perceive a cosmic dimension to this account, harkening back to the statement in the prologue of the gospel, where the darkness fails to overcome the light (1:5), even seemingly in the midst of defeat.⁸⁹

The Demonization of Jesus' Opponents

Beyond presenting Jesus' ministry as cosmic conflict with Satan, the gospel writers also make explicit connection between Satan and the human opponents of Jesus. This connection is seen paradigmatically in the parable of the Weeds (Matt 13:24–30). In his explanation of the parable, Jesus identifies the good seed as the “sons of the kingdom” and the weeds as “the sons of the evil one,” adding, “and the enemy who sowed them is the devil” (vv. 38–39). Jesus portrays the human race in sharply dualistic terms—one is either a son of the kingdom or a son of the evil one. Similarly, in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats, Jesus speaks on the final judgment in these same dualistic categories. The sheep are those “blessed by my Father,” who will “inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt 25:34). The goats, however, are “cursed” and condemned to “the eternal fire prepared for *the devil and his angels*” (v. 41; emphasis mine). For Jesus, therefore, everyone who follows him are aligned with the spiritual forces of righteousness to share in their eschatological blessing, and those who do not with the spiritual forces of evil to share in their eschatological judgment and condemnation. In this section, I will briefly discuss the depiction of the enemies of Jesus and the church with demonic imagery, beginning with Judas Iscariot, then the Jewish

2:46; 8:18; 10:9; Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14; Rev 1:17; 19:10; 22:8. Contra Carson, *John*, 578–79, who ascribes the falling of the soldiers to “physical ineptitude” and says they were merely “responding better than they knew.”

⁸⁹See also Luke 22:53, as Jesus consents to go with the arresting force and declares, “But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

leaders in general, the Jewish magician Bar-Jesus, and finally the unexpected “enemy,” Simon Peter.⁹⁰

Judas Iscariot. As the betrayer of Jesus, Judas is spoken of in demonic terms more than any other individual or group. This connection between Judas and Satan is particularly evident in the passion and betrayal narrative, but the Fourth Gospel hints at Judas’ demonic identification even earlier. Following the multiplication of the fishes and loaves, Jesus says to the disciples, “Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” The author immediately clarifies his meaning, “He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him” (John 6:70–71). Here then, Judas is directly named as a *διάβολος*.⁹¹ Other passages speak of Satan influencing Judas to betray Jesus, or “entering into him” (see Luke 22:3–6; John 13:2, 26–27). Further, in the Fourth Gospel’s account of the farewell discourse prior to the arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane, Jesus tells the disciples, “the ruler of this world is coming” (John 14:30). Here the author clearly refers to Judas Iscariot and the arresting force with him, but identifies him as the “ruler of this world.” As noted above, this designation is common in the Fourth Gospel to describe the influence of Satan on earth. Similar statements about the coming of Judas to arrest Jesus merely speak of him as the “betrayer” (see Matt 26:46; Mark 14:42), yet here the author of the Fourth Gospel again makes explicit the work of Satan through Judas.

Jewish leaders. In addition to Judas, the Jewish religious leaders in general are also portrayed as agents of Satan and the demonic realm. In John 8, the Pharisees

⁹⁰For more on the gospel writers’ use of Satan to describe human opposition to Jesus, see Pagels, “Social History Part II.”

⁹¹Carson suggests the phrase should be rendered “one of you is the devil.” Such an understanding would strengthen the notion of the work of Satan in the human opponents of Jesus and the church. As Carson writes, “The supreme adversary of God so operates behind failing human beings that his malice becomes theirs. Jesus can discern the source, and labels it appropriately.” Carson, *John*, 304.

confront Jesus over the authority of the claims he was making regarding himself. Jesus responds by claiming his authority from the Lord himself, his Father. Further, Jesus tells them that, due to their desire to put him to death, their father is not Abraham nor God himself, but Satan. He says, “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him” (John 8:44). In their opposition to Jesus, therefore, and specifically in their desire to kill him, they are aligned not with the Lord, but with his cosmic enemy.⁹²

Bar-Jesus. Beyond the earthly ministry of Jesus, the opponents of the apostles and the gospel in Acts are similarly equated with the cosmic forces of evil. Barnabas and Paul, while ministering in Cyprus, encountered a man named Bar-Jesus (also called Elymas, Acts 13:8), who is described as a Jewish false prophet and a magician. This magician served under the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, and sought to undermine the teaching of Paul and Barnabas, “seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith” (v. 8).⁹³ Paul rebukes the false prophet, calling him a “son of the devil” and an “enemy of all righteousness” (v. 10), ultimately cursing him with blindness.⁹⁴ Insofar as Bar-Jesus opposed the message of the gospel and acted as an “enemy of righteousness,” then, he showed himself to be a tool of Satan. While not directly opposing Jesus himself, his opposition to the apostles and the spread of the gospel is still regarded as demonic in nature.

⁹²See also 1 John 3:11–12, where Cain’s murder of Abel is also portrayed as the work of Satan.

⁹³Schnabel suggests the magician’s interests were self-serving, as “accepting faith in Jesus as Israel’s Messiah will bring the proconsul’s willingness, perhaps eagerness, to receive guidance through magical incantations and rituals to an end.” Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 558.

⁹⁴The language used in calling Elymas a “son of the devil” is probably also intended as an ironic twist on his other name, “Bar-Jesus.” So also F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 298; C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994–1998), 617.

Simon Peter. The Gospels do not merely identify the explicit opponents of Jesus as agents of Satan, however. Even those seemingly aligned with Jesus may be doing the works of Satan. Following the first prediction of his betrayal and death in the Gospel of Mathew, Peter pulls Jesus aside to rebuke him, protesting that these things will surely not come to pass. Jesus responds strongly, saying, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Matt 16:23; par. Mark 8:33). In Matthew’s account, Jesus had just declared Peter to be the rock upon which his church was to be built (vv. 16–19) and yet, in Peter’s suggestion that Jesus would not die at the hands of his enemies and be raised, he carried out not the will of the Lord, but of Satan. As Stein writes, “Peter is called ‘Satan’ not because he is indwelt by Satan or satanically possessed so that Satan is using him to tempt Jesus away from the divine plan. Rather, Jesus is best understood as saying that Peter is acting like Satan and representing a satanic-like attitude.”⁹⁵ France describes Peter’s suggestion as “acting as a spokesman of God’s ultimate enemy.”⁹⁶ Again, therefore, the biblical authors identify any opposition to the ministry of Jesus, including his sacrificial death, to be the work of Satan.

The “Gates of Hell” and the Church

In addition to portraying Jesus in conflict with the demonic realm, the Gospels also portray the church at large as participants in this conflict. In Matthew 16, Jesus asks the disciples who they think he is. In contrast to the generic “people” (v. 13), Peter answers and declares Jesus to be the Christ. Jesus responds by declaring Simon Peter to be blessed and promising to build his church upon “this rock.” Jesus further promises that the “gates of hell shall not prevail against” this church (πύλαι ᾗδου οὐ κατισχύσουσιν

⁹⁵Stein, *Mark*, 403; Allison, *Matthew*, 2:663.

⁹⁶France, *Mark*, 338.

αὐτῆς; v. 18). Numerous proposals have been advanced as to the meaning and interpretation of πύλαι ᾗδου. France suggests that the phrase is a metaphor for death, with “gates” implying the “imprisoning power of death.” Therefore, “The imagery is . . . of death being unable to swallow up the new community which Jesus is building. It will never be destroyed.”⁹⁷

The immediate context, however, suggests a fuller interpretation. In the verses immediately following, Jesus grants to Peter the “keys of the kingdom” and declares that what is bound and loosed upon the earth by him (and by extension, the disciples at large; see 18:18) is similarly bound and loosed in heaven (16:19). Therefore, spiritual authority in the heavenly realms is in view in this saying. The gates of Hades, then, refer not merely to death but to “the ungodly powers of the underworld which will assail the church in the latter days.”⁹⁸ The promise, therefore, is that “even the full fury of the underworld’s demonic forces will not overcome the church.”⁹⁹ Because of their trust in Jesus, Satan and the powers of darkness will not be able to overcome the believers. They are safe in the hands of their good shepherd (John 10:27–30).¹⁰⁰

Cosmic Conflict in Paul

In Paul’s epistles, cosmic conflict is present primarily in the emphasis placed

⁹⁷France, *Matthew*, 624–25.

⁹⁸Allison, *Matthew*, 2:632–33.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 633. See also J. Jeremias, “πύλη,” in *TDNT*, 6:923–27. For a fuller survey of scholarship on the interpretation of this phrase, see Allison, *Matthew*, 2:630–32; Jack P. Lewis, “The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail Against It’ (Matt 16:18): A Study of the History of Interpretation,” *JETS* 38, no. 3 (1995): 349–67.

¹⁰⁰Louis E. Sullivan, “The Gates of Hell (Mt. 16:18),” *TS* 10 (1949), 62–64, suggests that the “gates of hell” implies not so much a defensive posture on the part of the church as an offensive one. Gates are a defensive military advantage in keeping a city safe from an invading army. Yet Jesus says that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. The picture, therefore, is of the church advancing to conquer the powers of darkness, much like Jesus’ ministry upon the earth was described as the binding of the strong man and the plundering of his house. Jesus’ disciples, therefore, empowered by the Holy Spirit, advance God’s kingdom against Satan and the demonic realm. Sullivan rightly emphasizes the spiritual conflict pictured in the verses, but to interpret the phrase as the church assaulting the gates of hell is an overreading.

on the victory that Jesus has over the demonic realm in his death and resurrection. In other words, Paul focuses on the ongoing effects of Jesus' victory over Satan as they pertain to the church now and in the eschaton. The emphasis placed upon cosmic conflict in the epistles is not as great as in the Gospels or Acts, but this portrayal frequently informs Paul's exhortations. In 1 Corinthians, he speaks of Christ's resurrection in terms of his dominion over spiritual enemies. In the last day, Paul writes, Christ will deliver "the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power" (1 Cor 15:24). Paul explains further in the next verse that Christ "must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (v. 25). Thus the rulers, authorities, and powers of v. 24 are equated with Christ's enemies in v. 25, suggesting they are intended to serve as references to cosmic powers hostile to God and his people.¹⁰¹ Paul elsewhere makes reference to these cosmic entities in Ephesians, where he says that in the resurrection, God placed Christ "in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion" (Eph 1:20–21).¹⁰² Paul also speaks of these powers being placed "under his feet" (v. 22), alluding to Psalm 110:1.¹⁰³ He writes to the Colossians that all things, "whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities" were "created through him and for him" (Col 1:15–16). Peter, likewise, speaks of Christ's ascension to the right hand of God, where "angels, authorities, and powers" are subject to him (1 Pet 3:22).

This present victory, as well as the ultimate and final victory it anticipates, is the basis for encouragement and exhortation for believers now in their present suffering. In Romans 8, Paul encourages his readers by saying that nothing is able to separate them

¹⁰¹So also Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 710; Fee, *Corinthians*, 835 n. 185.

¹⁰²For an in-depth look at the LXX context of these terms and their usage as cosmic forces, see Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 277–80.

¹⁰³Notably, the referent in Ps 110 is to the human opponents of Israel—"he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations" (vv. 5–6). Paul and the other NT writers quoting this psalm therefore reinterpret the enemies of Christ not merely as human, but cosmic beings.

from Christ’s love, including “angels nor rulers, . . . nor powers” in his list. Colossians 2 describes the forgiveness of trespasses and Christ’s atonement in cosmic terms, saying, “[God] disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing (θριαμβεύσας) over them in him” (Col 2:15). O’Brien notes that θριαμβεύω carries the significance of a triumphal procession in celebration of a military victory by a Roman general.¹⁰⁴ He elaborates, “[God] has paraded these powerless ‘powers and principalities’ in his triumphal procession in Christ, making plain to all the magnitude of his victory. Their period of rule is finished; they must worship and serve the victor.”¹⁰⁵

Further, to the church at Ephesus, Paul writes that the church itself—as those saved and redeemed by God—functions as a proclamation of the wisdom of God in his victory over the demonic realm in salvation. He writes, “Through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (Eph 3:10). Thielman aptly describes the paraenetic effect of this statement,

It is likely that for Christians in Roman Asia in the first century, the earthly rulers and authorities—the deified and reigning emperors who were worshiped in the imperial cult and who, through governors and magistrates and loyal citizens, often made life difficult for believers—would have provided evidence of the continuing potency of the evil heavenly powers. If so, then Paul’s claim that the church provides counterevidence of God’s superior power would come as a welcome encouragement to his readers.¹⁰⁶

Paul also makes clear that the church plays an active role in this conflict between Christ and Satan. In the closing exhortation in Ephesians, Paul encourages the believers to “stand against the schemes of the devil” (Eph 6:11). Believers are elsewhere exhorted to resist the devil (Jas 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8–9), but here Paul elaborates more than

¹⁰⁴Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC, vol. 44 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 128.

¹⁰⁵Peter O’Brien, “Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church,” in *Biblical Interpretation and The Church: The Problem of Contextualization*, ed. D. A. Carson (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 135; so also James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 168.

¹⁰⁶Thielman, *Ephesians*, 217. See also Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic*.

other biblical authors. He explicitly describes the struggle of the believers in terms of cosmic conflict when he indicates that the true battle faced by believers is *πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου* (v. 12). We have already noted how both *ἀρχαὶ* and *ἐξουσίαι* can refer to cosmic beings. Here Paul introduces the figure of the *κοσμοκράτωρ*, used only here in the NT. From the further description that these beings are *τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας*, it is clear these terms are all intended to refer to malevolent spiritual beings.¹⁰⁷

Paul then describes how they are to engage in this cosmic conflict—namely, by putting on the armor (*πανοπλία*) of God. Though Paul draws here on heavily militaristic language, the believers are to “arm” themselves with such things as truth, righteousness, and faith (vv. 14–17). As Arnold describes, “The struggle/warfare can best be described in terms of an offensive aspect (making known the gospel) and a defensive aspect (resisting temptation; endurance).”¹⁰⁸ Their struggle, therefore, is not so much about their own might and strength, but rather on the strength of their God and their dependence upon him. In his might they would be able to stand firm, even against such a foe.

Finally, in the closing exhortation of Romans, Paul promises his readers, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Rom 16:20). Paul likely here is alluding to the promise of Gen. 3:15, where the Lord declares that the “seed of the woman” will crush the head of the serpent.¹⁰⁹ Significantly, Paul says that Satan will be

¹⁰⁷In T. Sol. 8.2–4, seven demons present themselves before Solomon, describing themselves as *κοσμοκράτορες τοῦ σκότους*. As Thielman notes, “The Testament of Solomon may have been influenced by Ephesians, but even so, it probably reflects the kinds of associations Paul intended his reference to *κοσμοκράτορες* to carry.” Thielman, *Ephesians*, 421. Arnold notes the magical connotations of the word and suggests that the referent is perhaps to the deities previously worshipped by the Ephesians—i.e., Artemis, Helios, and Serapis, among others—whom they now feared. Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic*, 67.

¹⁰⁸Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic*, 121.

¹⁰⁹So also Schreiner, *Romans*, 804; Moo, *Romans*, 932–33. Cf. Brown, who suggests that the reference is to Ps 110:1, as a reference to the “subjugation of Satan,” rather than a fulfillment of Gen 3:15. See Derek R. Brown, “The God of Peace Will Shortly Crush Satan Under Your Feet’: Paul’s Eschatological Reminder in Romans 16:20a,” *Neot* 44, no. 1 (2010): 1–14.

crushed underneath the believers' feet, rather than Christ's. The Lord is still the one who defeats Satan, but does so in some connection to the believers (cf. 1 John 2:13–14). Furthermore, the immediate context of Paul's exhortation is in reference to false teachers who cause division in the church (v. 17). The defeat of these false teachers, then, is tied to the defeat of Satan, as they are agents of the devil, insofar as they seek to oppose and undermine the church.¹¹⁰

Cosmic Conflict in Revelation

Revelation is replete with apocalyptic imagery that portrays earthly events in light of cosmic conflict. In this section, I begin by discussing the most explicit account of cosmic conflict in Revelation—the war in heaven described in Revelation 12.¹¹¹ Next, I will examine the opening letters in the apocalypse, making note of the connection drawn by the author between human conflict and the activity of Satan. Just as the enemies of Jesus in the Gospels were described with satanic imagery, so also Revelation depicts the enemies of the church as members of the “synagogue of Satan” (2:9; 3:9).

Revelation 12

The account of war in heaven in Revelation 12 is informed by the victorious proclamation following the sounding of the seventh trumpet in chapter 11. The angel blows his trumpet, and then loud voices in heaven declare, “The kingdom of the world

¹¹⁰So also Schreiner, *Romans*, 804; Brown, “The God of Peace,” 4–5. Contra Dunn, *Romans*, 905. See also Moo, *Romans*, 932, who calls for a “mediating” position, whereby the referent is both to general opponents, yet with some relevance for the false teachers of v. 17.

¹¹¹Some scholars argue the imagery here shows dependence on pagan sources from Babylon, Greece, etc.; Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, HDR, no. 9 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976); David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, WBC, vol. 52B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 670–74. However, as Beale, *Revelation*, 624, notes, none of the pagan stories proposed contain all the essential elements of Rev. 12. Further, there is sufficient background from the OT and Jewish tradition to account for the imagery present in Rev. 12. Beale concludes that while John is not copying pagan myths, “It is not implausible to see that the OT, especially Daniel, is a filter through which extrabiblical traditions and myths are subordinated to biblical thought and accordingly transformed and applied to the dragon and to other figures in the Apocalypse.” *Ibid.*, 634.

has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” (v. 15). The following chapter then, expands on this statement by describing a great conflict between a dragon and the armies of heaven. Though the interpretation of the chronology of Revelation is controversial, here the events of chapter 12 should be taken as an explanation of the victory proclaimed in chapter 11.

The author goes on to describe a woman about to give birth to a child. The imagery surrounding the woman is in some ways reminiscent of OT Israel. She is “clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet” and wears a crown with twelve stars upon it (12:1). Several scholars have noted the connection between the sun, moon, and stars here and in Joseph’s vision in Genesis 37:1–9, where the collective imagery is of Jacob and his sons, i.e., Israel.¹¹² Further, the woman is said to be pregnant, which is another image used of OT Israel (Isa 26:17–18). The child she gives birth to is described as a male, who will “rule all the nations with a rod of iron” (v. 5), alluding to the messianic expectation of Psalm 2 (ὃς μέλλει ποιμαίνειν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ; cf. Ps 2:8 – ποιμανεῖς αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ). In context, the child clearly refers to Christ, born of a woman of the nation of Israel, who will rule the nations in the kingdom of God. Shortly thereafter, however, the woman is spoken of in language more reminiscent of the church, as her offspring are said to “keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (v. 17). The woman is therefore a picture of both Israel and the church, “the people of God living both before and after Christ’s coming.”¹¹³

The opponent in this text is described as “a great red dragon” (δράκων μέγας

¹¹²See, e.g., Beale, *Revelation*, 625; Osborne, *Revelation*, 456. Contra Aune, who says the woman is portrayed as a “queen of the cosmos,” with the stars representing the zodiac; Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 680–81, 713. Collins suggests the woman is portrayed as “a high-goddess, a cosmic queen conceived in astral categories” and reflects much of the imagery of Isis. Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, 71–76.

¹¹³Beale, *Revelation*, 627. So also Osborne, *Revelation*, 456.

πυρρὸς), who stands ready to devour the child.¹¹⁴ The dragon, reminiscent of OT depictions of Canaanite chaos monsters, refers to Satan, as verse 9 makes plain. There the “great dragon” is held in apposition to “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan.” Whereas the dragon in the OT could be used as a metaphor for hostile nations (e.g., Egypt), here it refers to “the devil himself as the representative head of evil kingdoms.”¹¹⁵ In engaging in conflict with the hostile institutions of the earth, then, the church engages in conflict with Satan himself, just as Israel’s conflict with her neighbors was often pictured as a struggle with that nation’s deity.

The outcome of this dramatic encounter is brief, as the author merely says that the child was “caught up to God and to his throne”—likely a reference to the resurrection—and the woman is protected by God for a period of 1,260 days.¹¹⁶ The nature of this conflict, however, is spelled out more explicitly in the verses immediately following, where there is war in heaven between Michael and his angelic army against Satan and his own angels (v. 7).¹¹⁷ The dragon is cast down to the earth, along with his angels, and another loud voice in heaven proclaims victory for Yahweh, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of God and the authority of his Christ have

¹¹⁴Page notes that some take the attempt to devour the child to refer to Herod’s attempted destruction of Jesus (Matt 2:16–18), while others suggest it refers to the crucifixion. Page concludes, rightly, “The language is so vague that it is probably best to understand verse 4 as referring in a comprehensive way to Satan’s attempts to prevent the accomplishment of God’s redemptive plan through Christ.” Page, *Powers of Evil*, 214.

¹¹⁵Beale, *Revelation*, 633.

¹¹⁶Osborne, *Revelation*, 463; Beale, *Revelation*, 639. Premillennial interpreters place the 1,260 days in the future prior to the final tribulation period (e.g., Osborne, *Revelation*, 464), whereas amillennial writers interpret this time period as symbolic of the time spent by the church in between the coming of Christ and his return (e.g., Beale, *Revelation*, 646–47). I am inclined to the latter view, though neither interpretation greatly affects my argument, and space prohibits any further discussion on the issue.

¹¹⁷Beale argues the vv. 7–12 are “a narration of the defeat of the devil and his angels by Michael and his angels in heavenly combat. The actions described are the heavenly counterpart of earthly events recorded in vv. 1–6.” Beale, *Revelation*, 650. Osborne, *Revelation*, 468–69, suggests that both 12:4 and 12:7–12 refer to the primordial fall of Satan. The context of the birth of the Messiah and his resurrection, however, indicate the referent is more likely in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. This account is, therefore, analogous to the binding of the strong man in Mark 3:27.

come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God” (v. 10; cf. 11:15). The dragon, also called a serpent, pursues the woman further, but is unsuccessful (vv. 13–16). The dragon’s attention then turns to “the rest of her offspring,” who the author clarifies is “those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (v. 17), i.e., the church. The author therefore uses this account to describe the present victory of Jesus in his cosmic conflict with Satan, but also to explain the reason for the persecution of believers upon the earth, as well as to provide encouragement in the face of their present suffering. Beale suggests, “They should be all the more motivated to persevere in the face of Satanic onslaughts because Christ has already defeated the devil and his host through his death and resurrection . . . The troubles of the persecuted saints occur now not because Satan is too powerful for them but because he has been decisively thrown down.”¹¹⁸

The “Synagogue of Satan”

In addition to the explicit account of war in heaven in chapter 12, the author of Revelation makes use of the depiction of cosmic conflict in the portrayal of the enemies of the church as instruments of Satan. In the opening letters of the book, the author refers twice to the “synagogue of Satan,” in the context of opposition, suffering and false teaching (Rev. 2:9; 3:9; cf. those who learn “the deep things of Satan,” 2:24). These opponents of the church identify themselves as Jews, though the author makes clear they are not true Jews (“who say they are Jews and are not, but lie,” 3:9). Likely here the author means that though they are ethnically Jewish and claim to follow Yahweh, their opposition to and oppression of the church reveals them instead to follow Satan.¹¹⁹ As Collins summarizes,

¹¹⁸Beale, *Revelation*, 623.

¹¹⁹See also Beale, *Revelation*, 286–87; David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, WBC, vol. 52A (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 164; Osborne, *Revelation*, 131; Adela Yarbro Collins, “Vilification and Self-Definition in the Book of Revelation,” *HTR* 79, no. 1 (1986): 312–13.

The underlying conception then is not that of a number of synagogue communities who have opted for Satan and thus become *synagōgai tou satana*; but rather the more clearly dualistic notion expressed by the implicit opposition between the *synagōgē tou satana* and the *synagōgē tou kyriou* and parallel to the contrast at Qumran between the congregation of God (of Israel or of the Poor) and the congregation of Belial.¹²⁰

These opponents are said to persecute the church, as the author writes to the church at Smyrna, “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan” (2:9). In addition to the social persecution of slander, the author also mentions the threat of imprisonment, again tied to demonic forces. He writes, “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison” (v.10). The author here does not picture some abstract, ethereal spiritual warfare, but rather the work of Satan directly seen in the persecution and imprisonment of believers. This persecution could entail various economic components, including banishment from trade guilds, imprisonment, loss of property (see Heb 10:34), or even death (see Rev 2:13).¹²¹ The goal of this persecution and demonic activity is the destruction of the believers’ faith and thus ultimately apostasy. Accordingly, the exhortation to the church at Smyrna is, “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (v. 10).

Similarly, to the church at Philadelphia, the author praises the endurance of the believers, “I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name” (3:8; see also v. 10, “Because you have kept my word about patient endurance . . .”). Immediately following this commendation, the author addresses again the “synagogue of Satan.” He promises that the Lord “will make them come and bow down before your feet” (v. 9). While no direct connection is drawn between the believers’ perseverance in the midst of trial and the “synagogue of Satan,” it is reasonable to assume that the author depicts these opponents in submission and defeat before the

¹²⁰Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, 159.

¹²¹Beale, *Revelation*, 241.

believers because they are the ones bringing about the suffering and persecution experienced by the church. Therefore, just as Jesus ascribed demonic activity to the Pharisees who opposed him and his mission, so too these Jewish opponents of the church are pictured as under the influence of the will of Satan and the cosmic forces of darkness. Further, as one of Satan's primary goals in regards to humans is to bring about apostasy, we see in these human agents the means by which he might seek to cause believers to fall away—namely, suffering and persecution.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced the development of the doctrine of Satan and the biblical authors' depiction of cosmic conflict in the NT. I argued how the expansion of the role of Satan in the Second Temple period continued into the NT and resulted in a unified picture of Satan as the cosmic archenemy of God and his people, working to bring about suffering, persecution, and ultimately apostasy and destruction of the believers. The NT authors often pictured the ministry of Jesus as an expression of cosmic conflict against Satan and the demonic realm, both in his healing/exorcism ministry and ultimately in his death and resurrection. I also argued that the NT authors continued to draw close connections between the conflict that exists in the heavenly realms between God and Satan and the conflict that believers experience on earth. Followers of Jesus participate in conflict and victory over Satan and the demonic realm, though the ultimate power and victory belong to the Lord. The earthly conflict the believers experience is not a conflict between nations, per se, but instead a conflict between those who belong to the kingdom of God and all those who would oppose it. Therefore, any individual, group, institution, or nation that stands against God's people acts as an agent of Satan. Yet, while believers experience suffering at the hands of Satan through these agents, they have ultimate hope in the gospel and the certain victory of Christ in the eschaton. Therefore the believers are exhorted and empowered to resist the schemes of the devil and stand firm in

their faith, confident of ultimate eschatological victory.

The last three chapters have demonstrated the prevalence of depictions of cosmic conflict in biblical and extrabiblical literature. I have shown how the biblical authors portrayed cosmic conflict starting in the OT, through the Second Temple period, and throughout the writings of the NT. Now I will seek to demonstrate the relevance of this portrayal to our understanding of the letter of 1 Peter and the situation faced by its readers. Specifically, what was the nature of the suffering for the recipients of the letter and how does cosmic conflict inform and shape Peter's exhortation?

CHAPTER 6

SUFFERING AND PERSECUTION IN 1 PETER

In this chapter, I will examine the nature of the suffering and persecution depicted in 1 Peter. Modern scholarship is mostly in agreement that the persecution addressed in the letter does not suggest violent persecution on an official, empire-wide level, but rather likely stems from hostile local institutions and individuals in the form of verbal harassment and social ostracization. Despite this characterization, however, I will argue that the letter suggests persecution that is not confined to the individual and social level, but likely extends to official and legal-judicial persecution. I will then argue that cosmic conflict influences and shapes this depiction of suffering and subsequent vindication. In particular, I will suggest that in picturing suffering as a product of institutions and government authorities, the recipients of Peter's letter would therefore perceive their suffering as a result of demonic influence and activity.

The Scope of Suffering in 1 Peter

Prior to the 1970's, the predominant position on the persecution described in 1 Peter was that it reflected an official, empire-wide, state-sponsored proscription against Christianity.¹ Since Peter mentions that his readers were suffering *ὡς Χριστιανός* (4:16), and that “the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood

¹For a survey of scholarship, see Travis B. Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter: Differentiating and Contextualizing Early Christian Suffering*, NovTSup 145 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 4–15; John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB, vol. 37B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 98–101; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 24, 28–31; Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 28–36; Norbert Brox, *Der erste Petrusbrief*, 4th ed., EKKNT 21 (Zürich: Benziger/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1993), 24–33.

throughout the world” (5:9), scholars theorized that Peter was describing a situation reflected during the reign of Nero (54–68), Domitian (81–96), or Trajan (98–117).²

Roman Persecution in Early Christianity

Nero’s persecution of the church is well documented. Tacitus suggests that Nero’s persecution of Christians stemmed from the persistent belief among the populace that he was to blame for the great fire of Rome in AD 64. He writes, “Therefore, to scotch the rumour, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians” (Tac. *Ann.* 15.44; Jackson, LCL). Tacitus goes on to detail the persecution:

First, then, the confessed members of the sect were arrested; next, on their disclosures, vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race. And derision accompanied their end: they were covered with wild beasts’ skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed were burned to serve as lamps by night. (15.44)

Suetonius also records Nero’s persecution of Christians, but makes no reference to the fire. He instead suggests the persecution of Christianity was due to it being a *superstitionis novae ac maleficae* (a new and impious superstition; *Vit.* 6.16). Eusebius likewise does not mention the fire, but lists the persecution of the church as one of Nero’s “unholy pursuits” (*Hist. eccl.* 2.25.1–8).

Eusebius records that Domitian “showed himself the successor of Nero’s campaign of hostility to God” (*Hist. eccl.* 3.17; Lake, LCL). Tertullian, likewise, described Domitian as “a good deal of a Nero in cruelty” who attempted persecution of the church, albeit briefly (*Apol.* 5.4; Glover, LCL). Roman writers perhaps give some

²For an argument dating 1 Peter to the reign of Domitian, see, e.g., Cristiano Dognini, “Le comunità cristiane e l’impero romano secondo la Prima Lettera di Pietro,” *Latomus* 68 (2009): 957–71. For a date in the time of Trajan, see, e.g., Francis W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 30–34. More radical is the proposal by Gielen, who argues for a composition in the time of Hadrian (117–138). Marlis Gielen, “Der 1. Petrusbrief und Kaiser Hadrian Zur Frage der zeitgeschichtlichen Einordnung des 1. Petrusbriefes,” *BZ* 57, no. 2 (2013): 161–83.

indication as to the cause of this persecution, as they note that Domitian made strong claims to his own divinity. Dio Cassius records, “For he even insisted upon being regarded as a god and took vast pride in being called ‘master’ and ‘god.’ These titles were used not merely in speech but also in written documents” (Dio Cassius, *Hist. rom.* 67.4.7; Cary, LCL. See also Suet. *Vit.* 12.13.2). Schreiner summarizes Domitian’s reign as “marked by terror,” where “he put opponents to death among the nobility and extradited philosophers.”³

Trajan’s disposition towards Christians can be seen in his correspondence with a local magistrate of Bithynia and Pontus (cf. 1 Pet 1:1) named Pliny. In one of these letters, Pliny inquires about how he should proceed in trials against those accused of being Christians (Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96). His custom, he states, has been to offer the accused three chances to renounce their faith before ordering their execution (10.96.3). Those that denied the charge or repented before Pliny were instructed to invoke the gods, make offerings to a statue of Trajan, and revile the name of Christ. Pliny’s main questions concern whether past association with Christians, even if one made the required offerings and renounced Christ, were still to be punished, and whether “it is the mere name of Christian (*nomen ipsum*) which is punishable, even if innocent of crime, or rather the crimes associated with the name” (10.96.2; Radice, LCL). Trajan’s reply makes clear he, in general, approves of Pliny’s procedure. He forbids the use of anonymous pamphlets to accuse individuals, and instructs that Christians are not to be “hunted out,” but agrees that those brought before him who refused to renounce Christ ought to be punished (10.97). Trajan’s persecution is not particularly aggressive in nature, and yet makes clear that Christians in Asia Minor in the early second century could be and were executed merely for the name of “Christian,” if accused before a local magistrate.

³Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 28–29.

Modern Views on Persecution

As mentioned above, these three significant eras of persecution have been used as evidence to date 1 Peter to the reign of one of these three emperors, or some period in between. A different view of the persecutions of 1 Peter began to emerge, however, after the publication of Selwyn's commentary. He argued, instead, that the suffering experienced by the recipients of the letter was not due to an official proscription enforced across the empire. The sufferings in the letter were "spasmodic and particular rather than organized on a universal scale, a matter of incidents rather than of policy."⁴ Selwyn suggests that the language used to describe suffering in 3:13–17 (εἰ καὶ πάσχοιτε . . . εἰ θέλοι τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ) "point to a contingency which was regarded as remote, or at least rare."⁵

Others have pointed out that even the persecutions under Nero, Domitian, and Trajan were not universal in scope, reflecting some official stance on Christianity, and therefore these three historical eras are of no use in dating the epistle or informing the situation it describes.⁶ The first true worldwide persecution of Christians did not begin until the reign of Decius (ca. AD 250). Elliott notes, "Prior to this time, anti-Christian actions against individuals or groups were sporadic, generally mob-incited, locally restricted, and unsystematic in nature."⁷ Nero's persecutions did not extend to the empire at large, but pertained to the Christians in Rome itself. Domitian's persecution was likely not so much about Christianity, per se, but a product of his general paranoia and violence toward any perceived threat to his authority.⁸ Even Trajan's policy towards Christians, as

⁴Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1947), 55.

⁵Ibid., 53.

⁶See, e.g., Achtemeier, Duane Warden, "Imperial Persecution and the Dating of 1 Peter and Revelation," *JETS* 34, no. 2 (1991): 203–12.

⁷Elliott, *1 Peter*, 98.

⁸Ibid., 99; Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 28–29; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 32. See also L. L.

mentioned in his correspondence with Pliny, indicates a more passive role in persecution, in that he instructs Pliny against seeking out Christians for punishment.

“Median” View of Persecution

Williams has recently suggested, however, that this characterization of official persecution represents a false dichotomy. While it is virtually unanimous in modern thinking that there was no official proscription of Christianity prior to the reign of Decius in the third century, it is not entirely accurate to say that persecution was wholly unofficial and localized. Williams draws attention to an often-ignored tradition of scholarship that advocates for a “‘median’ view of persecution.”⁹ This view made note of the impact of the Neronian pogroms following the fire in Rome of AD 64 on the imperial provinces. The violent treatment of Christians in Rome set a precedent for local proconsuls, which could erupt into abrupt outbreaks of violence against a suddenly vulnerable Christian community. While persecution was still sporadic and unsystematic, it could still result in legal punishment at the hands of Roman officials when charges were brought by a private accuser (similar to the situation reflected in Pliny’s correspondence with Trajan). Therefore, though no official laws were in force making Christian practice a criminal offense and Christians were not hunted down by Roman authorities, Christianity was “effectively illegal,” and could be punished by death across the empire from the time immediately following Nero’s persecution in Rome.¹⁰ Goppelt notes the practical effect of Nero on Christians in the Empire: “If an imperial measure affected Christians as Christians in this way in the capital city, the name certainly carried

Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 95–115. Thompson suggests that the ancient Roman sources cannot be trusted in their depiction of Domitian, as they were written by authors seeking to ingratiate themselves with new rulers who wished to distance themselves from the Flavian emperors.

⁹Travis B. Williams, “Suffering from a Critical Oversight: The Persecutions of 1 Peter within Modern Scholarship,” *CBR* 10, no. 2 (2012), 278.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 284; see also David A. Horrell, *1 Peter*, NTG (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 57.

the same burden for all public officials of the Empire.”¹¹ Holloway, writing from a social-psychological perspective, says that the popular prejudice against Christians posed a “lethal threat.”¹² He writes, “Christianity is consistently treated throughout our period and across a broad range of sources as an actionable offense. To be a Christian is to be a criminal, and to be accused of being a Christian is to be accused of being a criminal.”¹³

If this median view of the persecution in 1 Peter is correct, it is possible to correlate our current understanding of state-sponsored persecution in the first century with the notion that these sufferings were experienced by the brotherhood around the world (1 Pet 5:9). Though instigated by private accusers, the role of the local governmental institutions in these persecutions meant that the first-century church could conceive of their suffering with imperial dimensions. In that sense, these hostile institutions functioned in the same way as the Jewish leaders did to Jesus and his followers, and various other opponents as depicted in the gospels and Acts. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, those opponents were identified as agents of Satan and the demonic realm. I will discuss further the imperial and cosmic dimensions to this opposition later in the chapter.

The Portrayal of Rome in 1 Peter

Some writers have objected to this adversarial portrayal of Rome by arguing that Peter speaks of Rome with a conciliatory tone, unlike the harsh images present in a book like Revelation. Elliott, for example, writes,

The letter contains only one direct and unambiguous reference to Roman rule (the emperor and his governors, whose tasks are to reward those doing what is right and

¹¹Leonhart Goppelt, *A Commentary on First Peter*, ed. Ferdinand Hahn, trans. John E. Alsup (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 43.

¹²Paul A. Holloway, *Coping with Prejudice: 1 Peter in Social-Psychological Perspective*, WUNT 244 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 65.

¹³Ibid., 65.

punish those doing wrong, 2:14) and expressly urges the readers to respect their authority (2:13) and to honor the emperor (2:17), advice hardly imaginable if Christians at the time were suffering from official Roman persecution.¹⁴

This line of reasoning, however, does not necessarily follow. While Peter does clearly urge submission to the emperor and local governors, this exhortation is in the beginning of his *Haustafel*, where he also urges submission to other parties that could bring about physical abuse and other forms of suffering. In the verses immediately following Peter's command to honor the emperor, he urges slaves to treat their masters with respect even if they are beaten unjustly for it (2:20). The example of submission in the face of unrighteous suffering is Jesus himself (2:21–23), who faced reviling and death at the hands of the Jewish and Roman authorities—who, I noted in the last chapter, were described in the harshest terms of demonic influence. Next, Peter calls for wives to submit even to unbelieving husbands (3:1–6), encouraging them at the end of the section not to “fear any intimidation” (CSB; Gk. *πτόησιν*). Some scholars have posited that one of the causes of fear and intimidation included in this instruction is the threat of physical domestic violence.¹⁵ Peter does not make this threat explicit, but such an understanding is possible, given the more explicit reference to violence in 2:20.¹⁶ Finally, in the concluding exhortation of the *Haustafel*, Peter instructs his readers, “Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling” (3:9). The believers may take this tone of submission and non-retaliation because “the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (v. 12).

Urging submission, then, does not imply a positive view of government, and

¹⁴Elliott, *1 Peter*, 100. See also, e.g., Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 176; Kelly D. Liebengood, *The Eschatology of 1 Peter: Considering the Influence of Zechariah 9–14*, SNTSMS157 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 163–64; Steven Richard Bechtler, *Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community, and Christology in 1 Peter*, SBLDS 162 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 50.

¹⁵Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 320–22; Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 158; J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, BNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 132.

¹⁶On the threat of domestic violence in this time period, see Plutarch, *Conj. praec.* 37; Petronius *Satyr.* 74–75; citations taken from Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 320–22.

Peter's instruction to submit to and honor the emperor does not preclude the possibility of some kind of official persecution from the state. As Williams notes,

Even after the Church-State relationship took a negative downturn as a result of the Neronian persecution, Christian writers still continued to expound the same submission ethic (1 Tim 2:1–2; Tit 3:1; *1 Clem.* 60.4–61.2; cf. *Mart. Pol.* 10). . . . While 1 Peter's description of the Roman government is not as negative as the one found in the book of Revelation, this is not to say that it is entirely positive.¹⁷

Not only does Peter equate submission to the state with submission to wicked slave owners, he also identifies Rome with Babylon in his closing address (5:13).¹⁸ As is made explicit in Revelation, Babylon had come to symbolize “avaricious power, the evil influences of sin and idolatry, and all anti-God predilections.”¹⁹ Whatever meaning might be intimated by this reference, the connotation is indisputably negative. Peter's attitude of submission towards local and imperial rulers, therefore, does not necessarily imply a lack of persecution from the state.

The persecution faced by the readers in Asia Minor was universal in scope, even if it did not arise from an official imperial edict reflecting a proscription of Christian religion or practices. Any time in the history of the church after the Neronian persecution could have reflected the reality described in 1 Peter.²⁰ I will further detail the imperial

¹⁷Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 305. See also David G. Horrell, “The Label Χριστιανός: 1 Peter 4:16 and the Formation of Christian Identity,” *JBL* 126, no. 2 (2007), 372.

¹⁸Calvin suggests that the reference to Babylon here was literal, pointing to a Mesopotamian provenance for the letter. John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Peter*, in *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 22, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 154–55. Such a suggestion is unlikely, however. Babylon was virtually in ruins at this point, no longer a place of influence, and there exists no early church tradition that links Peter with Babylon. So also Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 250; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 882–83; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 353n73. Josephus refers to a small military outpost along the Nile named Babylon (*Ant.* 2.315), but this suggestion is less likely, due to its obscure nature. The most likely explanation, and nearly unanimous in modern scholarship, is that Babylon stands as a symbol for Rome, as in fact some manuscripts (1611 2138) substitute Ρωμη for Βαβυλωνι, thus making the metaphor plain.

¹⁹Bill T. Arnold, *Who Were the Babylonians?* SBLABS, vol. 10 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 11–12.

²⁰Some scholars have suggested that 1 Peter predates Nero (e.g., Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 36–37; Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, NTNC [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009], 37–38; Kelly, *Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 30). Even if this suggestion is correct, several instances in Acts demonstrate that Christians could be charged before local rulers at the instigation of mobs or individuals prior to Nero's pogroms in the mid-60's AD (see Acts 16:19–24; 17:1–9; 18:12–16; 19:38). The likelihood of persecution at the hands of local rulers likely increased following the actions of

and cosmic dimensions of these persecutions later in this chapter. Next, I will examine the nature of the suffering depicted in the letter and suggest that the situation reflects social and verbal forms of abuse, as well as physical and legal punishments.

The Nature of Suffering in 1 Peter

Just as the current majority of scholarship sees the scope of suffering in 1 Peter as local and sporadic, most scholars have also now rejected the opinion that any kind of violent or legal persecution is in view for the recipients of the letter. Since no official persecution was in force at this time, they argue, the suffering experienced by the readers of the letter must have been of an informal and social nature. Elliott writes,

The cause of this suffering is also clearly indicated: persistent slander and verbal abuse from nonbelieving outsiders aimed at demeaning, shaming, and discrediting the Christians in the court of public opinion. The nature of this abuse and insult is primarily verbal, not physical, as the terms for this harassment clearly indicate.²¹

He goes on to state, “No mention is made of physical aggression, trials, torture, or execution of the believers.”²² Jobes similarly contends, “In general, the specific persecution referred to throughout the book seems limited to verbal slander, malicious talk, and false accusations (1:6; 2:12, 15; 3:9, 16; 4:12, 16).”²³ Achtemeier refers to the persecution as “unofficial harassment,” which would not necessarily lead to “lethal consequences.”²⁴

Nero, but such persecution was possible at virtually any point in the first century AD. Even if it could be demonstrated that the threat of criminal accusations was absent prior to the Neronian pogroms, opposition in the form of verbal slander and social ostracism could still be portrayed as demonic in origin. As noted in ch. 5, nonviolent opposition to the gospel was still spoken of in demonic terms (Peter, Bar-Jesus). While more explicitly violent forms of persecution were more likely to be spoken of in demonic terms, any opposition to the gospel could still be viewed through the framework of cosmic conflict. As such, the dating of 1 Peter lies outside the scope of this study, since it does not significantly impact my thesis.

²¹Elliott, *1 Peter*, 100.

²²Ibid., 101. Elliott does concede that such opposition to Christianity could lead to legal trials, but states that 1 Peter does not make mention of any such trials. Ibid., 103.

²³Jobes, *1 Peter*, 9.

²⁴Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 35.

Sociological Aspects of Suffering

The verbal nature of this harassment does not, however, imply that it was trivial. In Greco-Roman society, verbal harassment had important implications for the social categories of honor and shame. To suffer slander and harassment meant to suffer from a loss of honor. As Bechtler notes, honor and shame were considered to be “of the utmost importance” in Greco-Roman society.²⁵ He writes, “In a society preoccupied with accumulation and loss of honor, the honor of the Petrine addressees is constantly at risk in their interactions with outsiders—interactions whose effects on the intended readers are characterized by the letter as ‘suffering.’”²⁶ Campbell similarly suggests that Peter’s depiction of conflict should be understood in light of the “honor contest,” whereby ridicule and slander could result in a loss of honor for the recipients of the letter.²⁷ The accumulation of honor was important insofar as it played a role in establishing social rank and status. To gain honor was to gain social status, whereas to suffer shame was to lose social status.²⁸ If Christians were slandered and ostracized from society on account of their fidelity to Christ, the suffering described in the letter would reflect no small threat to the general livelihood and wellbeing of the readers. Peter’s purpose in writing, therefore, is at least in part to encourage the readers by pointing to the honor that will be bestowed by God upon those who persevere in the midst of such suffering, with Christ as the exemplar.

In addition to the ridicule and social ostracism experienced by the churches of Asia Minor, however, the persecution envisioned in the letter likely extends beyond the social realm. As Holloway writes, “Commentators who describe the suffering of the

²⁵Bechtler, *Following in His Steps*, 109.

²⁶Ibid., 39. See, e.g., Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.2.5–6.

²⁷Barth Campbell, *Honor, Shame and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, SBLDS 160 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 27.

²⁸Bechtler, *Following in His Steps*, 95–96.

readers of 1 Peter as social ostracism with little or no reference to the ever-present threat of active persecution fail to do justice to the predicament facing these early Christians.”²⁹ Beyond the threat of a loss of social status, the suffering in 1 Peter could also have an economic impact, as well as official legal-judicial proceedings, as I will now argue.

Economic Aspects of Suffering

From an economic perspective, for Christians involved in trade in Asia Minor, a loss of social status would have significant impact on already low profit margins.

Williams writes,

For the majority of urban inhabitants in Asia Minor, income was generated through some form of commercial undertaking. In most cases, these local trades or businesses did not generate large financial surpluses. Therefore, even the slightest economic hindrance could have produced a devastating impact on a person’s (or family’s) financial stability. Numerous ways could be listed in which one could be ruined through this form of economic oppression: censoring or boycotting of business and trade relations, breaking of patron-client relationship, canceling the tenancy of a person’s place of business operation, or withdrawing financial assistance.³⁰

Furthermore, the centrality of the imperial cult in Roman society, particularly in Asia Minor, made participation in the marketplace a moral dilemma for Christians. Beale remarks, “The imperial cult permeated virtually every aspect of city and often even village life in Asia Minor, so that individuals could aspire to economic prosperity and greater social standing only by participating to some degree in the Roman cult.”³¹ For Christians who could only set apart Christ as Lord (1 Pet 3:15), compromise in this area was untenable. As Williams concludes, the subsequent marginalization from the marketplace for these Christians could have devastating economic impacts, such that “even a slight alteration to one’s income could mean the difference between life and

²⁹Holloway, *Coping with Prejudice*, 68.

³⁰Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 134.

³¹G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 240.

death.”³²

Legal Aspects of Suffering

The question of legal proceedings against Christians in 1 Peter is a matter of much debate. Many commentators argue that Peter does not envisage any such legal charges and punishments. They argue that such legal proceedings did not occur both because Christianity was not legally outlawed in the first century and because Peter does not explicitly refer to any such trials. Bechtler exemplifies this line of argument when he writes, “It is simply inconceivable that so grave a situation would not have been more clearly reflected in the letter. What *is* clearly reflected in 1 Peter is a situation of sustained verbal abuse and slanderous accusation of Christians by their non believing neighbors.”³³ Even if 1 Peter contains no such explicit mention of trials, to suggest this omission implies the complete absence of such trials is to make an argument from silence. Further, there are reasons to suggest that Peter does include legal trials as a component of the persecution experienced by his readers.

First, the nature of the ancient legal system itself made official trials an imminent threat. Williams, in his work on the nature of persecution in 1 Peter, offers a detailed analysis of the Anatolian legal system. There is no evidence to suggest that Christians were hunted down by Roman authorities in the first century—not even Trajan advocated for that in the early second century. This does not mean, however, that official legal action was not a threat to first century believers. As Williams notes, legal trials before the highest provincial court (that of the governor) could be instigated by a private citizen called a *delator* (“informer”).³⁴ He continues, “Because the Anatolian judicial

³²Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 325.

³³Bechtler, *Following in His Steps*, 94; emphasis original. See also Elliott, *1 Peter*, 101.

³⁴Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 170.

system was set in motion by the private accusations of local inhabitants, the general hostility and harassment faced by Christian assemblies could have turned into legal accusations at any moment and with relative ease.”³⁵

Indeed, Pliny’s correspondence with Trajan reflects just this legal procedure. While it is not clear that 1 Peter was written in this time period, Pliny’s disposition towards Christians—though he makes clear he has little experience with them (*Ep.* 10.96.1–2)—is nonetheless revealing. At the behest of these private *delatores*, Pliny briefly questions the Christians and orders their execution if they will not renounce Christ. For local Christians, then, their fate in the courts was largely dependent on the disposition of the local magistrate. If Pliny, with little experience with Christians, would find ordering their execution so simple, any private accusation could prove deadly. As Holloway concludes, “Simply put, anti-Christian prejudice was at all times a lethal threat.”³⁶ Williams aptly summarizes the plight of the Christians in Asia Minor,

Written at a time when the Christian religion had been rendered effectively illegal in the Roman Empire, the Anatolian believers faced the ever-present threat of being taken to court by private citizens. During this period, Christians were suspected of heinous crimes that often made them liable in the eyes of Roman authorities. But even beyond their questionable activities, Christians could also be accused and condemned simply for the confession of the Christian faith. Such an environment would undoubtedly breed fear among the Anatolian congregations, and it would have certainly provided opportunities to present a defense of the faith in both formal and informal settings.³⁷

There is also ample evidence within 1 Peter itself to suggest that legal proceedings were at least a genuine perceived threat, even if they were not regarded as the most likely form of persecution. Peter’s first mention of suffering in the letter makes clear that the believers were experiencing “various” trials (1:6; *λυπηθέντας ἐν ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς*). This broad characterization of the trials experienced by the readers alone

³⁵Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 178.

³⁶Holloway, *Coping with Prejudice*, 72.

³⁷Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 315.

should caution us against excluding more official, legal dimensions to persecution as impossible. As Jobes suggests, “Peter’s readers were experiencing various kinds of trials that were causing them varying degrees of grief and suffering. Their Christian faith was being slandered and maligned. Their social status, family relationships, and possibly even their livelihood were threatened.”³⁸ Further, there are at least three passages within 1 Peter that point to at least the possibility of legal proceedings against Christians.

First Peter 2:11–12. The first is the exhortation in 2:11–12, where Peter urges the believers to abstain from the desires of the flesh in the face of the claim of the Gentiles that the Christians are *κακοποιοί*. Most English translations render *κακοποιός* here as “evildoer,” “wrongdoer,” or some minor variation thereof. As Holloway notes, however, this translation places too much weight on etymology and not on contextual exegesis. Just two verses later Peter uses *κακοποιός* again to describe the function of governing authorities as those who punish *κακοποιοί* (2:14). Here Peter clearly means not just those who commit moral evil, but those who violate laws.³⁹ For Christians to be accused of being *κακοποιοί*, then, they were being accused of being criminals.⁴⁰ The two meanings are not, of course, mutually exclusive, but Peter’s other uses of the word help show that the criminal connotation should not be ignored. Peter’s exhortation to “good deeds” and an “honorable conduct” is not a means of refuting false allegations of wrongdoing, but to “undertake distinctively Christian conduct—the very thing that was

³⁸Jobes, *1 Peter*, 42.

³⁹See, e.g., Polybius, *Hist.* 15.25.1. Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 304, notes on the use of the terms *ἐκδίκησιν* and *ἔπαινον* in 2:14: “When ‘punishment’ and ‘praise’ are used with respect to a governor, the most natural context in which these words would have been understood by a provincial inhabitant would have been a legal-judicial setting.”

⁴⁰Holloway, *Coping with Prejudice*, 67. Contra Elliott, *1 Peter*, 794. The usage of the term in 4:15 may have moral rather than criminal connotations, but even in that passage it is comprehensible to understand the term as a general label for a criminal. The nearer referent in 2:14 is preferable for understanding the ambiguous usage in 2:12.

causing the present conflict.”⁴¹ This distinction is made clear by the fact that Peter does not indicate that the good deeds will result in the charges being dismissed or seen as unfounded, but that the result would be that their accusers would see them and “glorify God on the day of visitation.” Peter’s hope is, then, that the accusers would be moved by the Christians’ display of righteous suffering and compelled to believe the gospel they preach as they “proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (2:9).⁴²

First Peter 4:16. The second passage that suggests a legal component to the persecution in 1 Peter is the notion in 4:16 of suffering *ὡς Χριστιανός*. In 4:12, Peter transitions from his *Haustafel* to the beginning of his closing exhortation to persevere in the midst of suffering. Peter tells his readers not to be surprised at the “fiery trial” they are experiencing, but to rejoice insofar as they share in Christ’s pattern of righteous suffering.⁴³ Peter adds that the basis of their suffering, however, must not be due to evil deeds or criminal associations, but only *ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ* (4:14–15). He then declares that the one who suffers *ὡς Χριστιανός*—functionally equivalent to *ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ*⁴⁴—ought not to be ashamed but to give glory to God. The label, then, of *Χριστιανός* is held in parallel with labels such as “murderer” and “thief.” One’s “suffering” for these actions would doubtless be of official legal prosecution. There is no

⁴¹Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 296; emphasis original.

⁴²For this understanding of the Gentiles glorifying God, see Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 124; Ceslas Spicq, *Les Épîtres de Saint Pierre*, SB 4 (Paris: Gabalda, 1966), 99; J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC, vol. 49 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 118–20.

⁴³The “fiery” nature of this trial should not be interpreted as a key to the severity of the persecution and suffering experienced by the readers, as the imagery of fire here is best seen as analogous to the “fire” of testing in 1:7. There, as here, the focus is on the purifying effect of the fire rather than the intensity of the trial. So also Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 124; Elliot, *1 Peter*, 771–72; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 9; Selwyn, *First Peter*, 54; Dennis E. Johnson, “Fire in God’s House: Imagery from Malachi 3 in Peter’s Theology of Suffering (1 Peter 4:12–19),” *JETS* 29 (1986): 285–94.

⁴⁴So also Horrell, “The Label *Χριστιανός*,” 371.

apparent reason why the punishment for the charge of Χριστιανός would be any different. Some accusations against Christians could involve insinuations of evil deeds,⁴⁵ but in 4:16 the label Χριστιανός is treated as independent of the charges of φονεὺς, κλέπτῃς, or even the broader designations κακοποιὸς and ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος.⁴⁶ Indeed some hostile descriptions of Christians from ancient sources make no mention of any particular accusations of immorality, but rather a disdain for the religion as a whole.⁴⁷

Further, Peter's mention of ridicule and shame in these verses (ὄνειδίζεσθε, αἰσχυνέσθω) does not limit the scope of suffering merely to the verbal and social realms. As Horrell notes, the concept of shame carried broader connotations in the ancient world. He writes, "For a person judged and condemned by society, a death might well be described in terms of shame and ignominy, as indeed is Christ's death (Heb 12:2)."⁴⁸ Holloway explains the role that shame played in the Roman penal system, "Criminals were regularly mocked and humiliated in their deaths, and in many cases were likened to animals."⁴⁹ Fittingly, the language used of suffering (πάσχω) in 4:13–16 is consistent with the description of Christ's suffering unto death (2:21, 23; 3:18; 4:1). As Horrell observes, "The key point about Jesus' suffering, after all, was that he was killed, not that he suffered public ridicule."⁵⁰ The notion of suffering ὡς Χριστιανός in 4:16, then, should be understood as describing a situation that reflects at least public ridicule and shame,

⁴⁵See Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 9.5–6; *Mart. Lyons* 1.52; Tertullian, *Apol.* 9; Origen, *Cels.* 6.27. Paul Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity*, LNTS 307 (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 67, describes these accusations: "It is the impression that the new cult members were incestuous, debauched, seditious cannibals, who fed on the flesh of children that caused the most concern."

⁴⁶For more on the connotations of ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος, see Jeannine K. Brown, "Just a Busybody? A Look at the Greco-Roman Topos of Meddling for Defining ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος in 1 Peter 4:15," *JBL* 125 (2006): 549–68; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 788.

⁴⁷See Suetonius, *Vit.* 6.16; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.8.

⁴⁸Horrell, "The Label Χριστιανός," 373.

⁴⁹Holloway, *Coping with Prejudice*, 225. Holloway further points to the work of Donald G. Kyle, *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome* (London: Routledge, 1998).

⁵⁰Horrell, "The Label Χριστιανός," 373.

with criminal accusation and punishment (even unto death) as possible outcomes as well.

First Peter 3:13–17. The third passage to be considered that points to the possibility of legal proceedings against Christians is the encouragement found in 3:13–17. Here Peter begins with the general statement that the believers need not fear mistreatment and persecution if they remain committed to good works (3:13), but then immediately acknowledges that it is possible to suffer because of righteousness (v. 14). Here again Peter envisions not accusations of general moral corruption, but the behavior that should normally mark Christians. Peter counsels his readers in such a situation to maintain their allegiance to Christ (*κύριον δὲ τὸν Χριστὸν ἀγιάσατε*), and be prepared to give an *ἀπολογία* to anyone at any time (v. 15). The stated goal of this *ἀπολογία* is so that those who slander the Christians may be put to shame. Here, as in 2:11–12, Peter does not seem to envisage righteous behavior resulting in an acquittal of the charges, as the concluding verse states, “For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil” (v. 17). Instead, he encourages them to persist in Christlike behavior, though that appears to be the very source of the accusation.

Some scholars maintain that the situation pictured in 3:13–17 relates only to informal, everyday questions and opposition and not to any kind of judicial proceedings. Elliott maintains, “[The situation] involves not formal trials and the demands of official magistrates requiring evidence of nonculpability but occasions when outsiders, out of curiosity, ask for explanations of the hope that animates these believers.”⁵¹ Indeed, the presence of terms like *ἀεὶ* and *παντί* suggest that we should not narrow the focus to any one kind of situation. This exhortation, however, would make sense in a legal and judicial setting as much as in an informal setting, if not *moreso*. As Williams notes, the encouragement not to fear in v. 14 makes more sense if some threat were attached to the

⁵¹Elliott, *1 Peter*, 628. See also Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 30; Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 244.

questioning.⁵² Everyday questions about the faith of the believers would be no cause for fear unless the tone were at least somewhat threatening or some consequences could result, even if just social consequences. Further, the use of ἀπολογία points to the possibility of legal proceedings. The term can be used to describe a general reply (1 Cor 9:3; 2 Cor 7:11; Phil 1:7), but is also naturally used in explicitly judicial settings (Acts 22:1; 25:16; 2 Tim 4:16).⁵³ The notion that the believers are asked to give an “account” (λόγος) could be seen in an informal context, but the language also calls to mind the notion that those who slander these Christians will also have to give a λόγος to the Lord, who comes κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς (4:5). With nothing to definitively suggest whether legal proceedings are in view or not, then, it is best not to restrict the conflict in these verses either entirely within the judicial sphere or entirely outside of it.⁵⁴

The Cosmic Significance of Suffering in 1 Peter

I have noted that most scholars today contend that the suffering described in 1 Peter is local in nature and not a function of the empire at large. However, as noted above, the imperial action taken by Nero in Rome carried significance for any and all imperial provinces, such that local institutions could treat Christian practices as crimes, and often did, at the behest of a private *delator*. It was entirely possible, then, for Christians to receive economic, physical, and even capital punishments without any official laws in place against Christianity. Accordingly, even without an official proscription of Christian practice, early Christians could, and often did, perceive of their

⁵²Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 315. The use of αὐτῶν in 3:14 should be understood as an objective genitive, thus, “Have no fear of them.” So also *ibid.*, 312n42; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 624–25; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 186–87. Contra NRSV, CSB, who translate it subjectively, “Do not fear what they fear.”

⁵³Williams, while arguing for a judicial context to these verses, prudently says that ἀπολογία is not determinative on its own for what kind of meaning may be intended; Williams, *Persecution*, 314.

⁵⁴Holloway, *Coping with Prejudice*, 70, claims, “Virtually every item in this list suggests that some sort of official hearing is in view.” This assertion stretches the evidence too far, but he does show possible connections between the language of 3:13–17 and early persecution texts.

suffering as a product of the Roman Empire.

To understand the Christian perspective on suffering and persecution in the first century, the book of Revelation is helpful, as it contains some of the most explicit language on the imperial dimensions of early Christian persecution. The dating of Revelation is a subject of much debate, as is the dating for 1 Peter.⁵⁵ While it is likely that 1 Peter predates Revelation, the general time frames for the dates of both books likely belongs to the late-first century.⁵⁶ Since the historical evidence suggests that no official, empire-wide persecution of Christians existed at any point in this range, both works reflect the same general historical situation, and therefore may be helpful in interpreting each other.

As noted in the previous chapter, Revelation contains a clear polemic against Rome, which the author makes clear is responsible for the persecution and martyrdom of Christians. The author describes a woman with the name “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations” written on her forehead (17:5). He goes on to say that the woman (clearly referring to Rome) is “drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (v. 6). Similarly, in describing her destruction, the author writes, “And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth” (18:24). Until recently, many commentators, following Irenaeus’ writing in the late second century, supposed that this clear reference to persecution at the

⁵⁵For proposals regarding the dating of Revelation, see, e.g., Albert A. Bell, “The Date of John’s Apocalypse: The Evidence of Some Roman Historians Reconsidered,” *NTS* 25 (1979): 93–102; Adela Y. Collins, “Dating the Apocalypse of John,” *BR* 26 (1981): 33–45. For a survey of recent positions on the dating of 1 Peter, see Mark Dubis, “Research on 1 Peter: A Survey of Scholarly Literature Since 1985,” *CBR* 4, no. 2 (2006): 202–4. As noted in n. 20, I do not address the dating of 1 Peter in this dissertation as it does not significantly impact my thesis.

⁵⁶Arguments for a specific date of the letter are not conclusive, but the use of “Babylon” as a cipher for Rome (5:13) points to a date after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70. But see C. P. Thiede, who argues that the historical Peter (who, according to tradition, died in the mid-60’s) could have reasonably used Babylon as a “Kryptogramms” to refer to Rome. C.P. Thiede, “Babylon, der andere Ort : Anmerkungen zu 1 Petr 5,13 und Apg 12,17,” *Biblica* 67, no. 4 (1986): 532–538. Goppelt’s assertion that the letter should be dated between AD 65–80 appears the safest and most reasonable. See Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 45.

hands of Rome pointed to a date near the end of Domitian's reign (ca. AD 90).⁵⁷ As noted earlier in this chapter, however, there is insufficient evidence to suppose that Domitian carried out any empire-wide, state-sponsored persecution of Christians.⁵⁸ Until the reign of Decius (mid-second century AD), no official proscription of Christianity existed on a universal scale. Revelation clearly describes the martyrdom of Christians, however, as a function of the Roman Empire, and in particular a function of the Emperor Cult (13:1–12; 14:9–11).⁵⁹

“Imperialization” of Suffering and the Emperor Cult

Middleton accounts for this discrepancy by arguing that early Christians “imperialized” their suffering.⁶⁰ He writes, “Though Christian persecution was not instigated from the centre of Imperial power, in the Christian imagination, experience of local hardship was universalized as coming from the state.”⁶¹ This “imperialization” of suffering was due primarily to the centrality of the Emperor Cult throughout the Empire. As Williams observes, “Even though the number of provincial cults had not yet reached its zenith, at the local level, emperor worship was a mainstay within most—if not all—municipal communities.”⁶² In fact, the Emperor Cult was more prominent in provincial

⁵⁷Irenaeus, *Haer.*, 5.30.3.

⁵⁸Some scholars argue for an altogether more positive view of Domitian than is seen in ancient historians like Suetonius or Tacitus. See, e.g., Thompson, *Revelation*, 95–115, who argues that Christians under Domitian “did not live in a world of conflict,” but “lived quiet lives.” Thompson offers a helpful caution against the portrayal of Domitian in ancient sources, but his conclusions, as I have shown throughout this chapter, are overstated.

⁵⁹So also Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict*, 42.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 40.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 48.

⁶²Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 248–49. Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict*, 48, similarly writes, “Despite the clear Roman official position that the Emperor was not *divus* in his lifetime, the Cult of the Emperor spread rapidly throughout the Empire, so that by the fourth decade of the first Christian century, even the Roman elite were recognizing the divinity of the Emperor.”

territories than it was in Rome itself.⁶³ The reasons for this prominence are twofold. First, participation in the Emperor Cult allowed those who were not near Rome an occasion to ingratiate themselves to the Emperor and express their allegiance. Particularly for the poor and marginalized, expressions of worship such as festivals provided an “opportunity for high spirits and civic pride.”⁶⁴ Secondly, and more importantly for my purposes, the Emperor Cult provided a mechanism whereby a subjugated nation or province could maintain devotion to its civic gods, provided they were incorporated into the worship of the gods of Rome, including the Emperor himself.⁶⁵ To the ancient audience, then, to neglect the Emperor cult is to neglect the local, civic gods, and vice versa.

The result of the centrality of the Emperor Cult, then, was that participation in the Cult would be “an inevitable part of everyday socio-religious life, and it would have been impossible to escape.”⁶⁶ Christians, however, could make no concession to the worship of the Emperor. For them, Christ was Lord and there was room for no other.⁶⁷ As Middleton writes,

Ultimately, though some Christians tried to take what they supposed to be a relatively accommodating stance towards Rome, one could not be a good Christian and do everything the Romans expected good citizens to do. Christians could not participate in the symbols of Rome because there was no room in their conception of reality for those symbols.⁶⁸

The exclusivity of the Christians led to their branding as ἄθεοι, abandoning the

⁶³So also Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 27.

⁶⁴Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict*, 50–51.

⁶⁵Ibid., 53. See also Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 27.

⁶⁶Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 253. See also Beale, *Revelation*, 241, “It was almost impossible to have a share in a city’s public life without also having a part in some aspect of the imperial cult.”

⁶⁷See Acts 17:1–7, where a mob brings charges against the new Christians in Thessalonica, accusing the Christians of “saying that there is another king, Jesus.” See also the confrontation in *Mart. Pol.* 8.2, where Polycarp is implored to save himself simply by saying the words Κύριος καὶ ἴσαρ.

⁶⁸Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict*, 62.

traditions of their forebears (see 1 Pet 1:18).⁶⁹ Judaism in the Roman Empire was open to the same charge, but it was generally treated more favorably due to its ancient roots.⁷⁰ Achtemeier notes, however, that even the Roman attitude towards Judaism was not static, and ranged “from protection to annoyance to outright suppression.”⁷¹ Once Christianity began to be distinguished from Judaism as its own movement, these charges of atheism were compounded by the fact that Christians did not have a similar ancient heritage to which to point.⁷² Accordingly, Suetonius describes Christians as a *genus hominum superstitionis novae ac maleficae* (“a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition”).⁷³

The danger this new and exclusive religion posed related to the spurning of the gods, which would in turn invite divine chastisement on the entire community. Ste. Croix writes, “The monotheistic exclusiveness of the Christians was believed to alienate the goodwill of the gods, to endanger what the Romans called the *pax delorum* (the right harmonious relationship between gods and men), and to be responsible for disasters which overtook the community.”⁷⁴ Writing at a later time, Tertullian describes the blame cast on Christians,

They take the Christians to be the cause of every disaster to the State, of every misfortune of the people. If the Tiber reaches the walls, if the Nile does not rise to the fields, if the sky doesn't move or the earth does, if there is famine, if there is plague, the cry is at once: ‘The Christians to the lion!’⁷⁵

⁶⁹So also G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, “Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?,” in *Church and State in the Early Church*, ed. Everett Ferguson, Studies in Early Christianity, vol. 7 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 34; Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 30; Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 43; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 34–35.

⁷⁰Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict*, 55.

⁷¹Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 24.

⁷²Ibid.; Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict*, 55.

⁷³Suetonius, *Vit.* 6.16; Rolfe, LCL.

⁷⁴Ste. Croix, “Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?,” 34.

⁷⁵Tert. *Apol.* 40.2; Glover, LCL.

Middleton writes that the Christians, in their spurning of the worship of the gods and withdrawal from participation in the cultic rites, “were seen to be willfully and deliberately wishing misfortune upon local communities and the Empire” and “inviting divine disaster.”⁷⁶ This, in part, was why Tacitus could refer to Christianity as a “deadly superstition” and Christians as having a “hatred of the human race” (*odio humani generis*; (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44).

Even if the suffering experienced by Christians was brought about more by local provincial governments than Rome itself, then, their persecution could still be legitimately seen as a function of the Roman Empire. Further, even if the persecution was not criminal in nature, if the source of the Christians’ social ostracism or economic hardship was found in the centrality of the Emperor Cult, their suffering could still be “imperialized.” Middleton’s summary of the situation is worth quoting at length,

The issue is not so much that local people wished enthusiastically to promote the cult; rather local communities felt horror that a group from within should eschew it publicly and vociferously, when the cult was its primary means of representing itself to Rome. The Cult bound the Empire together and protected the worship of traditional gods. This is also why the Christians could see their own experience of suffering as coming from the State. Everyone had something to lose if this crucial means of devotion to the Emperor was disrupted, and therefore the Christians threatened not just the carefully cultivated reputation of a city, but the social and perhaps even the cosmic order – the very symbols of reality.⁷⁷

The Agency of Satan in Persecution

Finally, now, the cosmic implications of the suffering described in 1 Peter may be seen. As I suggested in chapter 3, from a Jewish perspective, any nation or empire that opposed the nation of Israel was shown to be an agent of hostile spiritual entities, whether gods, demonic spirits, or Canaanite chaos monsters. In the NT era, though the people of God are equated with the church rather than Israel, the same principle still applies. Even

⁷⁶Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict*, 55, 68.

⁷⁷Ibid., 54.

nonviolent opposition to the gospel could be attributed to the work of the devil (Matt 16:23; Acts 13:10). Groups such as the Jewish religious leaders and individuals such as Judas and Bar-Jesus were said to be representatives of Satan, the chief cosmic power opposed to the Lord. By extension, therefore, any institution, from a local magistrate to the Roman emperor himself, made itself an instrument of the devil insofar as they opposed and persecuted the church. If the early Christians perceived of their suffering with imperial dimensions, they would thereby perceive of it with cosmic dimensions as well. This conflict was not just about the church and the state, but about the heavenly war between Yahweh and the forces of Satan. Writing of the Jewish Holy War tradition, particularly in the Maccabean literature, Middleton says, “Adopting Jewish apocalyptic dualism, as well as its concept of Holy War, the enemy of God’s people changed from Seleucid or Roman armies to Satan. There was no hope of ending persecution, and therefore the cause of their suffering moved from God to Satan. Death did not trigger an earthly military victory, but a future, cosmic, heavenly success.”⁷⁸

Revelation makes these cosmic dimensions explicit, as I have already indicated. The woman of Revelation 17, said to be “drunk with the blood of the saints,” is seated upon a scarlet beast (17:3), which is likely the same beast described in Revelation 13.⁷⁹ That beast is explicitly tied with the dragon (13:4), which symbolizes Satan (cf. 20:2). The author of Revelation, then, describes the persecution of Christians not only as “imperialized,” but also “demonized” as a function of Satan’s activity here on the earth.

In addition to the other NT texts that portray a link between human suffering and persecution and cosmic conflict (see ch. 5), several early Christian martyr texts make this connection even more explicit. As Middleton suggests, “The Christians were God’s foot soldiers on the front line and they experienced the skirmishes of war through

⁷⁸Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict*, 133–34.

⁷⁹Beale, *Revelation*, 853.

persecution. Satan and his legions were, therefore, directly responsible for the persecution of Christians.”⁸⁰ In the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, the author writes of the sufferings of Christians in the mid-second century AD, “He might, if possible, by means of the unceasing punishment compel them to deny their faith—for the devil tried many things against them.”⁸¹ In the introduction to the *Martyrs of Lyons*, after mentioning the pagans’ hatred for Christians, the author writes, “The Adversary swooped down with full force, . . . he went to all lengths to train and prepare his minions against God’s servants.”⁸² Though the suffering was clearly at the hands of local officials, the true instigator was Satan, who sought not merely their physical pain or death, but their apostasy.⁸³

In the account of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua*, similarly, Perpetua receives a vision the night before her execution, whereupon she concludes, “I realized that it was not with wild animals that I would fight but with the devil, but I knew that I would win the victory.”⁸⁴ For Perpetua and the other martyrs, “victory” meant a faithful death, refusing to deny Christ in spite of whatever tortures they would face. The death of Sakkeas in the *Martyrdom of Apollonius* is described as “victory over the Evil One.”⁸⁵ Similarly, in the closing of the account of the death of the Bishop Fructuosus, the martyrs are said to have “trod underfoot the devil’s head.”⁸⁶ These martyrs, then, perceived not

⁸⁰Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict*, 81.

⁸¹*Mart. Pol.* 2.4. Translation taken from Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

⁸²*Mart. Lyons* 1.5. It is significant that the author finishes this sentence by talking about social ostracism and exclusion before mentioning later in the account the physical persecutions suffered by the Christians. Translation from this and the following martyr texts, unless otherwise noted, taken from Herbert Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

⁸³So also Ste. Croix, “Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?,” 30, who says of the goal of torture in Roman settings, “the essential aim was to make apostates, not martyrs.” See *Mart. Lyons* 1.16.

⁸⁴*Mart. Perpetua* 10.14.

⁸⁵*Mart. Apoll.* 47.

⁸⁶*Mart. Fruct.* 7.2. See also *Mart. Lyons* 1.23, where the death of a man named Sanctus is described as “overwhelming the Adversary.”

only of their suffering with cosmic dimensions—namely, as the work of the devil through their executioners—but also of their deaths themselves as a participation in this cosmic conflict.

These early Christian martyr texts are clearly too late to have influenced 1 Peter directly. They do, however, represent a continuation of depictions of cosmic conflict from the Pentateuch, through Second Temple literature, and in the writings of the NT itself. They are, therefore, a reliable depiction of a view of persecution that was present in the first-century, though their theology of persecution and martyrdom is slightly more developed. In that sense, these texts reveal the cosmic dimensions of suffering in the early Christian worldview, though they might not always be so explicitly stated.

Conclusion

While there was no official, empire-wide proscription and persecution of Christianity until the reign of Decius in the mid-third century, first-century believers still faced the constant possibility of social and economic ostracism, or even legal consequences, which could pose a “lethal threat.”⁸⁷ As a result of Nero’s pogroms against Christians in Rome after the Great Fire of AD 64, Christianity was “effectively illegal” as a result of the precedent set by the Emperor. Consequently, Christians could be slandered and ostracized on a local and unofficial level, as well as prosecuted and even executed on a provincial level for the name of “Christian” alone (*nomen ipsum*), without any official law in force forbidding Christian practice. Several texts in 1 Peter indicate that these kinds of official trials and sufferings are in line with the “various” trials described in the letter’s opening (1:6). As a result, early Christians tended to “imperialize” their suffering as a product of the Roman Empire, despite the absence of official persecution across the

⁸⁷Holloway, *Coping with Prejudice*, 65.

Empire at large. This imperialization naturally led to a demonization of their suffering and persecution as a result of the activity of Satan. In line with portrayals of cosmic conflict from the OT through the Gospels and other Epistles, the work of Satan in these persecutions was to attempt to produce apostasy. In resisting the devil's schemes and standing firm in the midst of persecution, the church thereby participates in Yahweh's cosmic conflict with the forces of evil.

Now that I have examined the origin and development of the Jewish and Christian depictions of cosmic conflict and located its relevance for the suffering and persecution experienced by the recipients of the letter, the task remains to apply this framework to a reading of the letter as a whole. How does cosmic conflict influence and shape Peter's paraenesis to these Anatolian congregations in the midst of suffering, and where might the influence of this portrayal be felt?

CHAPTER 7

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL PARAENESIS OF 1 PETER

Of the 105 verses that make up the epistle of 1 Peter, none are quoted more by the early church Fathers than 1 Peter 5:8: “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”¹ It is not difficult to see why many Christians throughout the history of the church have pointed to this exhortation and the surrounding context in the face of temptation or perceived demonic oppression. As this passage stands at the conclusion of the epistle, however, the reader would expect an exhortation in line with the primary aims of the author. In a letter primarily concerned with encouragement and exhortation to believers in the midst of suffering as a result of persecution, a warning against the chief demonic entity and his desire to “devour” Christians might seem out of place. Elsewhere in the letter the agents of persecution are human opponents and institutions. Indeed, this verse marks the first, and only, mention of the devil in the entire epistle.

This closing warning is, I suggest, not out of character with the rest of the epistle, but is integrally connected to Peter’s consistent encouragement in the face of suffering.² Viewed through the lens of the Jewish and early Christian depictions of cosmic conflict, this call in 5:9 to resist the devil is the logical conclusion of all that the

¹Urbanus Holzmeister, *Commentarius in Epistulas SS. Petri et Iudae Apostolorum. Epistula Prima S. Petri* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1937), 404–5. I am indebted to John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB, vol. 37B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 4, for this citation.

²When Peter speaks of “suffering” throughout the letter, he refers to the persecution experienced by his readers (see 2:19, 20; 3:14, 17; 4:1, 13, 15, 19). In keeping with this usage, when referring to “suffering” throughout this chapter, I have in mind suffering as a result of persecution, rather than suffering in general.

author has written thus far. Peter reminds his readers that they have been born again into the living hope of the people of God, heirs to all of God's promises to OT Israel. As such, they are also born again into the conflict that exists between Satan and God's people. As Satan opposed Jesus in his earthly ministry and the apostles as the gospel spread after the resurrection, so now he opposes the church and seeks its destruction. For the readers, all the attempts of their peers and of local human institutions to oppress and persecute them ought to be expected, as it is an expression of Satan's attempts to war against God and his saints. In the face of this opposition, Peter calls his readers to take a posture of non-retaliation and submission, not warring against their oppressors, but persisting in holiness and steadfast allegiance to the Lord.

In this chapter, I will discuss these themes as they are present throughout 1 Peter by offering a succinct reading of the letter as a whole, arguing for the relevance of cosmic conflict to Peter's overall message. In the interest of space, I will limit my comments to those issues most relevant for establishing the overall flow of the argument and the significance of cosmic conflict.

First Peter 1:1–2:10

The opening section of the epistle is primarily focused on redefining the identity of the recipients as the true people of God and their suffering as akin to Israel's suffering in their captivity in Egypt and the Babylonian exile. Peter speaks of these Christians not merely as a persecuted minority, but as a chosen people (1:1; 2:9) who will receive eschatological reward and salvation. They are born again into the promises of OT Israel, and therefore also into the conflict of OT Israel. Though they are chosen by God and heirs of his eschatological salvation, they experience suffering at the hands of their peers and local governmental institutions, as did Israel at the hands of the Egyptians and the Babylonians. In the following section, I will examine the language in this opening address that connects the church with Israel, and explore the use of both exodus and exile

imagery in this section, showing the significance of cosmic conflict on Peter's paraenesis.

The Church and Israel

Peter's purpose in reframing the identity of his readers is not merely to provide them with a more hopeful outlook, but to incorporate their story into the larger story of Israel, the people of God chosen to inherit the promises to Abraham. Accordingly, throughout the letter, and particularly in the opening, Peter uses language and imagery pertaining to OT Israel in describing the blessings the readers possess.

Some suggest that the consistent use of this imagery indicates that Peter envisioned primarily a Jewish, rather than Gentile, audience.³ Elsewhere, however, Peter describes the former life of the readers in terms more natural to a Gentile audience. Referring to the “passions of your former ignorance” (1:14), he states that the readers “were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers” (1:18). Later Peter admonishes the readers to live according to God's will, noting “the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do” (4:3; ἀρκετὸς γὰρ ὁ παρεληλυθὼς χρόνος τὸ βούλημα τῶν ἐθνῶν κατεργάσθαι), listing several vices, including idolatry. While OT Israel is frequently chastised for her idolatry, the notion of idolatry as something “inherited from your forefathers” points more to a Gentile audience than those of a Jewish background. Peter likely then pictures the former behavior of the readers as like the Gentiles, suggesting at least a sizable portion of the intended audience is non-Jewish.⁴ The significance, then, of the imagery of OT Israel likely lies in its rhetorical and theological import. Specifically, in applying the language of Israel to a sizably Gentile

³E.g., Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.1.2; John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Peter*, in *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 22, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).

⁴So also, e.g., Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 51; Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 8; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 38–40; Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, NTNC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 39; J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC, vol. 49 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), xlv–xlvi.

audience and making allusions to OT concepts and events, Peter connects the present existence and struggle of the Christians with the story and struggle of Israel.⁵ Even for ethnically Jewish recipients of 1 Peter in Asia Minor, this theological conception of the identity of the church is most significant. In the following sections, I will discuss the various images and allusions in this opening section that connect the Christian community with OT Israel, noting their significance for Peter’s paraenesis.

The elect. Peter begins his letter by addressing his readers as “elect exiles of the Dispersion” (ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς). At the end of this opening section, similarly, the Christians are called a “chosen race” (γένος ἐκλεκτόν; 2:9), thereby creating an *inclusio* around the idea of election. The OT authors often speak of Israel being “chosen” (ἐκλέγω) by the Lord (e.g. Deut 4:37; 7:7; 10:15; Pss 32:12; 46:5; Isa 44:1; 41:8–9; 44:1).⁶ The church, then, though living as exiles, remains chosen and precious in the sight of God, as did Israel in its exile and sojourning. The Christians receive this elect status because of their connection to Christ, who is likewise “chosen.” Peter reminds his readers that Christ was “rejected by men” and yet “chosen and precious” (ἐκλεκτόν ἔντιμον) in God’s sight (2:4, 6; cf. Isa 28:16). Insofar as the believers belong to Christ, the “chosen one,” they share in his elect status. Conversely, those who oppose Christ and his people are also “chosen,” though in a negative sense. Those who reject the chosen cornerstone are said to “stumble” (προσκόπτουσιν), which, Peter adds, they were “destined to do” (ὁ καὶ ἐτέθησαν).⁷

For Christians who also face rejection at the hands of their peers, the reminder

⁵See also Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 69; Michaels, *1 Peter*, xlix–l; Abson Prédésin Joseph, *A Narratological Reading of 1 Peter* (London: T & T Clark, 2012), 18–19.

⁶See also Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 81.

⁷Contra Elliott, *1 Peter*, 434, who suggests the “stumbling” is ordained rather than the disobedience itself. He writes, “It is the *result* of disobedience that is foreordained, not the decision itself” (emphasis original).

of God's election provides hope. These readers may indeed feel like "exiles," as their identity as Christians has led to their social ostracization and perhaps more tangible forms of persecution. Yet, in the midst of their exile, these believers are still God's elect. As such, they share in the inheritance of God's promise to Abraham, including God's protection from their enemies.

The testimony of the prophets. Following his description of the blessings of salvation and the new birth (1:3–9), Peter speaks of the testimony of the OT prophets.⁸ He writes that the prophets, in their anticipation of Israel's Messiah, "were serving not themselves but you" (1:12). As the prophets announced the continuation of God's plan of salvation through his Messiah, the fulfillment of that promise led not to ethnic Israel, but to God's new chosen people, the church. As Goppelt writes, this statement serves "to illustrate indelibly the 'already' of salvation's presence, so that the church . . . might hold fast the tension between this 'already' and its own existence in the world."⁹ The eschatological salvation that Israel hoped for, then, found its fulfillment in the present for the church as they await its ultimate realization in the eschaton. Furthermore, the Messiah was expected to bring about victory over Israel's enemies and usher in the everlasting kingdom of God (e.g., Dan 7:13–14). As the church now receives the blessing of Israel's Messiah, they share in the expectation that they, too, will see the subjugation of their enemies.

⁸Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1947), 259–68, suggests these are contemporary prophets, rather than OT prophets. Given the consistent OT references and allusion to OT Israel, this suggestion is unlikely. For further discussion, see Mark Dubis, *Messianic Woes in 1 Peter: Suffering and Eschatology in 1 Peter 4:12–19*, *Studies in Biblical Literature* 33 (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 108–10.

⁹Leonhart Goppelt, *A Commentary on First Peter*, ed. Ferdinand Hahn, trans. John E. Alsup (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 100.

The call to holiness. Beginning in 1:13, Peter shifts to exhort the believers to set their hope in Christ and urges them toward holiness. In contrast to their “former ignorance” (v. 15), the believers are to walk in holiness. Both the reason for this call to holiness as well as the model of true holiness is the character of God himself, as Peter appeals to the repeated call in Leviticus, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (Lev 11:44; 19:2; 20:7). This call to holiness for Israel was not only a call to moral excellence and obedience to the law, but also to serve as a distinction from the pagan practices of the people living in Canaan (see esp. Lev 20:7, 26). So also Peter’s exhortation to holiness comes in the context of a call to abandon “the passions of your former ignorance” (v. 14) and “the futile ways inherited from your forefathers” (v. 18). Peter thus draws the connection between Israel, called to holiness in the midst of the pagan people of Canaan, and the church, called to holiness in the midst of the Roman Empire and the various pagan aspects of society within it. This call for holiness will also be significant in Peter’s *Haustafel* in 2:11–3:22, as remaining holy to the Lord entails the resistance to conformity with the surrounding pagan culture, despite the suffering that may result from such nonconformity (see further below).

The church as the “chosen race.” Peter ends the opening section of the epistle by contrasting the believers, who believe in Christ, the cornerstone, and therefore “will not be put to shame” (2:6), and the unbelievers, who “stumble” with regard to Christ. He ends with a reference to both Exodus 19:5–6 and Isaiah 43:20–21, saying of the believers, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession” (ὁμεῖς δὲ γένος ἐκλεκτόν, βασιλῆιον ἱεράτευμα, ἔθνος ἅγιον, λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν; cf. Exod 19:5–6 LXX). These words in Exodus (βασιλῆιον ἱεράτευμα καὶ ἔθνος ἅγιον) are given to the people by the Lord in anticipation of the institution of the

covenant at Sinai.¹⁰ Israel as a nation enjoyed this privileged status as a result of, and conditional upon, their faithfulness to the laws and ordinances given through Moses. As God set his seal upon Israel in the midst of all the other nations of the earth, so also these words, reapplied by Peter, indicate that the Lord has chosen this new people for himself from all nations. The context of Isaiah 43:20–21 relates to the promise of return from exile. The Lord promises restoration for the people from Babylon, and that he will provide for “my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise” (LXX τὸ γένος μου τὸ ἐκλεκτὸν λαὸν μου ὃν περιεποιησάμην τὰς ἀρετὰς μου διηγείσθαι; cf. 1 Pet 2:9, γένος ἐκλεκτὸν . . . λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν). Though the Christians in Asia Minor are indeed “exiles” (1:1), they share in Israel’s promise of restoration through the Lord, who delivers them out of darkness and into light.¹¹

In the following verse, Peter alludes to the book of Hosea, where God pronounces judgment on Israel for her continued faithlessness and declares that they are not his people and will they no longer receive mercy (Hos 1:6, 9). Following a depiction of the Lord’s judgment, Hosea goes on to describe the Lord’s mercy and his restoration of his people (2:23 LXX). Peter reappropriates this imagery to the church, who, insofar as they come from Gentile nations, “were not a people,” and yet have been made to be the new people of God (2:10), having been ransomed by the blood of Christ (1:18–19). As Davids notes, the label, “the people of God,” is significant: “Jews were not slow to point this out and glory in their status. But now these Christians know they are elect—not just a people of God, but *the* people of God. They are the recipients of God’s mercy, that is, his

¹⁰Note also the connections between the “sprinkling” of the blood of Jesus in 1 Pet 1:2 with the blood thrown on the people in the confirmation of the covenant in Exod 24:6–8. See also Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 88; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 12; Davids, *First Peter*, 49; J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, BNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 44; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 320; Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 56.

¹¹For more on the OT background of these verses, see Dubis, *Messianic Woes in 1 Peter*, 49–50.

care and concern.”¹² Once again, Peter draws the readers into the story of Israel and reframes their identity within the story of God’s dealings with his people throughout history. As God guided and protected his people through suffering in ages past, so now he guides and protects his church in the midst of their suffering. As noted in chapter 3, the supremacy of Yahweh and his actions as the divine warrior throughout Israel’s history provided hope for the nation in its conflict with its neighbors. As the Christians are drawn into Israel’s story, then, as the new “elect” of God, they are also drawn into Israel’s conflict and, ultimately, victory.

Exodus and Exile Imagery

Peter further connects the early Christians with the people of Israel in his repeated references both to the exodus event as well as the exile. As these two key events were a major part of Israel’s story, Peter connects the current experience of the readers to these significant experiences of OT Israel. Thus, Peter not only reframes the identify of his readers as the new elect of God, but also reframes their struggles in light of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt and Babylon. As noted in chapter 3, OT authors repeatedly interpreted God’s victory in the exodus and in the return from exile in light of cosmic conflict. Therefore, while some scholars have sought to elevate either the exodus or the exile to the status of the dominant metaphor throughout the letter, I will briefly examine likely references and allusions to both events and suggest that both are important for Peter’s paraenetic purposes. As God’s acts of deliverance of OT Israel was a function of his victory over the so-called gods of the nations, so also the coming vindication of these early Christians would be a product of God’s victory over Satan and the demonic realm.

¹² Davids, *First Peter*, 93; emphasis original.

Imagery of the exile. The letter opens by referring to the addressees as *παρεπιδήμιοι*, typically translated as “exiles.” The term only appears twice in the LXX and usually has the broader connotation of a “stranger” or “sojourner” (e.g., Gen 23:4; Ps 38:13). Here, in connection with *διασποράς*, it calls to mind the “Dispersion” of the people of Israel, scattered throughout Gentile lands. Jews thus “dispersed” awaited a time of restoration when they might be gathered back to the land to receive God’s blessing (LXX Deut 30:4; Ps 146:2; Isa 49:6).¹³

Similarly, Peter’s use of the OT in this opening section frequently carries exilic connotations. Having reminded his readers of their new birth by the word of God, Peter cites Isaiah 40:6–8 (1 Pet 1:24). In the context of Peter’s exhortation, the citation gives cause for confidence, as their new birth is established forever, in contrast to “all flesh” (likely a reference to their enemies, in part), which will wither and fade. Within the broader context of Isaiah 40, however, the citation takes on added significance. Isaiah 40 marks a major shift in the book towards the hope of future restoration from exile. The punishment for the people has come to an end, and the Lord speaks a word of comfort (40:1–2). The Lord will reveal his glory (v. 5) and come with might (v. 8) to tend to his people and restore them. Peter connects this abiding “word” of God with the proclamation of the gospel to the readers when he says, “And this word is the good news that was preached to you” (1:25). As Dubis notes, Peter connects this *ῥῆμα* of Israel’s return from exile with the *ῥῆμα* of the gospel. “For 1 Peter, then, the long-anticipated restoration of Israel has found (and, at the Parousia, yet *will* fully find) its realization in the readers of 1 Peter themselves.”¹⁴

¹³As I argued above, Peter does not use this language to indicate his audience is primarily Jewish. The reference to the exile is instead metaphorically applied to Gentile Christians, who share in Israel’s hope of restoration and vindication in the midst of a pagan and hostile society. Contra Elliott, *Home for the Homeless*, who argues that the term refers only to the political and sociological status of the readers as “resident aliens.”

¹⁴Dubis, *Messianic Woes in 1 Peter*, 53; emphasis original.

I have already noted above how Peter's citation of Hosea 1:6, 9; 2:23 LXX in 2:10 serves to incorporate the church's experience of mercy with the story of Israel. This citation also carries overtones of the return from exile. The background for this restoration in Hosea is the exile, as the removal of Israel from the land signified their "disinheritance."¹⁵ The "mercy" shown to Israel is their restoration in the land, as Hosea writes, "I will sow her for myself in the land" (2:23), immediately preceding the verses to which Peter alludes. Like in his citation of Isaiah 40, then, Peter appropriates language from the OT that portrays salvation in terms of return from exile.

Imagery of the exodus. Other times in 1:1–2:10, however, Peter makes references to events surrounding the exodus from Egypt. As the letter shifts from the description of the benefits of salvation to the exhortation to holiness, Peter marks this transition with the phrase *ἀναζωσάμενοι τὰς ὀσφύας τῆς διανοίας ὑμῶν* ("girding up the loins of your minds;" 1:13). The girding of loins involved securing the ends of long robes or garments in preparation for activity or quick movement. When applied to the mind, then, the idea is of mental readiness (cf. ESV, "preparing your minds for action"). Luke uses a similar expression in the context of readiness for the coming of the Son of Man (12:35; *Ἔστωσαν ὑμῶν αἱ ὀσφύες περιεζωσμέναι*), indicating that Peter perhaps intends the phrase to carry eschatological overtones. The phrase also is likely an allusion to the exodus narrative. In the institution of the Passover, the Israelites are told to eat of it "with your belt fastened (LXX *αἱ ὀσφύες ὑμῶν περιεζωσμέναι*), your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand" (Exod 12:11). This preparedness was indicative of the nearness of their redemption and the suddenness of their departure. Peter, then, in using this phrase following his explanation of the eschatological salvation that belongs to the

¹⁵So also Dubis, "It is vital to recognize that Israel's exile was the prime evidence that God had disinherited Israel." Dubis, *Messianic Woes in 1 Peter*, 59.

believers, likens their expectant hope of the ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:13) to Israel’s expectation of God’s judgment on the Egyptians and their gods.

A few verses later, Peter speaks of Christ as a “lamb without blemish or spot” (ἀμνοῦ ἀμωμοῦ καὶ ἀσπίλου; 1:19). The adjective ἀσπίλος does not occur in the LXX, but ἀμωμος appears frequently in sacrificial contexts. Similarly, the instructions for the Passover indicate that the lamb (πρόβατον) must be flawless (τέλειον). Peter may, therefore, be alluding to the sacrificial system in general, to the Passover specifically, or even to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, who is also spoken of as a πρόβατον.¹⁶ Given the likely reference to the exodus in 1:13 and 1:17 (see below), a reference to the Passover seems most likely, though Schreiner rightly cautions against restricting the language to any one specific reference.¹⁷ Indeed, the mention of redemption in 1:18 (λυτρώω) is used in the LXX with reference to the exodus (Exod 6:6; 15:13; Deut 7:8; 9:26; 13:5; 15:15; 24:18; 1 Chr 17:21) and the return from exile (Isa 35:9; 41:14; 43:1; 51:11; 52:3; Jer 38:11 LXX; Zeph 3:15; Zech 10:8). Given Peter’s blending of exodus and exile imagery in his references to Exodus 19, Isaiah 43, and Hosea 2 in 1 Peter 2:9–10, it is likely that he has both ideas in mind in 1:19 as well.

Finally, Peter makes his exhortation to reverence and holiness with reference to the παροιμία of his readers. Some translations render this word as “exile” (ESV; NRSV), but this incorrectly points towards the idea of the Babylonian exile.¹⁸ The

¹⁶For the sacrificial system in general as the intended allusion, see Grudem, *1 Peter*, 87–88; Duane F. Watson and Terrance Callan, *First and Second Peter*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 35. For the possibility of the Passover lamb as the referent, see Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 116–117; Joel B. Green, *1 Peter*, Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 41; M. Eugene Boring, *1 Peter*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 83; Davids, *First Peter*, 72–73; Francis W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 106. For Isa 53 as the backdrop, see Elliott, *1 Peter*, 374. The notion of a reference to Isa 53 is strengthened by the possibility that 1 Pet 1:18a is an allusion to Isa 52:3.

¹⁷Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 86–87; so also Michaels, *1 Peter*, 66.

¹⁸Elliott, *1 Peter*, 366–369 again here argues that παροιμία refers only to the political and sociological status of the readers. As will be shown below, this fails to adequately account for the OT background of the term.

biblical usage of *παροιμία* and the related *πάροικος* is a more natural reference either to a non-native resident or to the exodus and wilderness wanderings. The only other occurrence of *παροιμία* in the NT occurs in Acts 13:17, which describes the status of Israel while in bondage in Egypt (see also *πάροικος* in Acts 7:6). The LXX uses *πάροικος* and *παροικέω* to describe Abraham's status as a "stranger" in the land of Canaan (Gen 21:34; 23:4; Ps 104:12 LXX) or to refer to a foreign resident (Exod 12:45; Lev 22:10; 25:6; Num 35:15; Deut 14:20 LXX). The term is also used, however, specifically to Israel in bondage in Egypt (Gen 15:13; Num 20:15; Deut 26:5; Isa 52:4). Peter, then, uses *παροιμία* here as a way of describing the social status of the Christians in the midst of their hostile pagan culture. Beyond that, however, Peter likely intends to recall the image of Israel in bondage in Egypt, awaiting their redemption by God's power.

The significance of both exodus and exile imagery. As noted in chapter 1, the use and significance of both exodus and exile imagery has been well noted in several recent works on 1 Peter. Dubis argues that Peter's depiction of suffering and vindication is "essentially an exile/restoration pattern. First Peter portrays the suffering of the readers as exilic suffering, and portrays future glory as the glory of Israel's anticipated eschatological restoration."¹⁹ Dubis further suggests that the allusions to the exodus in 1 Peter should be interpreted in light of the exile imagery, as a kind of "first exile."²⁰ Peter's use of exile and exodus imagery is therefore "complementary rather than antagonistic," as "the exodus and the Babylonian exile represent a pattern of subjugation followed by liberation that has repeated itself in the history of Israel."²¹ Nevertheless,

¹⁹Dubis, *Messianic Woes in 1 Peter*, 46.

²⁰Ibid., 51. Dubis suggests this connection is due to the influence of Isa 40–55 on Peter's eschatological outlook.

²¹Ibid.

Dubis argues that the exile/restoration pattern is the dominant metaphor for Peter's depiction of suffering and the vindication to come.²²

By contrast, Liebengood proposes that the exodus is the primary metaphor for Peter, as Peter depicts the readers in a second exodus. Rather than picturing suffering as “exilic suffering” (a la Dubis) preceding restoration, Liebengood argues instead that the suffering in the letter is characteristic of the testing and trial of the wilderness in the second exodus.²³ While noting that the mention of *διασπορά* in 1:1 seems to point to an exilic mindset, Liebengood nonetheless argues that the grammatical construction *ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς* should be understood so as to say that “Peter did not intend to locate his readers *in* the Diaspora, but instead wished to communicate separation from it.”²⁴ The Christians are therefore delivered from their exilic suffering and are instead on the wilderness journey of the new exodus. This understanding of *διασπορά* is challenged by the common observation of the literary *inclusio* between the mention of “Diaspora” in 1:1 and “Babylon” in 5:13.²⁵ Liebengood argues, however, the mention of “Babylon” in 5:13 does not necessarily point to an exilic setting. “Babylon” could simply be a hostile world power whose reign will ultimately end.²⁶ Further, he proposes, the *inclusio* between 5:13 and 1:1 should be understood in terms of election rather than exile (*ἐκλεκτοῖς, συνεκλεκτῆ*), emphasizing that the sending community are “co-elect” and thus are also “participants in a new exodus journey.”²⁷

²²So also Andrew M. Mbuvi, *Temple, Exile, and Identity in 1 Peter*, LNTS, vol. 345 (London: T & T Clark, 2007); Green, *1 Peter*, 18.

²³Liebengood, *Eschatology of 1 Peter*, 135–40.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 156–60; emphasis original. Liebengood suggests *διασπορᾶς* should be regarded as an ablative genitive, indicating the notion of departure.

²⁵E.g., Elliott, *Home for the Homeless*, 39.

²⁶Liebengood, *Eschatology of 1 Peter*, 163. Liebengood further suggests that “Babylon” may not be a reference to Rome at all. I discuss the options for understanding this reference in ch. 6n18, and suggest Babylon should in fact be taken as a reference to Rome.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 164.

In contrast to these scholars, I suggest that neither the exodus nor the exile should be considered a kind of controlling metaphor, but rather that both are indicative of the larger theme of incorporation into the story—and thereby the conflict—of the people of Israel. Peter’s intention, then, is not to picture the readers in a second exile or a second exodus, but to picture them in a similar situation to both the exile and the exodus. Dubis approximates this idea, when he suggests that both exile and exodus “represent a pattern of subjugation followed by liberation.”²⁸ The significance of the exodus and the exile, however, is greater than simply a pattern of subjugation and liberation. For the OT writers and early Christians, both of these events had cosmic as well as earthly implications. As I demonstrated in chapter 3, Egypt did not simply represent a powerful oppressor, but the earthly counterpart to sinister cosmic rivals of Yahweh. Their oppression and slavery of God’s people was not just a matter of political expediency, but an expression of war between the gods of the nations and Yahweh. Therefore in God’s deliverance of his people, the OT makes clear the judgment of the plagues and the Red Sea are against the people of Egypt *and their gods* (Exod 12:12; Num 33:4b; 2 Sam 7:23; Ps 74:13–14; Isa 51:9b–10).

In the same way, the Babylonian exile was more than just a political reality. In one sense, it was an expression of the Lord’s righteous judgment on Israel’s faithlessness and idolatry (2 Kgs 24:1–4, 20; 2 Chr 36:15–16). At the same time, Jeremiah likens the actions of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians to the actions of the Canaanite sea monsters (Jer 51:34; see chapter 3 above). In announcing judgment on Babylon and thus redemption for Israel, Jeremiah speaks of the Lord not only against the cities of Babylon (51:41–43, 54–58), but also against the god Bel in Babylon (51:44). In bringing judgment upon the nations hostile to Israel, Yahweh brings judgment against their gods and

²⁸Dubis, *Messianic Woes in 1 Peter*, 51.

demonstrates his preeminence. For the biblical writers, to face oppression at the hands of an enemy was to experience the hostility of evil cosmic beings, and to receive vindication and liberation was to experience the supremacy of Yahweh as he conquers his foes in the heavenly realm.

Peter, then, in alluding to the exodus and the exile, is not necessarily trying to frame the readers experience primarily in the terms of either event by itself. Rather, by utilizing the imagery of both events (particularly in such close proximity), Peter recasts the setting of his readers as a situation like *both* the exodus and the exile. Namely, they are experiencing hostility as a result of both local and, by extension, imperial institutions, just as Israel experienced at the hands of Egypt and later Babylon. Their predicament was not merely a political or social one, however, but also had cosmic significance. The hostility they experienced was none other than that of their adversary, the devil (5:8), and therefore their coming vindication was a product of the sovereignty and supremacy of Yahweh rather than their own strength or the whims of their circumstances (5:10).

Summary

Peter opens his letter by seeking to redefine his recipients as the true people of God and redefine their circumstances in light of the conflict between God's people and the influence of hostile cosmic powers at work through human governments and institutions. Though they are "exiles" and "sojourners" (1:1, 17) they are "elect" and "born again into a living hope" (1:1, 3), heirs of an eschatological salvation (1:4–5). They are suffering (1:6), but their suffering is temporary and a product of a conflict that transcends their earthly circumstances. As such, these trials only serve to prove the genuineness of their faith, since they are guarded by God's power (1:5–7). They are the heirs to the promises of Israel given through the prophets (1:10–12), though now they suffer as Israel did during their captivity in Egypt and exile in Babylon.

As such, these Christians are to put aside their "former ignorance" and pursue

holiness in fear and reverence before God (1:14–17). As Israel was redeemed out of captivity in the exodus and the return from exile, the readers have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and therefore will endure forever, since they have been born again from the imperishable word of God (1:23–25). They have clung to the precious cornerstone, while those who would malign and oppress them are doomed to stumble and receive judgment and condemnation from the Lord (2:4–8). As such, they stand as a chosen people, a new Israel to proclaim the excellencies of Yahweh (2:9–10), even in the midst of persecution.

First Peter 2:11–3:22

In this middle section of his letter, Peter proceeds to address specific groups of individuals in the form of a *Haustafel*. In these passages, Peter consistently exhorts several groups to walk in good and upright behavior, with humility and subordination to the proper authorities, even in the face of hostility and suffering. On the basis of their identity as heirs of God’s eschatological salvation, the believers can face the hostility towards them with humility and honor. If the Christians in Asia Minor are the heirs of Israel’s salvation and share in Israel’s conflict and struggle, these ethical exhortations act as the “rules of engagement” in the midst of their suffering and persecution.

In the midst of this conflict, Peter instructs three groups of people in inferior social positions—civilians to government (2:13–17), slaves to masters (2:18–25), wives to husbands (3:1–6)—to submit rather than retaliate to their more powerful counterparts. As Asumang argues, “Peter’s strategy amounted to encouraging the use of peaceful non-retaliation, and the hope and holiness inaugurated by the redemptive work of Christ, as resistive weapons in a spiritualized holy war.”²⁹ This submission and righteous behavior

²⁹Annang Asumang, “‘Resist him’ (1 Pet 5:9): Holiness and Non-Retaliatory Responses to Unjust Suffering as ‘Holy War’ in 1 Peter,” *Conspectus (South African Theological Seminary)* 11 (2011), 17.

is not, however, promised to end or even alleviate their suffering. Peter consistently calls the believers to persevere in “good works,” but, as Williams notes, these works frequently “cause, or at least further exacerbate, social conflict (rather than deter it)” (e.g., 3:6; 3:14, 16–17; 4:19).³⁰ These good works, then, are not the means by which the believers ought to expect to ingratiate themselves to the culture, but rather expressions of devotion to the Lord that might, in fact, run counter to the general cultural expectation.³¹ Though the readers are called to submit to the human authorities, their ultimate allegiance belongs to the Lord. It is with this backdrop that Peter’s exhortation for proper submission should be understood.

Civilians and Rulers

Peter begins his *Haustafel* by addressing civilians in their relation to the governing authorities. In chapter 6, I argued that the Christians in Asia Minor (and by extension, across the Empire) were subject to persecution at the hands of local magistrates and governors, even though Christianity was not officially outlawed as a religion until the third century AD. Early Christians might have been tempted to regard the government as an evil, illegitimate institution that claimed no authority over Christians who worshipped Jesus as Lord. Here, however, Peter contends that human institutions are appointed by God and should therefore be obeyed. While they may at times act as oppressors of the church and therefore embody the desires of Satan, human institutions exist by the will of God and the citizens and residents of the Empire should subordinate themselves to their rule (cf. Rom 13:1–5).³²

³⁰Travis B. Williams, *Good Works in 1 Peter: Negotiating Social Conflict and Christian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, WUNT 337 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 255–57.

³¹Balch, by contrast, has argued that Peter’s *Haustafel* served an apologetic purpose, and therefore urged acculturation to the society at large. See David Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code of 1 Peter*, SBLMS 26 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981).

³²For the notion of subordination in *ὑποτάσσω*, see Elliott, *1 Peter*, 487. The idea of subordination encompasses both the idea of respect and obedience. So also Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 127; Grudem, *1 Peter*, 123.

This subordination, however, has its limits. Even in the midst of his call for subordination, there are hints of subversion here and throughout the *Haustafel*. Peter refers to these rulers as human (*ἀνθρωπίνῃ*) who are sent by God for a purpose. Even the emperor, though “supreme” (*ὑπερέχοντι*), derives his authority from the Lord. The Emperor may be acknowledged throughout the Empire as *divus*, but for Christians all earthly rulers remained *ἀνθρώπινος*. Further, these rulers are referred to as *κτίσεις*, implying their contingency upon the Lord. As Schreiner notes, “Peter reminded his readers at the outset that rulers are merely creatures, created by God and existing under his lordship.”³³

The reason for the believers’ submission is, likewise, not due to the inherent worth and authority of these institutions, but rather *διὰ τὸν κύριον* (2:13). In context, *κύριος* likely refers to Jesus, who is called *κύριος* elsewhere in the epistle (1:3; 3:15) and whom Peter explicitly uses as an example for believers in 2:21–25.³⁴ The subordination of the believers, therefore, is not an expression of their devotion to the Emperor or provincial rulers, but an act of living as “servants of God” (v. 16) under the ultimate authority of Christ.

Further, Peter does not advocate total passivity on the part of his readers, but instead perseverance in love and holiness even in the midst of opposition and hostility. Christians are told to submit *ὡς ἐλεύθεροι*.³⁵ Their subordination to the Roman Empire does not make them subject to every whim of the local and imperial rulers, as their

³³Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 128. So also, e.g., Williams, *Good Works in 1 Peter*, 226–28; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 489; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 124; Davids, *First Epistle of Peter*, 98–99; Jacques Schlosser, *La première épître de Pierre*, Commentaire biblique, Nouveau Testament 21 (Paris: Cerf, 2011), 154–55.

³⁴So also, e.g., Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 183; Grudem, *1 Peter*, 127; Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 128; Davids, *First Peter*, 99. Contra Elliott, *1 Peter*, 489–90; Kelly, *Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 109; who see God the Father as the referent.

³⁵The Greek lacks a verb prior to this phrase, thus most naturally linking it grammatically with the imperative Ὑποτάγητε of v. 13. See also Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 131; Dubis, Mark, *1 Peter: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 68.

ultimate authority is the Lord. Accordingly, submission does not involve perfect obedience of every law, particularly when those laws are at odds with the commands and laws of the Lord. Indeed, the centrality of the Emperor Cult in Asia Minor and other provinces, as well as the influence of pagan practices in honor of civic gods, made complete obedience to social norms and customs impossible for a Christian who aimed to remain faithful to Christ. Christians are therefore ἐλεύθεροι in regard to the world, but δοῦλοι of God. This freedom is not a license for evil (v. 16), but the motivation (in part) for doing good (v. 15).

These “good works” (v. 15) performed by the Christians are, in one sense, a function of their submission. By submitting to the governing authorities, Christians show they should not be regarded as seditious and therefore avoid punishment by the state. Peter’s ethical exhortation, however, is consistently directed towards holiness (1:15; 2:5, 9; 3:5) rather than cultural accommodation (1:14, 18; 4:2–4). Further, righteous behavior does not exempt the readers from punishment and suffering, as Peter makes explicit in the following section relating to slaves and masters (2:19–20) and the ominous overtones about that which is “frightening” (πτόησιν) in relation to wives and husbands (3:6; see further below). The “good” that the Christians are to do within their subordination to the governing authorities, therefore, also involves persistently doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord, regardless of whatever consequences may result. The goal of “silencing the ignorance of foolish people,” viewed in this light, is akin to the general exhortation that began the *Haustafel* in 2:12. Believers are there encouraged to live honorably, so that their opponents may glorify God “on the day of visitation.” There Peter does not indicate that righteous living will result in less conflict, but only that the believers will be vindicated in the eschaton. As Williams concludes, “Only through God’s eschatological intervention will the slander cease and will the conflict be brought to an end.”³⁶

³⁶Williams, *Good Works in 1 Peter*, 180.

Fittingly, then, Peter ends his exhortation regarding governments with a fourfold imperative in v. 17. The readers are told, “Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.” The emperor is to be honored, along with everyone, for his God-ordained role as a ruler, but only God is to be feared. Whereas the Emperor Cult remained a fixture at the center of life throughout the Roman provinces, the honor due the emperor from Christians remained a degree less than their fear and reverence for God.³⁷ Throughout the period of the early church and in the early martyr accounts, it is this refusal to honor the emperor as *divus* that brought about much of the suffering and persecution of Christians (e.g., *Mart. Pol.* 8.2). The readers of 1 Peter, however, must persist in doing good even in the face of the threats of Rome itself. Ultimate authority and honor reside in God alone, and so their resistance manifested itself in their unmatched allegiance of Christ alone as Lord. Peter here echoes the thought of Sirach, “The prince and the judge and the ruler are honored, but none of them is greater than the one who fears the Lord” (10:24 NRSV).

As I demonstrated in chapters 3 and 4, the nations that opposed and oppressed the people of God were frequently seen as instruments of evil supernatural beings, as a reflection of the cosmic conflict between Yahweh and the spiritual forces of darkness. These local and imperial governmental institutions in Asia Minor (and beyond), in their persecution of Christians, could also be seen as agents of Satan and the demonic realm. As the nature of this conflict, however, was spiritual rather than merely political, the Christians were not to respond in kind. Instead, they were to humbly subordinate themselves to the governing authorities, as the ultimate victory they hoped for would be achieved by God alone. Therefore, even though it may result in unjust suffering, the

³⁷So also Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 190; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 131–32; Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 133–34; Davids, *First Peter*, 104; Watson, *First and Second Peter*, 66; Boring, *1 Peter*, 116; Reinhard Feldmeier, *The First Letter of Peter*, trans. Peter H. Davids (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 164–65.

readers are exhorted to persist in doing good and persisting in their righteous behavior out of reverence for God, trusting in him for their ultimate vindication.

Slaves and Masters

The next group addressed in this *Haustafel* is slaves in relation to their masters. Like in his exhortation to civilians in relation to the government, again Peter addresses the more vulnerable group and encourages submission and nonretaliation. Peter's charge to slaves in this context, as with civilians to rulers, is both to genuine submission as well as faithfulness to God in spite of potential consequences. In this way, slaves are encouraged to subordination and subversion at the same time, as the authority of their masters is secondary to the authority of Christ.

The call for slaves to submit to their masters is modified by the phrase ἐν παντί φόβῳ. Several English translations render φόβος in this context as “respect” (ESV; NASB; NLT) or “deference” (NRSV), as though the objects of this φόβος are the earthly masters. “Fear” in 1 Peter, however, is used to refer to one's disposition towards God, not human beings (1:17; 2:17; 3:2). Indeed, Peter instructs the believers *not* to fear other humans (3:6, 14). This phrase should therefore be interpreted as reverence towards God, in line with the statement in v. 19 where suffering is experienced διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ.³⁸ In this way, the submission of slaves to their masters is similar to the submission of civilians to the government, who do so as ἐλεύθεροι and θεοῦ δοῦλοι (2:16–17).

Further, servants are again exhorted to “do good” (v. 20). Their submission to their masters may still result in unjust suffering and punishment, as servants in the ancient world were subject to various forms of verbal, physical and sexual abuse.³⁹ Yet

³⁸So also Karl H. Schelkle, *Die Petrusbriefe, der Judasbrief*, 6th ed., HTKNT 13/2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1988), 80; Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 194–95; Davids, *First Peter*, 106; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 138; Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 137; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 516–17; NIV, “in reverent fear of God.” Contra Grudem, *1 Peter*, 133; Brox, *Der erste Petrusbrief*, 131.

³⁹J. A. Harrill, “Slavery,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000); Elliott, *1 Peter*, 514. See also Thomas

servants are called upon to “do good,” enduring whatever suffering may follow. These acts of “doing good” should be understood as separate from the call to submission in v. 18. In other words, Peter exhorts servants to come under their masters’ authority but not to follow their every command. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand why these Christians slaves would face any beatings or punishment at all. Only an entirely capricious master would beat his servants for no reason, and it is unlikely this was a common enough occurrence to warrant comment in the epistle. Likely, then, Peter is urging slaves to persist in holiness and distinctly Christian behavior, even if it results in unjust suffering. As Williams notes, slaves in first-century cultures were expected to adopt the religion of their master.⁴⁰ Rather than accommodate to this practice, as an example, Christians were to “do good” in remaining faithful to Christ.

The reasons for this subordination are twofold: (1) to receive the commendation of the Lord (vv. 19–20); and (2) to follow in the footsteps of Christ (vv. 21–23). Peter writes that to “do good” and suffer is *χάρις* before God. Here, *χάρις* is best understood not as “grace” in the salvific sense, but in the more generic sense of a “gift” or “reward.” Accordingly, Elliott translates *χάρις* here as “creditable,” in that such righteous behavior occasions a favorable response from God (cf. Luke 6:32–34).⁴¹ That reward is not explained in depth until later, but is hinted at in the second reason Peter provides for subordination—namely, following Christ’s example. I will say more on the use of Christ as exemplar below, but for now it is important to note the relevance of this example at this point. Peter likens the suffering of Christ, using language from Isaiah 53 referencing the innocent suffering of the Servant, to the righteous suffering of the believers. The reason for Christ’s nonretaliation is given in verse 23—he “continued

Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 167–87.

⁴⁰Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 302.

⁴¹Elliott, *1 Peter*, 519; Dubis, *1 Peter*, 73; BDAG, s.v. “*χάρις*.”

entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”

This reference to the “judge” serves a double purpose here, as elsewhere in 1 Peter (1:17; 4:5, 17). In the case of Jesus, the just judge will see his righteousness and give him his proper reward, thus vindicating him from the accusations of his enemies. In the case of his enemies, however, the judge will punish them for their wickedness and opposition to the Son of God.⁴² This understanding of God as judge is strengthened by the probable allusion to Jeremiah 11:20, where the prophet calls for vindication in the form of vengeance against his enemies. Christians, therefore, have no need of retaliation when facing suffering and persecution for their faithfulness to the Lord, as they follow in the footsteps of Jesus, who experienced vindication through his suffering and entrusted both himself and his enemies to “him who judges justly.” Though Satan sought his destruction through the Jewish and Roman authorities (see ch. 5), Jesus was vindicated by the power of God in his resurrection. Christians, as participants in the same cosmic conflict, can also have confidence in God’s power to vindicate them from the sufferings inflicted by their enemies.

Wives and Husbands

The final group addressed in Peter’s *Haustafel* are wives in relation to their husbands—particularly unbelieving husbands. Again Peter encourages subordination even in the face of domestic partners who “do not obey the word” (3:1; cf. 2:8). The description of husbands as disobedient (*ἀπειθοῦσιν*) rather than simply unbelieving suggests a more adversarial relationship to Christianity, perhaps even finding expression in active persecution against Christians in general, and their own wives in particular.⁴³ As

⁴²Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 144; Kelly, *Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 121. The Greek text lacks an object for the verb *παρεδίδου*, suggesting that the object of the entrusting was not limited to Jesus himself, but also that he “entrusted” justice from his enemies to God as well.

⁴³Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*, 99.

in the other major sections of the *Haustafel*, however, wives are also charged here to persist in righteous conduct with their ultimate allegiance and subordination unto the Lord.

Peter urges wives to live with moral purity, noting that their husbands will be able to observe their “holy conduct in reverence for God” (my translation; τὴν ἐν φόβῳ ἁγνὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν). In describing their behavior as ἁγνός, Peter echoes his exhortations to all Christians to conduct themselves in holiness (1:15–16, 22).⁴⁴ Similarly, the phrase ἐν φόβῳ reflects the disposition of the wives towards God.⁴⁵ Translations that interpret this phrase in terms of “respect” (e.g., ESV, NASB) wrongly place the object of such “fear” as the husbands, rather than the Lord. As noted above in reference to 2:18, “fear” in 1 Peter is properly directed at God, and believers are counseled against fear of other humans. The moral purity and submission of the wives, therefore, is an expression of their allegiance to the Lord, rather than acculturation to social norms.

In addition to his admonition to holiness, Peter also calls for modesty in dress and adornment that followed common tradition in the Greco-Roman world.⁴⁶ Again, Peter’s purpose in this appeal, however, is not to find favor with society at large, but instead to find favor with God by exhibiting holy, righteous behavior. As Achtemeier rightly notes, the point is not that all such adornments are forbidden or evil, but

rather that the attraction of the Christian wife to her pagan husband is to consist not in external adornment but in the more important internal qualities outlined in the following verse. Only in that way will the virtue of the Christian faith become evident, and, more importantly, will the wife act in accordance with the divine will,

⁴⁴For this usage of ἁγνός elsewhere in the NT, see Phil 4:8; 1 Tim 5:22; Jas 3:17; 1 John 3:3.

⁴⁵So also, e.g., Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 220; Kelly, *Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 128; D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 198; Watson, *First and Second Peter*, 73; Beare, *First Epistle of Peter*, 154; Schelkle, *Der Petrusbriefe, der Judasbriefe*, 88; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 559–560; Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 152. Contra Brox, *Der erste Petrusbrief*, 143.

⁴⁶For examples of ancient writers commending similar modesty, see Elliott, *1 Peter*, 562–64; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 212.

and so be pleasing to God.⁴⁷

Just as civilians are called to submit to the government ὡς ἐλεύθεροι and slaves are called to be subject to their masters ἐν παντὶ φόβῳ, wives are called to adorn themselves modestly in submitting to their husbands so they might do what is right “in God’s sight” (v. 4).

Peter closes his exhortation to wives by another admonition to “do good” and not fear any human opposition (3:6). Similarly to slaves in relation to their masters, wives were expected to adopt the religious beliefs and practices of their husbands.⁴⁸ Despite exhorting submission, Peter’s mention here of “doing good” reinforces his earlier insistence that the conduct of wives be done ἐν φόβῳ. Wives who insisted on faithfulness to Christ in a marriage with a pagan husband, despite their general submissiveness and honorable conduct, could find themselves in danger of verbal, social, or even violent repercussions. Peter’s encouragement to not fear any intimidation (πτόησιν) is apt, in this context. While this verse marks the only occurrence of πτόησις in the NT, the verb form of this term (πτοέω) is used in Luke 21:9 in the context of “wars and tumults.” Peter likely has in mind not some abstract fear, but the threat of abuse from their peers, or perhaps even their own husbands.⁴⁹ Just as slaves were exhorted to “do good” in the face of undeserved beatings from hostile masters, wives also must persist in their holy behavior done in submission, even if it results in their persecution.

The goal of the submission called for here, then, is not only a missionary endeavor to “win” the unbelieving husbands to the faith (3:1), but also an expression of ultimate allegiance to the Lord and hope in his protection and ultimate vindication in the

⁴⁷Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 212–13.

⁴⁸Plutarch, *Conj. praec.* 19, *Mor.* 140D; Xenophon, *Oec.* 7.8; so also Elliott, *1 Peter*, 557–58; Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 153; Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*, 84; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 157; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 211.

⁴⁹On the threat of domestic abuse, see Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 320; Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 158.

face of fearful circumstances. In the cosmic conflict between the Lord and the forces of darkness, Satan's aims to oppose God's people might even be expressed in an unbelieving husband's attempt to dissuade his wife from worshipping Christ. As shown in chapter 5, Satan's opposition to the church is at times manifested in the actions of sole individuals rather than large institutions (e.g., Judas, Elymas). Wives in such situations must stand firm and continue to do good, placing their hope in God (3:5).

Christ as the Exemplar of Righteous Suffering

Following the exhortations given to civilians, slaves, and wives, Peter concludes his *Haustafel* by reiterating the call to nonretaliation and righteous behavior. This exhortation is grounded in a citation from the LXX of Psalm 33. The path to seeing "good days," according to the psalmist, is in turning away from evil and doing good, rehashing the frequent call throughout Peter's *Haustafel* to engage in righteous behavior, even in the midst of suffering and the opposition of "those who do evil" (v. 12). I argued in the previous chapter that verses 13–17 contain a call to persist in distinctively Christian behavior, even if it results in suffering, including legal trials. This radical call is grounded in verses 18–22 in the example of Christ, just as Peter, in his appeal to servants in relation to wicked masters, called upon Christ as the exemplar of righteous suffering (2:21–25).

Whereas the example of Christ in 2:21–25 focuses on the unjust nature of Christ's suffering, the emphasis in 3:18–22 is more on his vindication following his suffering. Like the Christians in Asia Minor, Christ also suffered—even unto death—but was "made alive in the spirit" (v. 18).⁵⁰ This latter phrase, as most scholars rightly note, refers not to Christ's spiritual life following his death, but to his resurrection.⁵¹ Even

⁵⁰The mention of Christ "suffering" (πάσχω) for sins, rather than the more traditional ἀποθνήσκω (e.g., 1 Cor 15:3) serves to connect the readers' suffering and persecution with Christ's.

⁵¹Grudem, *1 Peter*, 164; Davids, *First Peter*, 136; Beare, *First Epistle of Peter*, 169; Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 183; Watson, *First and Second Peter*, 88; Kelly, *Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 150; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 646.

though experiencing of a shameful death, Christ was vindicated and exalted in his resurrection over his enemies. For these early Christians, then, facing persecution perhaps even unto death in some cases, the example of Christ is a reminder that those who are “guarded by God’s power” (1:5) may still look forward to their own vindication in the last day.

Peter continues to speak of Christ’s vindication when he references Christ’s proclamation to the “spirits in prison” of verse 19. The identity of these spirits, as well as the nature of Christ’s proclamation, has been a matter of intense controversy throughout the history of interpretation. Numerous possibilities have been proposed, but these spirits are best seen as demonic entities, tied to the Enochic tradition of the Watchers (see ch. 4), to whom Christ proclaimed victory and judgment in his resurrection and ascension.⁵²

This view of the identity of the spirits is the majority view today and should be favored for several reasons. First, as Elliott notes, *πνεύματα* in the NT overwhelmingly refers to supernatural beings.⁵³ Second, the mention of Christ’s proclamation to “spirits” in verse 19 is parallel to the notion in verse 22 that “angels,” “authorities,” and “powers” are now subject to Christ. As noted in chapter 5, these terms frequently refer in the NT to angelic beings—often, evil spirits in particular (e.g. Mark 13:25; Rom 8:38; Eph 3:10;

⁵²E.g., William Joseph Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation to the Spirits: A Study of 1 Peter 3:18–4:6*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989); Chad T. Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ: 1 Peter 3:18–22 in Light of Sin and Punishment Traditions in Early Jewish and Christian Literature*, WUNT 2/305 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); Andrew J. Bandstra, “‘Making Proclamation to the Spirits in Prison:’ Another Look at 1 Peter 3:19,” *CTJ* 38 (2003): 120–24; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 650; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 245–46. Two other major interpretive options exist. (1) The “spirits” are the people in Noah’s day “imprisoned” in their sin to whom Christ preached through Noah to repent; e.g., Grudem, *1 Peter*, 166, 203–39; Wayne A. Grudem, “He Did Not Descend Into Hell: A Plea For Following Scripture Instead of the Apostles’ Creed,” *JETS* 34, no. 1 (1991): 103–13. (2) The spirits are those in hell to whom Christ preached during the *triduum mortis* (or after the resurrection), either in bringing salvation to OT saints or even offering repentance and a second chance at salvation for all; e.g., Selwyn, *First Peter*, 259–60; Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 172; Green, *1 Peter*, 122–34. For an extensive survey of scholarship on these verses, see Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation to the Spirits*, 17–50; Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ*, 2–20.

⁵³Elliott, *1 Peter*, 656; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 207; Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 187; Kelly, *Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 154; Watson, *First and Second Peter*, 89; Davids, *First Peter*, 139–40. Contra Green, *1 Peter*, 126. The one exception is Hebrews 12:23, where the reference is to deceased human beings, qualified by the genitival phrase *δικαίων τετελειωμένων*.

6:12; Col 1:16; 2:15). Third, these spirits are tied to the time of Noah (see v. 20; cf. 2 Pet 2:4–5; Jude 6), which comports with the tradition of the Watchers from *1 Enoch*, who were imprisoned to await eschatological judgment (*1 En.* 10:6, 12; 19:1). Fourth, the mention of Christ being “made alive” in verse 18, coupled with the mention of the resurrection in verse 21 and Christ’s ascension in verse 22 suggest that the proclamation was made after the resurrection and in the ascension. Fifth, within some depictions of Second Temple Jewish cosmology, imprisoned spirits were said to dwell in the heavens above, rather than within the underworld. In *2 Enoch* 7, for example, apostate angels are bound and punished within the second heaven. Similarly, in *2 Enoch* 18, other spirits await their judgment in the fifth heaven, explicitly said to be connected with the time of Noah and the “sons of God” of Genesis 6:1–4.⁵⁴ Therefore, if Peter has in mind Christ’s ascension—as seems likely from verse 22—he very well may think of Christ passing through these heavenly places in his ascension to the right hand of God, making his proclamation of victory in his exaltation.

If this interpretation is correct, what is the intended impact of this reference and its relevance at the end of the *Haustafel*? As Peter has continually directed throughout the *Haustafel*, the predominant attitude of Christians should be humility and submission to others rather than retaliation or withdrawal. The current position within society for the readers caused them to be placed in vulnerable and even dangerous situations if they were to maintain their fidelity to Christ. Yet in the face of persecution of many kinds, Peter is adamant that Christians must humble themselves before God, submit to those in rightful authority over them, and persevere in righteous behavior, even if it results in further suffering. Where, then, is the hope for these Christians?

In 3:18–22, Peter addresses this issue of hope in the midst of suffering by

⁵⁴See also Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ*, 17–18.

pointing to the example of Christ. Having previously used Christ as the model of righteous suffering, here he draws attention to the glorious exaltation that Christ experienced in the resurrection as an indication to the readers that their submission would one day result in a similar vindication in the Parousia. Christ was put to death, but made alive through the resurrection and has ascended to the right hand of the throne of God. In his resurrection, he proclaims his victory (and, implicitly, judgment) to the imprisoned spirits of Noah's day. Christ was subject to death, and by extension the victim of the schemes of the demonic realm. But in his resurrection, as he sits at the right hand of God, now these malevolent spiritual forces are subject to him. Peter's use of ὑποτάσσω to describe the spirits' posture towards Christ is significant, as Peter has frequently used ὑποτάσσω to describe the attitude of Christians to those in authority over them (2:13, 18; 3:1, 5).⁵⁵ For now, Christians must be subject to those in positions of authority, but their submission is not absolute, nor is it forever. In the eschaton, these evil spirits themselves will be subject to the ultimate authority of Christ.

Further, as has been noted in our survey of biblical and Second Temple literature, opponents of God's people on the earth and inextricably tied with demonic opponents of Yahweh himself in the heavens. In describing Jesus' victory and authority over the demonic realm, then, Peter also intimates that this victory and authority extend to those who belong to him. As Pierce states, "If Jesus has subjugated the cosmic powers of evil, he has achieved victory over their human representatives as well."⁵⁶ Similarly, Dalton writes, "The topic is . . . the doctrinal ground for Christian confidence in persecution. The underlying supposition is *Christianus alter Christus*. Christ's victory over the powers of evil means the Christian's victory over the same powers and their

⁵⁵See also 1 Pet 5:5, where the referent is not towards hostile individuals, but elders within the church.

⁵⁶Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ*, 218.

earthly representatives.”⁵⁷

Summary

The *Haustafel* of 2:13–3:22 is connected to the explanation of the new birth of 1:1–2:10 by the transitional statement of 2:11–12. Peter reaffirms the identity of the readers as “sojourners and exiles,” at war with the passions of their flesh and called to live in holiness before their neighbors, even in the face of slander and abuse. Peter then addresses three distinct sets of individuals, focusing on those in more vulnerable circumstances, urging submission and non-retaliation even in the midst of suffering. Civilians are to be subject to the governing authorities, slaves to their masters, and wives to their husbands. In each setting, Peter acknowledges that the readers may experience suffering and persecution of some kind despite their submissive behavior. Yet, he directs the Christians to persist in righteous behavior, even if it leads to more suffering. In so doing, they acknowledge the temporal and earthly authority of those in positions of power over them, while at the same time acknowledging the ultimate and eternal authority of God. The believers may have hope in the midst of their afflictions as they consider the example of Christ, who exemplified righteous suffering and yet experienced complete vindication and exaltation over his enemies, both earthly and demonic. Because the Christians belong to their great shepherd, Christ, they too share in his imminent victory and glory.

First Peter 4:1–19

Having completed his *Haustafel* and addressing specific groups of individuals, Peter returns to general exhortation in the midst of suffering and persecution in 4:1–19. This section begins with “therefore” (οὖν), signifying that the actions prescribed in this

⁵⁷Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits*, 105.

section flow from the realization of Christ's victory in 3:18–22.⁵⁸ In light of Christ's victory, Peter recalls his emphasis on holy living in the midst of debauchery (cf. 1:14, 17–18). This section also contains a reminder that suffering is an inevitable and necessary reality for Christians. Accordingly, Peter reminds his readers in this section of the coming eschatological judgment on those who do not “obey the gospel of God” (v. 17). In the following sections, I will briefly examine these three major themes: (1) living in holiness; (2) the necessity of suffering; and (3) the reality of eschatological judgment.

Living in Holiness

Beginning with the participial phrase *Χριστοῦ οὖν παθόντος σαρκί*, Peter connects the suffering of the believers “in the flesh” with the suffering of Christ, as the latter provides the reason for the former. Christ, in his war against Satan and the demonic realm, suffered unto death before achieving victory and vindication, and therefore the believers should expect to follow the same pattern. The readers are to “arm” themselves (*ὁπλίσασθε*) with the same mindset of Christ. This “mindset” (*ἔννοιαν*) refers both to their expectation of and response to suffering. They should prepare themselves for the inevitability of suffering, as well as to respond to suffering in the same way as Christ. I will discuss the necessity of suffering in the following section; here I intend to focus on the response for which Peter calls. The use of the term *ὁπλίζω* evokes images of military might, particularly of the “hoplite” Greek foot-soldiers.⁵⁹ As I noted throughout the preceding section, however, Peter consistently calls for submission and non-retaliation, while continuing in good deeds and faithfulness to Christ. Paradoxically, then, the believers are urged to “take up the arms” of non-retaliation, as did Christ (2:22–23). As Asumang writes of this verse, “Peaceful non-retaliatory response to unjust suffering, by

⁵⁸Contra Michaels, *1 Peter*, 225, who argues that οὖν draws a conclusion from 3:18 only.

⁵⁹Elliott, *1 Peter*, 712.

which Jesus wrought his victory, was equally their spiritual weapon.”⁶⁰ In Satan’s cosmic conflict with Yahweh and his people, the Christians are to engage in this conflict by standing firm in their faith, arming themselves with humility as they wait for the realization of Christ’s ultimate victory.

Non-retaliation is not, however, the only “weapon” available to believers. As the following verses make clear, Peter has in mind here primarily holy living according to the will of God. The enigmatic saying “whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin” should be interpreted in this light. Peter has in mind not some kind of sinless perfectionism, but rather a decisive commitment to pursue righteousness in the midst of suffering and opposition.⁶¹ By choosing to “do good,” even in the face of possible suffering (2:20; 3:6, 13–14), Christians turn from the “human passions” in which the Gentiles indulge (4:3) and live instead “for the will of God” (v. 2). Peter’s use of *ὁπλίζω* in this sense is similar to that of Paul in 2 Corinthians, where he says of believers, “For the weapons (*τὰ ὅπλα*) of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds” (10:4).⁶² Earlier, Paul defines these “weapons” as “weapons of righteousness,” mentioning in context virtues such as “purity,” “knowledge,” “patience,” “kindness,” “genuine love,” and “truthful speech” (6:6–7). Peter thus continues his exhortation by urging love, hospitality, and the exercising of spiritual gifts in service towards one another (vv. 7–11). In light of the nearness of “the end of all things,” Christians must persevere in holiness and “entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good” (v. 19).

⁶⁰Asumang, “Resist him,” 36.

⁶¹Neither should the phrase be understood to refer to the sinlessness of Christ, as the nearer referent is the believers themselves, and also since Christ was entirely without sin (2:22; 3:18), rather than “ceasing” from it at any one moment in time. For this view, see, e.g., W. Schrage and H. Balz, *Die katholischen Briefe*, NTD (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 107; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 226–229; Davids, *First Peter*, 149.

⁶²Elliott, *1 Peter*, 712.

Elsewhere in the letter, Peter uses military metaphors to inform his paraenesis, reflecting the reality of cosmic conflict. In describing the benefits of the new birth in 1:3–5, he states that the believers “by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1:5). The verb “guarded” (φρουρέω) is often used in military contexts, to denote the presence of a military garrison or guard (e.g. 2 Cor 11:32; Jdt 3:6; Josephus, *Vita* 53, 240).⁶³ Similarly, evil desires are said to “wage war” (στρατεύομαι) against the believers’ souls (2:11). For Peter, then, the Christians are engaged in a war against sin and its instigators in both their human opponents and the demonic realm that inspires their persecution. The only “weapons” to be wielded by Christians in this war, however, are the weapons of humble submission and holy behavior, since their true power lies in the reality that they are “guarded” by the power of the Lord. In keeping with OT depiction of Yahweh as the divine warrior described in chapter 3, their victory comes from their identification with the Lord, who has already initiated his conquest of his enemies (3:22).

The Necessity of Suffering

Being “armed” with the same mindset as Christ involves not just one’s response to suffering, but also to one’s expectation of it. Peter indicates that suffering is not just likely, but in fact necessary. In the opening exhortation, Peter reminds the readers that their current suffering is necessary as a means of authenticating the genuineness of their faith (1:6–7). Here Peter draws the connection between the suffering of the believers and the suffering of Christ. Since Christ suffered in the flesh, his followers should expect the same. This need not be understood as an indication that every individual Christian will experience suffering from persecution, but rather that the collective Christian brotherhood will certainly and necessarily endure suffering prior to

⁶³BDAG, s.v. “φρουρέω.”

the return of Christ.⁶⁴

This connection between the sufferings of Christ and believers is made again in 4:12–13, where Peter instructs the readers not to be surprised at the “fiery trial” of their suffering. Rather, Christians ought to rejoice when they experience suffering (even innocent suffering), as it is an indication that they are following in the footsteps of Christ (cf. 2:21). His vindication was necessarily dependent on his suffering, as it represented God’s ordained means of achieving victory over his enemies. For Christians, following in his steps, therefore, God has likewise ordained that their vindication will follow their suffering. While the believers are “guarded” by God’s power (1:5), Peter can still thus speak of their suffering as “according to God’s will” (4:19).⁶⁵

The imagery of fire (πύρωσις) here is significant, as several commentators and scholars have indicated. Particularly important to this picture, as Johnson has argued, is the imagery of Malachi 3:1–4, where the Lord enters the temple “like a refiner’s fire and a fuller’s soap” (v. 2), so that he might “purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver” (v. 3).⁶⁶ As such, as Johnson writes, “the *pyrōsis* they are undergoing is not a symptom of the Lord’s absence from them but rather is a token of his presence (v 14), an anticipation and inauguration of the eschatological inbreaking of the purifying glory of God (vv. 17–18).”⁶⁷ Unlike Malachi, Peter makes no explicit mention of the purifying effects of this “fiery” suffering (contra Johnson). In 1:6–7, the notion of the testing of gold in fire is also mentioned, but the emphasis in this instance is contrastive.⁶⁸ Gold, an

⁶⁴Note the conditional phrase εἰ δέον preceding the mention of trials in v. 6. Elliott, *1 Peter*, 339–40.

⁶⁵So also Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 67; Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 89–90; Schelkle, *Die Petrusbriefe, der Judasbrief*, 35.

⁶⁶See Dennis E. Johnson, “Fire in God’s House: Imagery from Malachi 3 in Peter’s Theology of Suffering (1 Peter 4:12–19),” *JETS* 29 (1986): 285–94.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 289.

⁶⁸So also Liebengood, *Eschatology of 1 Peter*, 134.

obviously precious substance, “perishes” when it is exposed to fire. But for the believers, the proven character of their faith is more precious (πολυτιμότερον) even than gold, such that they do not perish when exposed to the fire, but instead “result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (v. 7). So also here in 4:12–19, both the believers and those “who do not obey the gospel of God” (v. 17) will experience the “judgment” of God. The righteous will be saved, while, it is implied, the ungodly will bear the weight of God’s eschatological judgment (cf. 4:5).

Why then is suffering depicted as inevitable and necessary? Dubis argues that the necessity of these trials is due to Peter’s dependence upon the Jewish tradition of the Messianic Woes, whereby a period of suffering precedes the coming of the Messiah. Peter thus portrays his readers as experiencing the suffering that must take place before the Parousia and the eschatological vindication that comes with it.⁶⁹ By contrast, Liebengood suggests that suffering is seen as necessary due to Peter’s dependence upon the “eschatological programme” of Zechariah 9–14.⁷⁰ Liebengood contends that these chapters uniquely depict God’s people being saved as they follow the Lord’s shepherd through suffering before ultimately experiencing vindication and glory.⁷¹ Certainly some parallels exist between 1 Peter and both of these traditions, but neither are adequate to explain why suffering is depicted as inevitable and necessary. If Peter did borrow from the eschatological outlook of Zechariah or the Messianic Woes, the question then merely shifts as to the reason why suffering was a necessary part of the eschatology of either of these traditions.

In part, the necessity of their suffering is explained by the example of Christ, noted above. Further, however, I suggest that the influence of cosmic conflict helps to

⁶⁹See Dubis, *Messianic Woes in 1 Peter*, 63–95.

⁷⁰Liebengood, *Eschatology of 1 Peter*, 8.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 23–50.

explain the reality of the believers' suffering as well as its necessity. Biblical authors frequently picture the works of God (particularly in the work of Jesus Christ) on the earth as acts of warfare against Satan and the demonic realm. Conversely, attacks on the people of God (whether OT Israel or the church) are seen as the outworking of the purposes of Satan and the spiritual forces of darkness, as I demonstrated in chapters 3–5. If the readers of 1 Peter have indeed been chosen by God and called out of darkness and into the light of the Lord (2:9), they are necessarily called into the cosmic struggle between God and Satan. Their suffering and persecution may seem surprising to them (4:12), but this opposition is perfectly understandable when interpreted in the light of cosmic conflict with the forces of the demonic realm and their representatives upon the earth. Further, by framing their circumstances in the light of this cosmic struggle, believers are encouraged to take great hope. Christ experienced suffering at the hands of Satan, as the Gospels make clear, but his suffering led ultimately not to his destruction, but to his ascension to the right hand of God (3:22). As they share in Christ's sufferings then, they also share in the assurance of ultimate victory. Later in this chapter, I will show how the influence of cosmic conflict informs Peter's closing exhortation to beware of Satan as the "adversary" and to resist him by remaining steadfast in faith in the midst of their suffering.

The Reality of Eschatological Judgment

Among the most controversial passages in 1 Peter is the saying in 4:6, "For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does." Central to understanding this cryptic verse is the identification of the "dead." Some writers have interpreted this "preaching" in light of the mention of Christ's proclamation to the spirits in 3:19, thereby envisioning a proclamation by Christ of the gospel to the spirits of those

who died and an offer of repentance and salvation.⁷² Others, particularly early interpreters, understood the “dead” here to refer to those who are spiritually dead, i.e., unbelievers unrepentant in their sins (as in, e.g., Eph 2:1; Col 2:13).⁷³ Such interpretations, however, do not account adequately for the broader context of the passage, which emphasizes the reality of eschatological judgment. In the preceding verse, Peter writes that those who malign the believers “will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (v. 5). In v. 7, he declares, “The end of all things is at hand (ἤγγικεν).” This reality functions both as a warning to those who oppose the believers and an encouragement to Christians persevering in the midst of suffering. As the readers arm themselves with the mindset of Christ, then, they expect opposition and persecution, and respond by persisting in righteous behavior, mindful of the coming eschatological judgment.

With this context in mind, the more likely explanation of Peter’s mention of the “dead” is that they refer to believers who have since physically died. The preaching of the gospel occurred when they were still alive, resulting in their conversion and salvation, but have experienced the “judgment” of death.⁷⁴ Despite their fidelity to Christ, they appeared to have incurred judgment in their death, thus calling into question their hope of vindication. The notion of these believers being “judged in the flesh” may point to the possibility that their death was due to their Christian commitment in some way, such that they were condemned (“judged”) by their human opponents, but will be vindicated (“live”) by the Lord in the eschaton. Without more explicit evidence, however, this

⁷²E.g., Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 2nd ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 170–71; Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 182; Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 288–89; Green, *1 Peter*, 126–34.

⁷³E.g., Augustine, Hilary of Arles; Gerald Bray, ed., *James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 113.

⁷⁴So, e.g., Elliott, *1 Peter*, 733–34; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 291; Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 208–9; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 272; Davids, *First Peter*, 154; Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*.

implication cannot be certain. Whatever the cause of their death may be, Peter's contention is that, because the gospel was preached to them, they will "live in the spirit" and therefore receive eschatological life and vindication. Achtemeier notes well the effect:

The point rather is the encouragement of embattled Christians, to assure them that their faith, despite their rejection by human beings and the death that has overtaken some of their fellow believers, has not been in vain. Rather, the same judgment that will require an account from those who have blasphemously opposed the Christians (v. 5a) will also see the vindication of those Christians who had undergone what appeared to their nonbelieving contemporaries to be the judgment of death, and hence the demise of all their hopes.⁷⁵

The dual nature of this eschatological judgment is reinforced at the end of the section, where Peter connects the "judgment" on the *οἶκος* of God with the coming judgment on unbelievers (vv. 17–18). Christians experience a form of "judgment" in their present suffering, therefore the judgment is said to "begin at the household of God" (v. 17). This judgment experienced in the present is tied to the coming eschatological judgment, such that Peter envisions the final judgment inbreaking into the present.⁷⁶ Just as they experience now the blessings of their eschatological salvation in their new birth (1:3–5), their suffering is an expression of eschatological judgment, which results in a demonstration of the genuineness of their faith (1:6–7), rather than dishonor and condemnation. For unbelievers, however, this judgment results in their shame and destruction, as Peter implies throughout the letter (1: 24; 2:7–8; 3:12; 4:5). Put another way, Peter shares the eschatological expectation (surveyed in chs. 4 and 5) that the cosmic war between the Lord and the forces of darkness is coming to a close. The conclusion of that war will mean destruction for those that oppose the Lord, and eternal life and vindication for those that belong to him.

⁷⁵Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 291.

⁷⁶Ibid., 315; Green, *1 Peter*, 155; Davids, *First Peter*, 171–72; Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 227–28.

Conclusion

Returning to exhortation in the midst of suffering, Peter connects the suffering and vindication of Christ with the present suffering of the readers. Since Christ experienced undeserved suffering and was later exalted over his enemies to the right hand of God (3:18–22), Christians also ought to expect suffering as a necessary and inevitable result of their union with Christ. Like Christ, they must remain devoted to holiness (4:2–3, 7–11), even though it will result in their being maligned (or perhaps worse) by the surrounding culture (v. 4). Even in the midst of such opposition, Christians are to have hope, as those who “judge” them in this life will stand before God as judge in the eschaton, while the believers experience life and blessing. Therefore, though they now experience “fiery trials,” these afflictions serve to authenticate their faith and lead ultimately to rejoicing in the Parousia (vv. 12–13). Suffering for the name of Christ, then, is a cause to glorify God, as the coming eschatological judgment will result in their vindication and their enemies’ destruction (vv. 16–18). The calling of the Christian is thus not to retaliate or conform to the surrounding culture, but to entrust themselves to God and persist in “doing good” (v. 19).

First Peter 5:1–14

In this final chapter of the letter, Peter shifts the focus of his appeal from dealings with outsiders to interpersonal matters within the church, before concluding the letter with a final exhortation to resist the activity of Satan. As believers were urged to walk in humility and submission to those in positions of authority over them outside the church, so also the readers of the letter are to show humility and submission for the authorities that exist within the church, that they might receive grace and be honored by the Lord. Finally, the readers are given a sober warning against Satan, the “adversary,” who is shown to be the cause of the sufferings they experience. In the following sections, I will first briefly characterize the exhortation given to those in the church. Next, I will

examine in detail Peter’s warning against Satan, showing the activity of the devil is closely connected with the sufferings and persecutions described throughout the letter.

Submission within the Church

As the letter draws to a close, Peter addresses the elders of the church. While the term “elder” can refer to an older person in general (1 Tim 5:1), the term more commonly refers to the leaders of local congregations (e.g., Acts 11:30; 14:23; 1 Tim 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; Jas 5:14). This latter sense of the word is preferable in this context, since Peter addresses the leadership functions of these *πρεσβύτεροι* in verses 2–3.⁷⁷ Further, in other interpersonal contexts, Peter typically addressed individuals in relation to established roles of authority (governing authorities, slaves/masters, wives/husbands). It is likely that he means those with an established leadership position within the church, rather than those merely older in age. These elders are urged to lead with gentleness and eagerness, rather than wielding their authority with pride and arrogance. Elders are exhorted to lead this way because they too are subject to the “chief Shepherd” (v. 4). Just like civil authorities, slave owners, and husbands, their authority is not inherent, but granted by God.

In verse 5, Peter turns his attention to the “younger” (*νεώτεροι*). Like the *πρεσβύτεροι*, this term could refer to young people in general, or could denote the “formal counterpart” to *πρεσβύτεροι*.⁷⁸ The distinction in this case is less clear, given that *νεώτεροι* does not refer to a recognized position elsewhere in the NT. Given the connection between this verse and verses 1–4 (note *ὁμοίως* in v. 5), it is more likely that Peter had in mind all church members under the authority of the elders.⁷⁹ In any case, it is clear that

⁷⁷So also, e.g., Elliott, *1 Peter*, 813; Watson, *First and Second Peter*, 116; Davids, *First Peter*, 175; Kelly, *Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 196–97; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 321–22; Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 231.

⁷⁸Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 339.

⁷⁹Alternatively, the exhortation could refer to those literally young in age, due to their more

the exhortation given to these νεώτεροι is applicable for all members of the church under the authority of the elders. As slaves, wives, and civilians are all called to be subject to the God-ordained authorities in place over them, so also the νεώτεροι are called to subject themselves to the authority of their elders.

All Christians, ultimately, are νεώτεροι in relation to Christ, the chief Shepherd, and so Peter concludes verse 5 by exhorting all believers to “clothe themselves” with humility towards one another, and ultimately to God himself. The reason for their humility is given in the end of the verse: “For God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (cf. Prov. 3:34). In his *Haustafel*, Peter urged submission and non-retaliation in the midst of suffering, because God himself would vindicate the believers. Here too, though absent the themes of unjust suffering, believers are called to humility, that they may be “exalted” (v. 6) by God in the Parousia.⁸⁰

Persecution and the “Roaring Lion”

Now, finally, we may return to the closing exhortation of 1 Peter and the warning against Satan as the “roaring lion.” This closing reference to the devil is not disconnected from the rest of the paraenesis throughout the letter, but represents the climax of Peter’s exhortation in the midst of persecution as he pictures the suffering of these Christians through the apocalyptic lens of Yahweh’s conflict with Satan and the demonic realm. As the NT writers consistently portray, following traditions developed throughout the OT and Second Temple literature, where the people of God are oppressed and persecuted by human opponents, Satan is seen as a primary cause for such suffering. Within the text of 1 Peter itself, several indications in this closing exhortation make clear

rebellious nature. So Ceslas Spicq, *Les Épîtres de Saint Pierre*, SB 4 (Paris: Gabalda, 1966), 170–71; Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 237; Schelkle, *Der Petrusbriefe, der Judasbriefe*, 130; Davids, *1 Peter*, 183–84. Elliott, *1 Peter*, 838–40, says that the reference is to those young in the faith.

⁸⁰For a reference in these verses to the eschaton, see Michaels, *1 Peter*, 296; Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 240; Schelkle, *Der Petrusbriefe, der Judasbriefe*, 131; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 339.

that the suffering at the hands of the “roaring lion” is closely tied with the suffering described throughout the epistle by the Christians’ human opponents.⁸¹

Peter’s exhortation begins with the double imperative “Be sober-minded! Be watchful!” (v. 8). The two terms (νήφω and γρηγορέω) are virtually synonymous and usually occur in eschatological contexts, where believers are instructed to be on guard for the Day of the Lord (e.g., Matt 24:42, 42; 25:13; see esp. 1 Thess 5:6, where the words occur together). The command to be watchful also occurs in the context of human opposition. After Matthew uses γρηγορέω three times in chapters 24–25, it occurs three additional times in the Garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus instructs his disciples to keep watch (γρηγορέω). Here the danger is not some cosmic judgment, but Judas and the arresting force who arrive in verse 47, “while he was still speaking” (see also Mark 13:34, 35, 37; cf. 14:34, 37, 38). Paul urges the Ephesian elders to be alert (γρηγορέω), where the stated danger is the “fierce wolves” who will seek to lead the people into false teaching (Acts 20:29–31). Further, Revelation 16 describes the sixth bowl judgment, where the Euphrates dries up and three “unclean spirits” arise from the dragon, beast, and false prophet to incite the kings of the earth to do battle with the Lord at Armageddon (16:12–16). In a parenthetical comment in the midst of this description, the author inserts the words of Jesus, “Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is ὁ γρηγορῶν” (v. 15). These commands, then, are an encouragement to stand firm in the midst of false teaching and opposition in light of the imminence of the eschatological Day of the Lord. Most relevant for 1 Peter 5:8, Peter uses νήφω in his opening exhortation (1:13), where the near

⁸¹Contra Thurén, who argues that Peter does not intend a reference to the readers’ human opponents in the metaphor of the lion, as such an identification would “nullify the author’s missionary goal.” Lauri Thurén, “1 Peter and the Lion,” in *Evil and the Devil*, LNTS 481, ed. Ida Frölich and Erkki Koskenniemi (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 155. Thurén here introduces a false dichotomy. The human oppressors of the Christians in Asia Minor could be pictured in demonic terms, insofar as they oppose God’s people and the spread of the gospel while still being “potential new Christians” (ibid., 154). In picturing the work of Satan in the persecution of the Christians, these opponents of the Church are not forever written off as beyond the reach of God’s plan of salvation, just as Peter was called “Satan” by Jesus and yet proclaimed to be the rock upon which Christ’s church is built (Matt 16:17–23).

context speaks of the “various trials” the readers are suffering (1:6), thereby forming an *inclusio* between the two texts.⁸²

Following the exhortation to watchfulness, Peter begins his description of Satan with the word, “adversary” (ἀντίδικος). The term is rare in the NT, occurring only three times outside of the present reference (Matt 5:25; Luke 12:58; 18:3). In each of those occurrences, it denotes an opponent in the lawcourt (see also Prov 18:17 LXX). In some instances, however, it simply referred to an opponent in a general sense.⁸³ In 1 Peter 5, the term is likely used in this secondary, general sense, though the legal connotations should not be totally dismissed (see ch. 6 on the possibility of legal trials in 1 Peter). The lawcourt imagery could also be applied to Satan directly—as in Revelation 12:9–10 where he is named the “accuser” (κατήγορ). Given the descriptions of God as judge throughout the epistle (1:17; 4:5, 17), as well as the numerous references made to Christians being reviled for their behavior or accused of doing evil (2:12, 23; 3:9, 16–17; 4:15–16), the use of “adversary” would be an apt descriptor for the local opponents and accusers of the Christians in Asia Minor, as well as the devil himself.

Even Peter’s choice of διάβολος as a name for this adversary—rather than the more Semitic Σατανᾶς—may be significant. The latter term refers to an actual spiritual entity in every instance except one—namely, Jesus’ rebuke of Peter in Mark 8:33. “Devil” still primarily serves as a reference to the cosmic figure of Satan, but at times has a more general reference. The Pastoral Epistles use διάβολος to refer not only to Satan himself, but also to a slanderous person in general (see 1 Tim 3:11; 2 Tim 3:3; Titus 2:3). In Revelation 2:10, Jesus warns the church at Smyrna that “the devil” is about to throw some of them in prison, clearly referring to some local governmental entity, if not Rome

⁸²Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 241; Kelly, *Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 66, 209; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 297; see also the usage in 4:7, where it is coupled with σωφρονέω in a similar expression.

⁸³See Schrenk, “ἀντίδικος,” in *TDNT*, 1:374–75; Davids, *1 Peter*, 190.

as a whole by extension. A “devil,” then, could be both the cosmic enemy of Yahweh as well as human enemies of his people, bringing slander and accusations against them.

Asumang suggests,

What is striking in 1 Peter’s use is that these two functions of the devil—accusations and slander—are previously used throughout the epistle to describe some of the unjust sufferings that the believers were facing (e.g. 2:12, 15; 3:16; 4:14–16). In other words, . . . Peter unveils the devil as the slanderer and accuser-in-chief spearheading the persecution of the believers.⁸⁴

The point ought not to be pressed too far from such little evidence, but Asumang’s observation may well provide another piece of evidence that links the activity of Satan with the persecution the Christians suffer from their peers and local governments.

Peter goes on to describe the devil as “prowling about” as a “roaring lion.” The background for this image most likely lies in the LXX.⁸⁵ While the imagery of a “lion” is nowhere else tied to descriptions of Satan, it frequently carries with it threatening and hostile overtones, particularly tied to one’s human opponents. One of the parallels most commonly noted is Psalm 21:14 LXX, where David likens his enemies to a “ravening and roaring lion.” Here the referent is clearly human enemies seeking David’s life. Other texts similarly utilize lion imagery for hostile human opponents, as well. The Psalms and Amos both utilize such language to describe general opposing forces (Pss 7:2; 17:12;

⁸⁴Asumang, “Resist him,” 26.

⁸⁵So also, e.g., Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 360; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 341; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 856–58; Samuel Bénéteau, *La Première Épître de Pierre*, 2nd ed., Commentaire évangélique de la Bible (Vaux-sur-Seine: Edifac, 1992), 276–77. Paschke argues that the phrase carries a more literal referent—namely, the *ad bestias* executions inflicted upon Christians. Paschke argues that *ad bestias* executions were in practice during the first century and posed a real concern for Peter’s readers, regardless whether the epistle is the product of the apostle Peter or a later pseudepigraphical writer. Though many wild beasts were utilized in these executions, lions in particular held a place of prominence (e.g., Gellius 5.14.7–11; Dio 60.13.4; Tert. *Apol.* 40.2). The threat of being “devoured,” then, was a very literal one. Paschke concludes that the devil “then would be seen as responsible for what was going on in the arena at the *ad bestias* executions of Christians.” Boris A. Paschke, “The Roman *Ad Bestias* Execution as a Possible Historical Background for 1 Peter 5:8” *JSNT* 28, no. 4 (2006): 489–500. See also David G. Horrell, Bradley Arnold, and Travis B. Williams, “Visuality, Vivid Description, and the Message of 1 Peter: The Significance of the Roaring Lion (1 Peter 5:8),” *JBL* 132, no. (2013): 697–716. Paschke’s suggestion is possible, but ultimately is unnecessary. Given Peter’s frequent use of the OT throughout the epistle, it is much more likely that he does so here, especially since there are several OT texts that may shed light on the connotation intended here.

35:17; Amos 3:12). Jeremiah uses the lion metaphor several times to refer to enemy nations bringing judgment upon Israel (Jer 2:15; 27:17 LXX; 28:38 LXX).⁸⁶ In the NT, Paul speaks of the harm done him by Alexander the coppersmith, and then characterizes the Lord's protection by saying, "I was delivered from the lion's mouth" (2 Tim 4:17). Therefore, while this lion imagery could be applied directly to Satan in a spiritual sense as a fearsome enemy, it also naturally fits as a reference to human opponents, whether corporate or individual.⁸⁷

Closely related to the description of Satan as a lion is the mention that his desire is to devour someone. This "devouring" likely does not refer to physical destruction, but rather to apostasy and thus to spiritual death.⁸⁸ However, Elliott has noted that this terminology was also used figuratively of human enemies who are said to "devour" God's people (Pss 35:25; 124:3; Hos 8:8; Isa 49:19; Jer 51:34, 44; Lam 2:16).⁸⁹ This usage connects the activity of Satan, who often is pictured as seeking the apostasy of Christians (Matt 24:24; Luke 22:31; 2 Cor 11:12–14; 2 Tim 2:24–26), with the aims of the local magistrates who persecute the believers. The Christian readers faced the hostile persecution of their localized human enemies, who sought to see them deny their faith, commit apostasy and thus be "devoured." Indeed, as I noted in chapter 6, Roman torture was designed primarily to produce apostates rather than martyrs. Even in instances where persecution was more verbal or social in nature, apostasy would still immediately lessen or even eliminate the threat to the Christians' honor, and would therefore be a temptation.

⁸⁶Best draws attention to the Targums of Isa 35:9; Jer. 4:7; 5:6; Ezek. 19:6, which make clear that opposing nations are in view, as they translate "lion" as "king." Ernest Best, *1 Peter*, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1971), 174.

⁸⁷For further examination of the lion metaphor, see Troy Martin, "Roaring Lions among Diaspora Metaphors," in *Bedrängnis und Identität: Studien zu Situation, Kommunikation und Theologie des 1. Petrusbriefes*, BZNW 200, ed. David S. du Toit (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 167–178.

⁸⁸Green, *1 Peter*, 174; Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 242; Davids, *First Peter*, 191; Watson, *First and Second Peter*, 121. Contra Paschke, "Roman *Ad Bestias* Execution," 498.

⁸⁹Elliott, *1 Peter*, 859.

Peter thus ties all these efforts to force Christians to recant their faith with the activity of their cosmic adversary, Satan.

In 1 Peter 5:9, Peter shifts to tell his readers to “resist” the devil. The word used for resist (*ἀντίστημι*) is frequently used to describe opponents of the gospel fighting to suppress its message (Luke 21:15; Acts 13:10; 2 Tim 3:8; 4:5). As Schreiner argues, “Resistance, then, is not passive but represents active engagement against a foe.”⁹⁰ This resistance, however, is not accomplished through physical opposition, as Peter has emphasized throughout his letter. They are to resist by remaining “firm in their faith.”⁹¹ In the face of the threat of being “devoured” in the midst of social ostracization, imprisonment, or even torture and execution, the believers are exhorted to “retaliate” by standing firm and being faithful, thus resisting the devil and his chosen instruments of persecution.

The final element connecting the activity of Satan with the suffering experienced through the churches’ human oppressors is the final clause of verse 9, which functions as a ground for the believers’ resistance. The readers are to resist the devil because they know that “the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.” When Peter speaks of “suffering” throughout the letter, the reference is consistently to the persecution carried out by human enemies and institutions (see also 2:19, 20; 3:14, 17; 4:1, 13, 15, 19). As such, Peter clearly equates the spiritual opposition of the devil with the human opposition of the enemies of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Green suggests that this wide-angle view offers a more accurate view of the believers’ circumstances. If an individual—or even an isolated community—suffers, it is a tragedy, or perhaps even just rewards for some wrongdoing.

⁹⁰Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 242; see also Grudem, *1 Peter*, 204.

⁹¹Dubis rightly notes that the phrase should be interpreted with an implied *ὄντες*, functioning as a participle of manner, modifying *ἀντίστητε*. Dubis, *1 Peter*, 169.

“If the whole family of believers throughout the world is undergoing suffering, however, a less individualistic and more systemic, cosmological explanation is required.”⁹²

Further, the use of the verb ἐπιτελέω in verse 9 is somewhat unexpected, as it typically connotes the idea of completion or fulfillment. Underlying this verse, likely, is the idea that these sufferings are not merely “being experienced” by believers around the world, but “being accomplished” by them (NASB; KJV).⁹³ As participants in Yahweh’s cosmic conflict with Satan and the demonic realm, their suffering is not random or meaningless. Instead, it is a part of the eschatological struggle against their adversary, the devil. Further, due to the certain expectation of God’s ultimate victory, their struggle is certain to end in victory.

If Christians from all corners of the empire are experiencing persecution, they should recognize that they are up against a foe greater than any local magistrate, governor, or even Caesar himself. They are a part of the eschatological battle between good and evil—one in which they are destined to see victory. If the struggles facing the believers in Asia Minor are a matter of a minority religious sect at odds with the might of the Roman Empire, the plight of the Christians is desperate and their outlook is bleak. If however, their sufferings are primarily a spiritual issue rather than a social, economic, or legal one, then their sufferings are temporary, and their vindication is assured. As Peter fittingly ends his closing exhortation, “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (5:10–11).

⁹²Green, *1 Peter*, 174–75.

⁹³Dubis, *Messianic Woes in 1 Peter*, 71. See also Moisés Silva, ed., “τέλος,” in *NIDNTTE* 4:478; G. Delling, “ἐπιτελέω,” in *TDNT*, 8:61.

Summary

In his closing exhortation, Peter calls for humility and submission within the church. Just as the believers should show proper respect and subjection to those in positions of authority (2:13–3:7), so also their interactions with authority within the church should be marked by humility. Elders should exercise their authority as shepherds under the authority of the chief Shepherd Christ, and those within the church should humbly submit to their elders. Those who humble themselves in this way can expect to be lifted up by God’s “mighty hand,” as Christ suffered and was subsequently glorified (v. 1). Peter then concludes his letter by warning his readers to be on their guard for the activity of Satan, who seeks their destruction. This admonition is integrally tied to his encouragement in the midst of suffering throughout the letter. As participants in the cosmic conflict between the Lord and the forces of darkness, these Christians can expect opposition from their peers and governmental institutions. Just as certain as their suffering, however, is their victory, as they are shielded by God’s power and destined for vindication and glory.

Conclusion

Writing to an audience facing suffering and persecution from “various trials” (1:6), Peter encourages his readers by reminding them that they have been born again into the promises and inheritance of God’s people. Peter makes use of several allusions to OT Israel in order to incorporate these Christians, likely predominantly Gentile, into the story of God’s redemptive purposes from the time of the exodus onward. In the face of their current struggle and persecution, Peter urges submission and non-retaliation, instead relying on the power of God for ultimate restoration and vindication. The Christians should submit to the God ordained authorities, even if it results in suffering for their persistence in holiness. The Christians are to continue to “do good,” though it might in fact lead to more suffering, as they follow in the footsteps of Christ, the example *par*

excellence of unjust suffering. Though Christ suffered even unto death, he was raised to life by the power of God and now reigns over his enemies (3:22), ensuring that believers will share in his glory in the eschaton. The reason Christians can persist in the face of such persecution lies in the significance of cosmic conflict, as their true enemy is not found in their human opponents, but in Satan, the “roaring lion.” Their mode of resistance, therefore, is to remain steadfast in their faith, knowing that the Lord’s certain victory over Satan and the demonic realm will mean victory for them over their oppressors.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have demonstrated the significance of Jewish and early Christian depictions of cosmic conflict, as it relates to the portrayal of suffering and persecution in 1 Peter. I have traced the development of this portrayal from biblical and extrabiblical texts, and applied the important elements from it to the situation and overall argument of 1 Peter. In this chapter, I will summarize my findings and suggest implications from it for the study of the NT at large as well as the significance of this tradition for the church today.

Introductory Matters

In chapter 1, I surveyed relevant literature on eschatology and suffering in 1 Peter, as well as works on Satan and cosmic conflict. I noted that scholars have not adequately explored how the doctrine of Satan and cosmic conflict influences Peter's exhortation in the midst of suffering and persecution. In chapter 2, I examined the paraenetic character of 1 Peter, suggesting it is an example of paraenesis in the paradigm of conflict. Such paraenetic writings are aimed at subversion, as Peter seeks to reframe the situation of his readers in light of God's cosmic conflict with Satan and the demonic realm. In so doing, I have shown that the influence of cosmic conflict coalesces well with the established genre of Greco-Roman paraenesis.

Cosmic Conflict in Jewish and Early Christian Writings

Beginning in chapter 3, through chapter 5, I traced the development of the depiction of cosmic conflict through the biblical and extrabiblical Jewish writings.

Chapter 3 examined the portrayal of God's conflict with Satan in the OT. I noted that Satan as a cosmic entity is rare in the OT, but the beginnings of the depiction of cosmic conflict are still apparent. Rather than picture Yahweh at war with Satan as a unified source of evil and hostility, the OT writers instead saw Yahweh in conflict with the so-called gods of the nations surrounding Israel. This conflict manifested itself primarily in Israel's conflict with these nations on the earth. God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, culminating in the Red Sea, was seen not only as a victory over Pharaoh, but also over the gods of Egypt (Exod 12:12; Num 33:4b; 2 Sam 7:23). Later in Israel's history, their conflict with the Philistines, Assyrians, and Babylonians, among others, would also be described with cosmic dimensions. The nations were depicted with cosmic representatives (Deut 32:8; Dan 10:13, 20), such that in Israel's conflict with these nations, the Lord was pictured in conflict with their heavenly counterparts. OT writers also depicted Israel's triumphs over opposing nations in terms of Yahweh's conquest of Canaanite chaos monsters, insofar as they came to represent the embodiment of cosmic evil (Pss 74:13–14; 89:9–10; Isa 26:20–27:1; 51:9–10).

In chapter 4, I examined texts from the Second Temple period of Judaism, as they continued to develop the portrayal of God's conflict with the spiritual forces of evil. In these texts, the many gods of the nations begin to be conflated into one unified cosmic archenemy of the Lord and his people. The name of this enemy varied, but these texts consistently portray all spiritual forces of darkness under his control as he raged against the people of God. From the *Book of Watchers* in *1 Enoch* through texts dating to the first and second century AD, these writers conceived of Satan as responsible for the evil that exists in the world and for the oppression of God's people. These writers also anticipated an eschatological judgment upon these hostile cosmic beings, which would result in blessing and redemption for Israel. For some, such as the Qumran community, this battle would involve human opponents as well, as the "sons of light" do battle with the "sons of

darkness,” led by Belial and his demonic host.

In chapter 5, I surveyed NT writings that continue this depiction of cosmic conflict by picturing the life and death of Jesus as conflict with and victory over Satan and the demonic realm. Satan is seen as the “ruler of this world,” exercising his limited authority over humanity. Jesus, however, comes to “bind the strong man” (Mark 3:27; Matt 12:29; Luke 11:21–22), which he does during his ministry through his healings and exorcisms, and which is finally accomplished through his atoning death and resurrection. Jesus’ conflict with Satan is not confined to the heavenly realms, however. The human opponents of Jesus and the church are frequently depicted with demonic imagery. In their opposition to the coming kingdom of God, these individuals (Judas and the religious leaders, most commonly) are said to be doing the works of Satan. Similarly, Christians are portrayed as participants in this cosmic conflict as well. As they resist temptation in the face of opposition and persecution, Christians “put on the armor of God” (Eph 6:13–17) and await eschatological victory of Christ at his Parousia.

The Significance of Cosmic Conflict for 1 Peter

Chapter 6 contains an examination of the suffering and persecution envisioned in 1 Peter. I demonstrated that while much of the persecution experienced by the readers was social and verbal, legal proceedings and more violent forms of persecution were still perceived as a real and imminent threat. No official laws prohibited Christian practice, but persecution was experienced all across the empire (5:9) such that Christianity was “effectively illegal.” As such, social ostracization could lead to legal accusations before local or provincial authorities at any time. Because of the ubiquity of the Emperor Cult and the centrality of the worship of civic gods, the exclusivity of these early Christians would inevitably lead them into conflict with the surrounding pagan culture. Such conflict could lead to verbal harassment, social ostracism and the loss of honor within society, economic hardship, and the possibility of legal proceedings and the threat of

execution in some cases. Early Christians would view this persecution as the agency of Satan, as the depiction of cosmic conflict pictures opposition to the church as a product of demonic activity in the ongoing war in heaven. These Christians engaged in this war as they stood firm in the midst of persecution and thereby thwarted the devil's schemes.

In chapter 7, I offered a reading of 1 Peter with a view to the significance of cosmic conflict as it pertains to suffering and persecution. In particular, I demonstrated how the closing admonition to resist the devil elucidated the importance of cosmic conflict for Peter's understanding of the cause of the readers' suffering. In light of the activity of Satan in their human oppressors, Christians must resist, but they are exhorted to do so through submission and non-retaliation, while continuing to pursue holiness and good works, even if it results in the exacerbation of their situation. Just as Christ suffered unjustly but was vindicated in his resurrection and ascension, so believers are called to follow his example, as Christ's victory over the demonic realm (3:22) ensures their final vindication in the eschaton (5:10). Peter thereby provides meaning for the persecution experienced by his readers while also reminding them of the certainty of their victory, thus encouraging them to persevere in holiness even in the face of suffering.

Implications for Further Study

As I have noted several times throughout this dissertation, space has prohibited me from engaging in an exhaustive study on several topics. I believe my contributions in this study suggest further lines of inquiry. There is a need for a more exhaustive study on the development of demonology through the OT and Second Temple periods, particularly with a view to the connection drawn between the cosmic and earthly realms. Similarly, if this portrayal of cosmic conflict is as widespread as I have suggested, it surely influences other NT authors' depiction of suffering and spiritual warfare. A more thorough examination of Jesus' ministry and sacrificial death in terms of cosmic conflict could prove fruitful, particularly in relation to Jesus' healing and exorcistic ministry. Also, in

view of Paul's admonition to the Ephesians to put on the armor of God, how has cosmic conflict shaped and informed the paraenetic strategy throughout his letter? The presentation of suffering and persecution in Revelation is similarly likely to be influenced by cosmic conflict, particularly with its explicit apocalyptic style.

This study also has implications for how biblical interpreters understand the idea of spiritual warfare. Some depictions of spiritual warfare focus on psychological aspects of Satan's temptation, like what may be found in C.S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*.¹ My conclusions in this study suggest a more concrete understanding of spiritual warfare, thought not entirely at the expense of psychological temptations. The work of Satan in depictions of cosmic conflict is to oppress the people of God and produce apostasy through the agency of human beings and institutions. Appreciating the contribution of cosmic conflict helps to bring balance and focus to modern understandings of spiritual warfare.

For the church today, this study highlights the nature of persecution Christians face around the world. Western believers are not likely to face violent or legal forms of persecution anytime soon, but do experience forms of social ostracism and perhaps even economic hardships in somewhat similar ways to the Christians in Asia Minor. Political debates surrounding threats to religious liberty are also increasingly common forms of opposition to the church. In other parts of the world where Christianity is outlawed, fidelity to Christ may result in lethal consequences. To all these believers, cosmic conflict as reflected in 1 Peter provides some clarity to the plight facing Christians all over the world currently and in the future. The church ought not to be surprised at this opposition, as it is merely an expression of the ongoing struggle between the spiritual forces of darkness and the people of God. Like the recipients of 1 Peter, Christians today are called

¹C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters: With Screwtape Proposes a Toast* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001).

to resist in this struggle through humble submission and persistence in holiness more so than outrage and more active forms of resistance. If the ultimate battle facing Christians in this age is a spiritual one, then the most appropriate response is one that relies on the power of God. Like those first century believers, that power is sufficient to sustain hope even in the midst of great suffering, as Christ's ultimate triumph in his death and resurrection provides certainty of victory and vindication for his people.

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ABSTRACT

ESCHATOLOGY, COSMIC CONFLICT, AND SUFFERING
IN 1 PETER

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Part of the biblical theology of Satan and the demonic realm includes a depiction of cosmic conflict, wherein earthly events and conflicts are portrayed as a reflection of heavenly ones, and vice versa. While this portrayal has been explored from various angles, it has not been applied to an examination of the letter of 1 Peter. This dissertation argues that the depiction of cosmic conflict does inform Peter's paraenesis and depiction of suffering to a significant degree.

Chapter 1 contains a survey of relevant research and presents the thesis: that the portrayal of cosmic conflict informs Peter's depiction of suffering in that Peter pictures the current persecution of the readers as a necessary and inevitable part of the cosmic struggle against Satan and the demonic realm.

Chapter 2 presents an examination of the paraenesis of 1 Peter, arguing that the letter reflects the paradigm of conflict, whereby the author seeks to subvert the perceived social values and structures. This chapter shows how cosmic conflict reflects this paradigm, as the world is depicted as an arena for opposing cosmic and human forces.

Chapters 3 through 5 contain a detailed survey of biblical and Second Temple Jewish literature as it portrays the figures of Satan and the demonic realm, as well as the conflict that exists between Yahweh and the forces of darkness. These chapters also make note of the connections drawn by the biblical authors between the earthly and heavenly realms.

Chapter 6 contains an examination of the suffering and persecution envisaged in 1 Peter, and argues for a portrayal of suffering that includes verbal, social, economic and legal components. This chapter also emphasizes how early Christian writers could speak of their struggles as having imperial and cosmic dimensions.

Chapter 7 offers a succinct reading of 1 Peter as a whole, with particular attention to how the depiction of cosmic conflict detailed thus far influences Peter's teaching and exhortation throughout the epistle.

Chapter 8 contains a conclusion of major arguments and suggests possible implications for broader study of the New Testament and application to the church at large today.

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