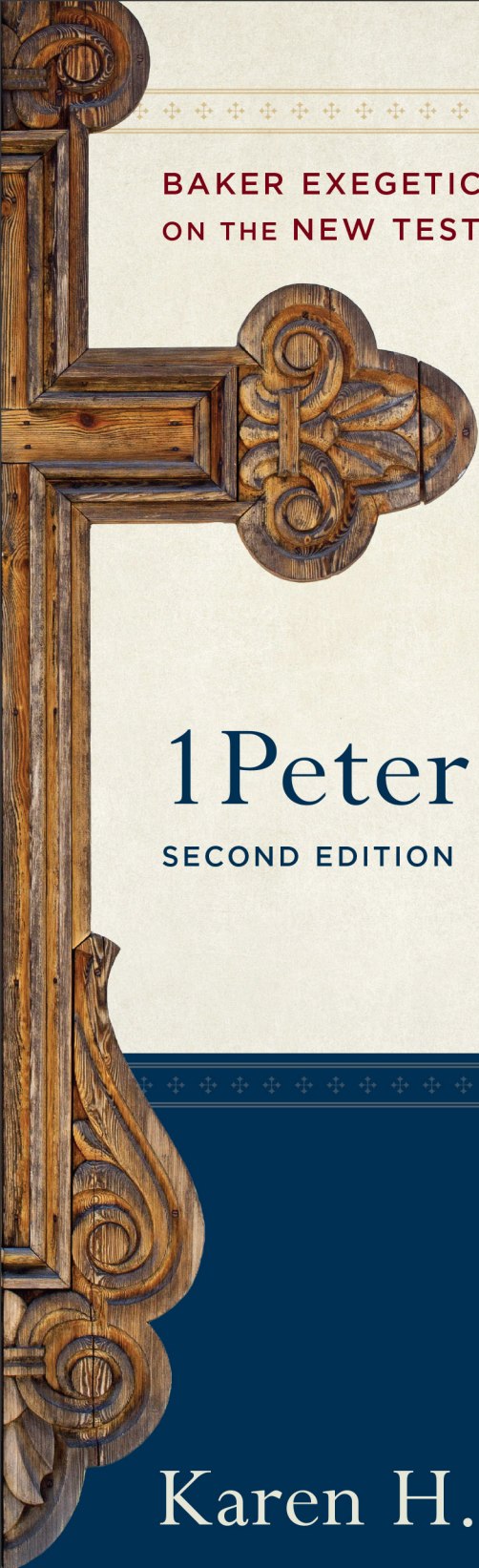


A large, ornate wooden cross is positioned on the left side of the cover. It features intricate carvings, including a central knot and floral motifs. The cross is made of dark wood and has a weathered appearance.

BAKER EXEGETICAL COMMENTARY
ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

1 Peter

SECOND EDITION

Karen H. Jobes

1 Peter

BAKER EXEGETICAL COMMENTARY
ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

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BAKER EXEGETICAL COMMENTARY
ON THE NEW TESTAMENT


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For my husband,
who has always exemplified Ephesians 5:25
by his support for my work

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Series Preface

The chief concern of the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (BECNT) is to provide, within the framework of informed evangelical thought, commentaries that blend scholarly depth with readability, exegetical detail with sensitivity to the whole, and attention to critical problems with theological awareness. We hope thereby to attract the interest of a fairly wide audience, from the scholar who is looking for a thoughtful and balanced examination of the text to the motivated lay Christian who craves a solid but accessible exposition.

Nevertheless, a major purpose is to address the needs of pastors and others involved in the preaching and exposition of the Scriptures as the uniquely inspired Word of God. This consideration directly affects the parameters of the series. For example, serious biblical expositors cannot afford to depend on a superficial treatment that avoids the difficult questions, but neither are they interested in encyclopedic commentaries that seek to cover every conceivable issue that could be raised. Our aim, therefore, is to focus on those problems that have the most direct bearing on the meaning of the text (although selected technical details are treated in the additional notes) or that pose unavoidable challenges for interpretation.

Similarly, a special effort is made to avoid treating exegetical questions for their own sake, that is, in relative isolation from the thrust of the argument as a whole. This effort may involve (at the discretion of the individual contributors) abandoning the verse-by-verse approach in favor of an exposition that focuses on the paragraph as the main unit of thought. In all cases, however, the commentaries will stress the development of the argument and explicitly relate each passage to what precedes and follows it so as to identify its function in the flow of discourse as clearly as possible.

We believe, moreover, that a responsible exegetical commentary must take into account the latest scholarly research, regardless of its source. The contributors to this series, accordingly, attempt to avoid two pitfalls. On the one hand, they do not consider traditional opinions to be sacrosanct, and they are committed to doing justice to the biblical text in the light of compelling evidence regardless of whether it supports such opinions. On the other hand, they will not quickly abandon a long-standing view, if there is persuasive evidence in its favor, for the sake of theories perhaps currently more in vogue. Contributing to this balance is contributors' affirmation of the trustworthiness and essential unity of Scripture. They also consider that the historic formulations of

Christian doctrine, such as the ecumenical creeds and many of the documents originating in the sixteenth-century Reformation and its aftermath, arose from a legitimate reading of Scripture, thus providing a valuable framework for its subsequent interpretation. While respect for formulations of classic consensual Christianity (Thomas Oden) may risk an imposition of tradition on the text, we deny that it must necessarily do so or that rejection of any hermeneutic that comports with Christian tradition automatically results in more valid exegetical insights and exposition.

In other words, we do not consider exegetically justifiable theological convictions to be a hindrance to biblical interpretation. On the contrary, an exegete who hopes to understand the apostle Paul in a theological vacuum might just as easily try to interpret Aristotle without regard for the philosophical framework of his whole work or without having recourse to those subsequent philosophical categories that make possible a meaningful contextualization of his thought. At the same time, it bears mention that the contributors to the present series come from a variety of theological traditions and that they represent a considerable span of hermeneutical outlooks and ecclesial orientations. In the end, what matters is representing the original text, in light of all of the relevant data and considerations that can and ought to be brought to bear, accurately, clearly, and meaningfully to the contemporary reader.

Shading has been used to assist the reader in locating salient sections of the treatment of each passage. This occurs particularly in introductory comments and concluding summaries. Textual variants in the Greek text are signaled in the author's translation by means of half-brackets around the relevant word or phrase (e.g., "Gerasenes"), thereby alerting the reader to turn to the additional notes at the end of each exegetical unit for a discussion of the textual problem. The documentation uses the author-date method, in which the basic reference consists of author's surname + year + page number(s): Fitzmyer 1992: 58. The only exceptions to this system are well-known reference works (e.g., BDAG, LSJ, TDNT). Full publication data and a complete set of indexes can be found at the end of the volume.

Robert W. Yarbrough
Joshua W. Jipp

Author's Preface to the Second Edition

It is a privilege to revise this previously published commentary on 1 Peter, for which I thank Baker Academic.

I have retained the three distinctive contributions of the 2005 edition:

1. Concerning the historical background of 1 Peter, I theorize that the Christians to whom Peter writes were converted elsewhere, possibly Rome, and were then displaced to Asia Minor. Peter, with whom they had some previous association, writes to these “foreigners and resident aliens,” using their personal situation to lend power to his spiritual application of the motif of this earthly life as an exile from their heavenly home. Although this remains a minority view, in the absence of extant evidence of how Christianity came rather suddenly to northern Asia Minor, I believe it should stay on the table.
2. Based on my further work since 2005, I elaborate the role of the Greek Jewish Scriptures (LXX/OG) for interpreting 1 Peter. By interpreting his letter against the scriptural context of the passages quoted from the LXX/OG, I seek to utilize an exegetical method that is truer to the historical origin of the letter.
3. I have retained the excursus with its analysis of the syntax of 1 Peter based on linguistic principles of bilingual interference, questioning the prevalent opinion that the high quality of the Greek is too good for Peter to have written. The analysis finds that the syntax of the Greek text of 1 Peter exhibits Semitic interference consistent with a Semitic-speaking author for whom Greek was a second language.

Some of the features of the commentary are as follows:

- a refreshed English translation based on the Greek text of NA28 and carried out in engagement with recent translations produced by other scholars
- the use of the author's translations of passages from 1 Peter unless otherwise noted
- the use of the NIV for quoting other biblical books unless otherwise noted
- the inclusion of more textual-critical information for some of the quotations of the OT in 1 Peter
- the continued use of historical-grammatical exegesis as my primary methodology for interpretation

- an additional section in the introduction titled “The Use of the OT in 1 Peter,” a subject that deserves continuing study
- the use of standardized terminology to refer to the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, using “LXX” in reference to books of the Pentateuch, “OG” (Old Greek) in reference to books of the Hebrew Scriptures beyond the Pentateuch, and “LXX/OG” in reference to the complete collection of the oldest Greek translation. The traditional use of the term “Septuagint” is still retained where the reference is to the Greek OT without distinguishing a particular form, much as we may refer to the “English Bible” without specifying a particular translation.

Special thanks to Dr. Bryan Dyer, acquisitions editor at Baker, for his encouragement to revise this volume. My thanks and appreciation to Jennifer Koenes at Baker for shepherding this commentary through its revision process and to Bob Banning for his copyediting expertise. Their work has improved the clarity and flow of this volume. My appreciation goes to series editors Robert Yarbrough and Joshua Jipp for their oversight and editorial suggestions, which have improved this revision. Any remaining flaws are solely my own responsibility.

I gratefully acknowledge the resources and benefits of the Gerald F. Hawthorne chair at Wheaton College, which allowed me to pursue research in my interests that have contributed to the revision of this commentary. Continued access to the libraries of Wheaton College, Westminster Theological Seminary, and Princeton Seminary was invaluable to my more recent work.

Last, but certainly not least, I express deepest gratitude to my husband for his continual support of my work. It is to him that this commentary is dedicated with heartfelt appreciation for our life together.

Karen H. Jobes
Philadelphia, PA

Author's Preface to the First Edition

Writing a commentary is a challenging endeavor. First, one is constrained by the flow and content of the biblical text itself. Rather than having the freedom to let one's thoughts be structured as they may, the author of a commentary must follow the structure of the biblical text, even where its meaning is difficult or obscure. Second, after about two thousand years of reflection on the New Testament (NT), it is daunting to say something that is new enough to warrant another commentary but not so innovative as to be heretical. Nevertheless, it is truly a great privilege to present the interpretive heritage of the Christian church in a fresh light to today's serious Bible readers.

In this commentary I hope to offer three distinct contributions to that heritage. First, I present a new theory on the historical background of the book of 1 Peter. Interpretive tradition has assumed that the letter was written to indigenous Christians of Asia Minor converted either by the evangelization of the apostle Peter on his travels between Jerusalem and Rome or by anonymous evangelists from the Pauline churches. This commentary presents the scenario that the Christians to whom Peter writes were converted elsewhere, probably Rome, and then displaced to Asia Minor. Peter, with whom they had some previous association, writes to these "foreigners and resident aliens," using their personal situation to lend power to his spiritual application of the motif.

Second, I attempt to make the role of the Greek Jewish Scriptures (LXX/OG) for interpreting 1 Peter more accessible to the reader. It was the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament (OT) that formed the scriptural context in which Peter wrote. Peter does not proof text when he cites the OT but applies the context of the passage as it occurs in the Greek OT to his Christian readers in Asia Minor. By interpreting his letter against the context of the passages quoted from the LXX/OG, I seek to utilize an exegetical method that is truer to the historical origin of the letter.

Third, by presenting an analysis of the syntax of 1 Peter based on principles of bilingual interference, this study questions the oft-repeated opinion about the high quality of the Greek of its author. The analysis concludes that the syntax exhibits elements consistent with a Semitic-speaking author for whom Greek was a second language.

I am grateful to Jim Kinney of Baker Academic and to Moisés Silva for the invitation to contribute to this series. Special thanks must go to Wells Turner and Robert Yarbrough for their oversight and editorial work. Because of their critique, this book is better than it would otherwise have been. I am also grateful

to my colleagues Bruce Fisk, Bob Gundry, George Guthrie, Moisés Silva, Frank Thielman, and Diana Trautwein for their time spent reading certain sections of the commentary and for the improvements they suggested. Their timely feedback was a great encouragement to me at just the right moment. Any remaining errors and flaws are of course my own sole responsibility.

Al Pietersma provided the text of the *NETS* quotations before they are available in print, for which I thank him. As we translated 1 Peter together in spring semesters 1999 and 2000, my Greek language students at Westmont College asked many questions that helped me to identify exegetical options for further thought. Classroom discussion with Westmont students in my General Epistles course in spring 2002 allowed me an opportunity to think out loud about the message of 1 Peter. The students in my course on 1 Peter at Regent College in summer 2002 engaged the text with me from the perspective of those long-experienced in church ministry, raising some difficult questions about the significance and relevance of this ancient epistle for the church today. I am grateful to all of these people for their presence in my life, which has helped form this work.

Karin Gluck, the academic secretary for the Religious Studies department at Westmont College, provided much time-saving assistance in tracking down books and journal articles. I appreciate the professional support she has cheerfully provided. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the several Westmont College library staff who offered advice and processed timely interlibrary loans for even obscure titles. Special thanks go to Ruth Angelos, Richard Burnweit, Claudia Scott, and Kristyn Thurman and to their student workers. My faculty colleagues Michael Sommermann and Aleta Anderson provided much-appreciated assistance with some German texts, for which I thank them.

I am grateful to Westmont College for granting the sabbatical time that made completion of this work possible. My dear colleagues in the Religious Studies department covered many tasks in my yearlong absence from departmental responsibilities; I owe them much gratitude. Last, but certainly not least, I express deepest gratitude to my husband for his continual support of my work. It is to him that this commentary is dedicated with heartfelt appreciation for our life together.

Abbreviations

Bibliographic and General

ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , edited by D. N. Freedman et al., 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992)
alt.	altered
BDAG	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , by W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)
CAH	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i> , edited by S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock, and M. P. Charlesworth, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934)
CSB	Christian Standard Bible
Diaspora	the Jewish historical experience of exile
diaspora	all other exiles in distinction from that of the Jews
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
Eng.	English
ESV	English Standard Version
GELNT	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains</i> , by J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988–89)
Gk.	Greek
Hb.	Hebrew
KJV	King James Version
Lat.	Latin
lit.	literally
LXX	Septuagint, Greek translation of the Pentateuch
MT	Masoretic Text
NA ²⁷	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , 27th rev. ed., edited by [E. and E. Nestle], B. Aland, K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C. M. Martini, and B. M. Metzger (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993)
NA ²⁸	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , 28th ed., edited by Barbara Aland et al. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012)
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NETS	<i>A New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> , edited by A. Pietersma and B. G. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
NIDNTT	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> , edited by Colin Brown, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975–78)

Abbreviations

NIDNTE	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , edited by Moisés Silva, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014)
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OG	Old Greek, Greek translation of the OT books except the Pentateuch
OT	Old Testament
OTP	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> , edited by J. H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983–85)
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, translated and edited by G. W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)
UBS ⁵	United Bible Society Greek New Testament, 5th ed.

Hebrew Bible

Gen.	Genesis	Neh.	Nehemiah	Hosea	Hosea
Exod.	Exodus	Esther	Esther	Joel	Joel
Lev.	Leviticus	Job	Job	Amos	Amos
Num.	Numbers	Ps(s).	Psalms(s)	Obad.	Obadiah
Deut.	Deuteronomy	Prov.	Proverbs	Jon.	Jonah
Josh.	Joshua	Eccles.	Ecclesiastes	Mic.	Micah
Judg.	Judges	Song	Song of Songs	Nah.	Nahum
Ruth	Ruth	Isa.	Isaiah	Hab.	Habakkuk
1–2 Sam.	1–2 Samuel	Jer.	Jeremiah	Zeph.	Zephaniah
1–2 Kings	1–2 Kings	Lam.	Lamentations	Hag.	Haggai
1–2 Chron.	1–2 Chronicles	Ezek.	Ezekiel	Zech.	Zechariah
Ezra	Ezra	Dan.	Daniel	Mal.	Malachi

Greek Testament

Matt.	Matthew	Gal.	Galatians	Philem.	Philemon
Mark	Mark	Eph.	Ephesians	Heb.	Hebrews
Luke	Luke	Phil.	Philippians	James	James
John	John	Col.	Colossians	1–2 Pet.	1–2 Peter
Acts	Acts	1–2 Thess.	1–2 Thessalonians	1–3 John	1–3 John
Rom.	Romans	1–2 Tim.	1–2 Timothy	Jude	Jude
1–2 Cor.	1–2 Corinthians	Titus	Titus	Rev.	Revelation

Other Jewish and Christian Writings

Acts Pet.	Acts of Peter	Ign. <i>Phld.</i>	Ignatius, <i>Letter to the Philadelphians</i>
<i>Bapt.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De baptismo</i>	Ign. <i>Rom.</i>	Ignatius, <i>Letter to the Romans</i>
2 Bar.	2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch	Ign. <i>Smyrn.</i>	Ignatius, <i>Letter to the Smyrnaeans</i>
b. Sanh.	Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin	Ign. <i>Trall.</i>	Ignatius, <i>Letter to the Trallians</i>
1 Clem.	1 Clement	Jdt.	Judith
Did.	Didache	1–4 Macc.	1–4 Maccabees
1 En.	1 Enoch	Pol. <i>Phil.</i>	Polycarp, <i>Letter to the Philippians</i>
2 Esd.	2 Esdras (4 Ezra)	Sib. Or.	Sibylline Oracles
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>	Sir.	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
Ign. <i>Eph.</i>	Ignatius, <i>Letter to the Ephesians</i>	<i>Strom.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Stromata</i> (Miscellanies)
Ign. <i>Magn.</i>	Ignatius, <i>Letter to the Magnesians</i>	T. Jud.	Testament of Judah

Philo

<i>Alleg. Interp.</i>	<i>Allegorical Interpretation</i>	<i>Sacrifices</i>	<i>On the Sacrifices of Cain and Abel</i>
<i>Drunkenness</i>	<i>On Drunkenness</i>	<i>Virtues</i>	<i>On the Virtues</i>
<i>Planting</i>	<i>On Noah's Work as a Planter</i>		

Josephus

Ag. Ap.	<i>Against Apion</i>
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Qumran / Dead Sea Scrolls

1QH	Thanksgiving Hymns/Psalms (<i>Hôdāyôt</i>)	1QS	Manual of Discipline (<i>Serek Hayyahad</i> , Rule of the Community)
1QpHab	Pesher Habakkuk		

Greek Papyri

BGU	<i>Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen/Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden</i> (Berlin, 1895–)	P.Mich.	The University of Michigan Papyrus Collection, University Library, Ann Arbor, MI
CPR	Corpus Papyrorum Raineri archeducis Austriae (Vienna, 1895–)	P.Wisc.	<i>The Wisconsin Papyri</i> , edited by P. J. Sijpesteijn, Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1967–77)
P.Cair.Preis.	<i>Griechische Urkunden des Ägyptischen Museums zu Kairo</i> , edited by F. Preisigke, Schriften der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft zu Strassburg 8 (Strassburg: Trübner, 1911)		

Classical Writers

<i>Advice</i>	Plutarch, <i>Advice to Bride and Groom</i>	<i>Gyn.</i>	Soranus, <i>Gynaecology</i>
<i>Ann.</i>	Tacitus, <i>Annales</i> (<i>Annals</i>)	<i>Oec.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Oeconomica</i>
<i>Curios.</i>	Plutarch, <i>De curiositate</i>	<i>Oecon.</i>	Xenophon, <i>Oeconomicus</i>
<i>Diatr.</i>	Epictetus, <i>Diatribai</i> (<i>Discourses</i>)	<i>Resp.</i>	Plato, <i>Respublica</i> (<i>Republic</i>)
<i>Ep.</i>	Seneca, <i>Epistulae morales</i> (<i>Moral Epistles</i>)		

Transliteration

Hebrew

א ' <i>ā</i>	ב <i>a</i>	<i>qāmeṣ</i>
ב <i>b</i>	ב <i>a</i>	<i>pataḥ</i>
ד <i>d</i>	ב <i>e</i>	<i>səgōl</i>
ה <i>h</i>	ב <i>ē</i>	<i>šērē</i>
ו <i>w</i>	ב <i>i</i>	short <i>ḥîreq</i>
ז <i>z</i>	ב <i>ī</i>	long <i>ḥîreq</i> written defectively
ח <i>ḥ</i>	ב <i>o</i>	<i>qāmeṣ ḥāṭûp</i>
ט <i>ṭ</i>	בו <i>ô</i>	<i>ḥōlem</i> written fully
י <i>y</i>	ב <i>ō</i>	<i>ḥōlem</i> written defectively
כ/ך <i>k</i>	בו <i>û</i>	<i>šûreq</i>
ל <i>l</i>	ב <i>u</i>	short <i>qibbûṣ</i>
מ/ם <i>m</i>	ב <i>ū</i>	long <i>qibbûṣ</i> written defectively
נ/ן <i>n</i>	בה <i>â</i>	final <i>qāmeṣ hē'</i> (רה = <i>āh</i>)
ס <i>s</i>	בי <i>ê</i>	<i>səgōl yōd</i> (בי = <i>êy</i>)
ע ' <i>ē</i>	בי <i>ê</i>	<i>šērē yōd</i> (בי = <i>êy</i>)
פ/ף <i>p</i>	בי <i>î</i>	<i>ḥîreq yōd</i> (בי = <i>îy</i>)
צ/ץ <i>ṣ</i>	ב <i>ă</i>	<i>ḥāṭēp pataḥ</i>
ק <i>q</i>	ב <i>ě</i>	<i>ḥāṭēp səgōl</i>
ר <i>r</i>	ב <i>ō</i>	<i>ḥāṭēp qāmeṣ</i>
ש <i>ś</i>	ב <i>ə</i>	vocal <i>šəwā'</i>
ש <i>š</i>		
ת <i>t</i>		

Notes on the Transliteration of Hebrew

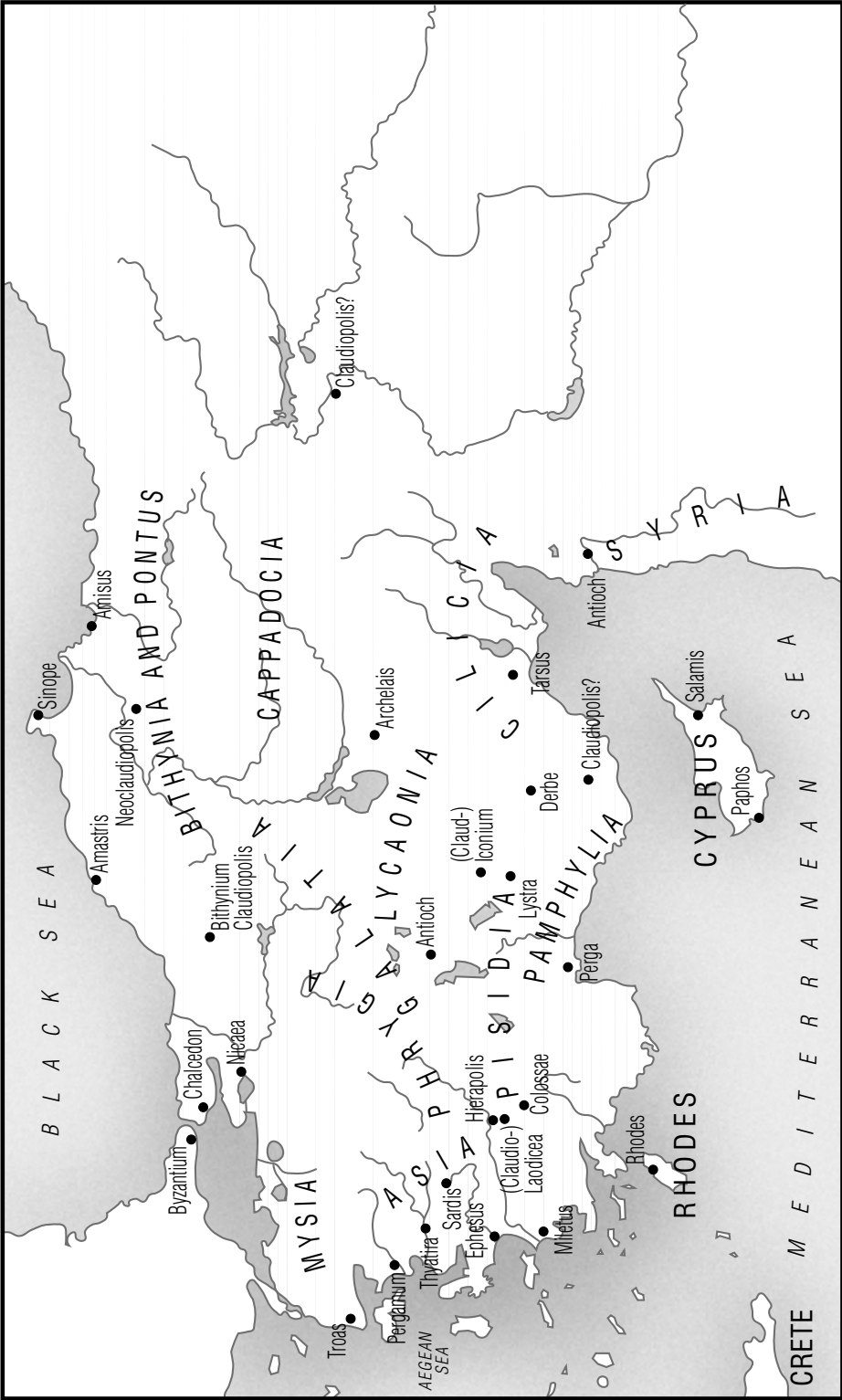
1. Accents are not shown in transliteration.
2. Silent *šəwā'* is not indicated in transliteration.
3. The spirant forms ת פ ד כ ב are usually not specially indicated in transliteration.
4. *Dāgēš forte* is indicated by doubling the consonant. Euphonic *dāgēš* and *dāgēš lene* are not indicated in transliteration.
5. *Maqqēp* is represented by a hyphen.

Greek

α	<i>a</i>	θ	<i>th</i>	ο	<i>o</i>	χ	<i>ch</i>
β	<i>b</i>	ι	<i>i</i>	π	<i>p</i>	ψ	<i>ps</i>
γ	<i>g/n</i>	κ	<i>k</i>	ρ	<i>r</i>	ω	<i>ō</i>
δ	<i>d</i>	λ	<i>l</i>	σ/ς	<i>s</i>	‘	<i>h</i>
ε	<i>e</i>	μ	<i>m</i>	τ	<i>t</i>		
ζ	<i>z</i>	ν	<i>n</i>	υ	<i>y/u</i>		
η	<i>ē</i>	ξ	<i>x</i>	φ	<i>ph</i>		

Notes on the Transliteration of Greek

- 1. Accents, lenis (smooth breathing), and *iota* subscript are not shown in transliteration.
- 2. The transliteration of asper (rough breathing) precedes a vowel or diphthong (e.g., ἄ = *ha*; αἶ = *hai*) and follows ρ (i.e., ῥ = *rh*).
- 3. *Gamma* is transliterated *n* only when it precedes γ, κ, ξ, or χ.
- 4. *Upsilon* is transliterated *u* only when it is part of a diphthong (i.e., αυ, ευ, ου, υι).



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Introduction to 1 Peter

Significance of the Letter

The apostle Peter ends his letter with a statement of its significance: “This is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it!” (1 Pet. 5:12). For two thousand years, believers around the world have read the letter Peter wrote to the Christians of first-century Asia Minor as God’s word. The apostle explains the significance of Jesus’ suffering and how those who follow him are to live out their faith within the reality of Christ’s resurrection. Some have accurately described 1 Peter as “the most condensed New Testament résumé of the Christian faith and of the conduct that it inspires” (Clowney 1988: 15). Martin Luther describes it as “one of the noblest books in the New Testament” and a “paragon of excellence” on par with even Romans and the Gospel of John (Pelikan 1967: 4, 9; Blevins 1982: 401). Luther believed it contained all that is necessary for a Christian to know (Achtemeier 1996: 64). Perhaps this letter’s universal relevance is due to its presentation of how the gospel of Jesus Christ is the foundational principle by which the Christian life is lived out within the larger, unbelieving society.

The life of Jesus and the lives of believers are inseparable in Peter’s thought. In 1 Peter Jesus is not only the object of Christian faith; he is also the pattern of Christian destiny. Jesus’ resurrection is the source of the believer’s new life (1:3). His willingness to suffer unjustly to fulfill God’s purpose is the exemplar to which Christians are called as they live out their lives in faith, following in his footsteps (2:21).

For the original readers to whom Peter wrote, their identity as Christians was not only the source of great joy but ironically also the reason they suffered grief in various kinds of trials (1:6). Because of their Christian faith, they were being marginalized by their society, alienated in their relationships, and threatened with—if not experiencing—a loss of honor and socioeconomic standing (and possibly worse). Many Christians around the world throughout these last two thousand years have experienced a similar negative reaction to their faith by the societies in which they live. Even today there are those who live in peril because of their faith in Christ. For them, the words of the apostle speak directly to their situation, providing consolation, encouragement, and guidance.

But there are also many modern readers of 1 Peter who cannot relate directly to that situation, those of us who have been fortunate enough to live in societies where, generally speaking, Christian faith does not lower social standing, jeopardize livelihoods, or threaten life itself. What significance could

this ancient letter have for Christians who rarely experience social alienation and suffering for the faith? One Lutheran biblical scholar who has devoted most of his professional career to 1 Peter confesses, “The more I study it, the more alien it seems to the interests and projects of mainstream Christianity” (J. H. Elliott 1998: 179). Classroom discussion of 1 Peter has raised the suggestion that perhaps 1 Peter is for the church in another time and place and that its message of suffering is not necessarily applicable to the church today. The relative neglect of 1 Peter in sermons and Bible studies may attest to the truth of that thought in practice if not in principle.

However, when viewed from a global perspective, North American Christianity occupies an increasingly receding place in Christendom. Writing about the emergence of large Christian populations around the world, P. Jenkins (2002: 218) observes, “For the average Western audience, New Testament passages about standing firm in the face of pagan persecution have little immediate relevance. . . . Millions of Christians around the world do in fact live in constant danger of persecution or forced conversion, either from governments or local vigilantes. . . . Ordinary believers are forced to understand why they are facing these sufferings, and repeatedly do so in the familiar language of the Bible and of the earliest Christianity.” Wherever Christians are a minority, the message of 1 Peter takes on renewed relevance. For instance, the apostle’s letter became a source of hope and encouragement to Christian students at the University of Halle in Soviet-dominated Germany after World War II (Boring 1999: 143). In former Yugoslavia and Muslim Indonesia, 1 Peter has been at times the most popular book among Christians (McKnight 1996: 35). E. Wendland (2000: 68–78) discusses the contemporary relevance of 1 Peter to the Bantu in Africa. Even within the United States, J. H. Elliott (1998) applies Peter’s principles to the sanctuary movement that shelters political refugees.

The social ethos of the first-century Greco-Roman setting of 1 Peter is undoubtedly substantially different from that of those cultures today founded upon the Judeo-Christian ethic. Nevertheless, the principles upon which Peter offers his original readers consolation, encouragement, and guidance in their specific situation are applicable to all Christians at all times. The apostle wants his readers to recognize the sweeping scope of new life in Christ and the implications for how they view themselves now that they have been born again by the mercy of God the Father through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1:3). They must no longer think of themselves and their relationships to family and society in the same way they did in their former life (4:3). As S. McKnight (1996: 36) puts it, “Peter intends his readers to understand who they are before God so that they can be who they are in society.”

However, a Christian self-understanding based on the NT is Christocentric and society is not. Herein lies the significance of 1 Peter for modern readers. Christians need to be transformed in their thinking about who they are in Christ and what that implies for relationships with other believers and with society, regardless of one’s historical moment or geographical location. The principle “it is better to suffer than to sin” (see further discussion below) is

relevant to every Christian who must decide how to live. First Peter applies principles of Christian conduct to a specific Christian community living out the faith in troubling times, and so this letter has something important to say about the engagement of Christians and culture. These concepts of Christian self-understanding and cultural engagement speak to the heart of the believer, whether babes in Christ or seniors in the faith.

First Peter encourages a transformed understanding of Christian self-identity that redefines how one is to live as a Christian in a world that is hostile to the basic principles of the gospel. Acknowledging that estrangement, Peter writes to those whom he addresses as “foreigners and resident aliens” (2:11) within the society in which they live. He holds up Jesus Christ as the true outsider, coming into this world but being rejected and executed by it. Reflecting on the message of 1 Peter, M. Volf (1994: 17) writes, “The root of Christian self-understanding as aliens and sojourners lies not so much in the story of Abraham and Sarah and the nation of Israel as it does in the destiny of Jesus Christ, his mission and his rejection which ultimately brought him to the cross.” The example of Christ’s suffering in 1 Peter is the pattern that explains the experience of Christians who suffer for their faith. The relationship between Christ and the world defines the basic principle of Christian self-understanding and engagement with culture. Therefore, Peter exhorts Christians to engage the world as foreigners and resident aliens, having a healthy respect for the society and culture in which they live while at the same time maintaining an appropriate separation from it. As foreigners and resident aliens Peter’s readers are to abstain from unrighteous desires—which, even though perhaps socially acceptable, war against the soul—while at the same time living good lives among the Gentiles (2:11–12).

The relationship between the Christian and culture is an overarching theme of 1 Peter, as relevant now as it was when the letter was first penned. Using what he called “sociological exegesis,” J. H. Elliott (1981) argued that the author of 1 Peter was concerned to maintain the identity of the Christian community and to discourage accommodation to the surrounding culture. In the same year, D. L. Balch (1981) approached the issue of the relationship of the Christian community to culture by considering the household codes in their sociohistorical setting (2:18–3:7). He concluded the opposite of what Elliott had: the author of 1 Peter was in fact encouraging a level of accommodation to society in order to avoid undue alienation from it. Both positions reduce the complexity of 1 Peter on this point, which, as Volf (1994: 22) observes, calls for “the possibility of either rejecting or accommodating to particular aspects of the surrounding culture in a piece-meal fashion.” Along that same line, D. Horrell (2007a: 141) has more recently argued that the letter “steers between conformity and resistance,” an accurate observation.

First Peter offers various examples of accommodating, rejecting, subverting, and transforming culture. A prime example is the so-called household code of 2:18–3:7, which discusses the relationships among members of the first-century household but does so in view of an apologetic concern for the

relationship between the Christian community and the society in which it has taken root (see comments on 2:18–3:7). The principles of 1 Peter’s differentiated acceptance and rejection of first-century culture offer perhaps the letter’s most significant contribution to contemporary Christian thought. Moreover, Peter’s principles remain significant for the church today, living in times when social values and structures are changing rapidly. The epistle is especially relevant in the Majority World, where Christianity is no longer a missionary religion but is becoming indigenous in cultures that were not formed by the Judeo-Christian tradition. First Peter’s emphasis on Christian engagement with society makes it a relevant and thought-provoking book for all times and places.

In addition to thoughtfully reflecting on the Christian’s relationship to society, 1 Peter raises a second related issue by presenting the challenging principle that *it is better to suffer than to sin*. Christians are to understand themselves as a people who are done with sin (see comments on 4:1), which means that one must be prepared to suffer the consequences of not sinning. The thought that suffering is a normal part of the Christian life (4:12) and within God’s will may be startling, especially for those who became Christians with the idea that “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” It is easy to confuse vicarious atonement with vicarious suffering and think that because Jesus suffered, Christians do not have to. The place of suffering in God’s will was also confusing to Peter’s original readers. The apostle explains their experience in light of the example of Jesus and challenges the Christian to live out the gospel boldly by embracing suffering if it should come. In the face of pressure to conform to social expectations, Peter exhorts his readers to live good, godly lives, to accept consequential suffering, and to continue trusting God.

The Christians to whom Peter wrote were suffering because they were living by different priorities, values, and allegiances than their pagan neighbors. These differences were sufficiently visible to cause unbelievers to take note and in some cases to heap abuse on those living out faith in Christ. Are Christians today willing to suffer alienation from our society out of obedience to Christ? If statistics tell the true story, it would seem that most Christians today, even those who call themselves evangelicals, are in some important ways not very distinguishable from unbelievers. We divorce at the same rate. We have the same addictions. We seek the same forms of entertainment. We wear the same fashions. And so on. First Peter challenges Christians to reexamine our acceptance of society’s norms and to be willing to suffer the alienation of being a visiting foreigner in our own culture wherever its values conflict with those of Christ.

Even those Christians who do not suffer persecution for the faith are called to the suffering of self-denial. Sin is often thought of as being motivated by the temptation for pleasure. But perhaps the real power of sin lies in the avoidance of pain and suffering. It is better to suffer unfulfilled needs and desires than to sin. Is this not what self-denial means? Jesus linked self-denial with following in his footsteps when he said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple

must deny themselves and take up their cross and *follow me*" (Mark 8:34, emphasis added). For instance, isn't the temptation to lie often an attempt to save face rather than face the consequences of the truth? Isn't the temptation to cheat on an exam an unwillingness to suffer the loss of reputation or other consequences that failure might bring? Isn't sexual sin often the alternative to suffering by living with deep emotional and physical needs unmet? According to Peter, the pain and suffering that self-denial brings is a godly suffering that is better than yielding to sin (1 Pet. 4:1–2).

The "foreignness" of Christians increases as modern society accepts values and legalizes principles that are inconsistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ. S. Gaede (1993: 11) reflected on tolerance as a highly esteemed modern virtue in words even more true today, writing, "We live in strange times. Or the times we live in make strangers out of folks like me. I'm not sure which." First Peter presents the Christian community as a colony in a strange land, an island of one culture in the midst of another. The new birth that gives Christians a new identity and a new citizenship in the kingdom of God makes us, in whatever culture we happen to live, visiting foreigners and resident aliens there.

Date and Authorship: Apostolic or Pseudonymous (and Can It Be Both)?

The dual issues of when 1 Peter was written and who wrote it are so intertwined that they must be considered together. The most basic issue, of course, is whether the apostle Peter wrote the letter, since the text indisputably claims it is from him, or whether it was written pseudonymously sometime after his death (composed by an anonymous author who wrote in Peter's name with unknown motives). A prevalent opinion today is that 1 Peter is a pseudonymous work written by someone of the Petrine group in Rome between AD 75 and 95 who was accurately representing the apostle Peter's thoughts (e.g., J. H. Elliott 2000: 127–30). The presumption of a Petrine school is an attempt to preserve some semblance of Peter's apostolic authority while allowing for a date of writing that places the book well beyond the apostle's lifetime. J. H. Elliott (1966; 1981; 2000) believes the existence of a Petrine group was inevitable from a social and practical point of view. This may be plausible from a sociological viewpoint, but it does not address why such a group would write in the specific form and terms found in 1 Peter to presumable strangers more than 1,300 miles away in northern Asia Minor. Horrell (2002: 55, 56) rejects the idea of a distinctively Petrine school but defends pseudonymous authorship by "leading figures in the Roman churches [who] presented, consolidated and synthesized—and at the same time developed and reinterpreted—a variety of early Christian traditions" in the name of Peter rather than Paul because of the latter's "shaky status" in parts of Asia Minor.

Are references to Peter, Mark, and Silvanus (1:1; 5:12–13) all part of a pseudonymous fiction? But if Silvanus were the true carrier of the letter, as J. H. Elliott (1980: 265–66) suggests, assuming he was aware that the apostle

Peter had not in fact written it, how would he have represented the letter to the recipients he actually had to face? Furthermore, apart from the letter itself, there is no extant evidence from the first century that a Petrine group existed that could pseudonymously represent the apostle Peter with authority. C. Keener suggests (2021: 12, 13) that one of Peter's close associates such as Silvanus (or Mark?) "could have put Petrine preaching into an epistolary frame after Peter's death, allowing for the work's early acceptance as Petrine even if Peter were deceased," though Keener ultimately rejects pseudonymous authorship for 1 Peter. On the other hand, if the Gospel of Mark is Peter's authentic testimony, even its author did not presume to write under Peter's name. Moreover, if a Petrine group did exist, why would they be writing to the remotest areas of Asia Minor? The explanation J. H. Elliott (1980: 264–65) offers, that the Petrine group's concern for Asia Minor confirms "the universal ethnic and geographical dimensions of the universal grace of which they write" and reflects a first attempt by the Roman church to establish hegemony, does not explain their specific connection to the regions of Asia Minor addressed (see commentary on 5:12).

On the other hand, the theory that the letter was written by Peter using an amanuensis usually understands it to have been written during Peter's lifetime and under his direction. But an amanuensis merely shades into a pseudonymous author if a close associate composed the letter shortly after Peter's death. On this ground the letter is often claimed to be pseudonymous, yet bearing Peter's apostolic authority.

Challenges to Petrine Authorship

The weightiest evidence that 1 Peter is a pseudonymous work has rested on four points: (1) the Greek of the epistle is just too good for a Galilean fisherman-turned-apostle to have written; (2) the book's content suggests a *Sitz im Leben* that reflects a time decades later than Peter's lifetime; (3) 1 Peter exhibits a dependence on the so-called deutero-Pauline books and must therefore have been written after them, which would date 1 Peter to the late first century; and (4) Christianity could not have reached these remote areas of Asia Minor and become a target for persecution until a decade or more after Peter had died at the earliest.

The Greek of 1 Peter

As for the first point, in the opinion of scholars on both sides of the authorship question, the Greek of 1 Peter does seem to be too good for Peter himself to have written it. Even those supporting a date within Peter's lifetime propose that he used an amanuensis more highly skilled in Greek than himself (G. Green 2019: 87–92). However, the quality of the Greek is a somewhat subjective judgment that must be evaluated on several levels. Recent scholarship has concluded that the overall structure of the letter does seem to follow the contours of formal Greek rhetoric (B. Campbell 1998; Thurén 1990; Thurén 1995; Tite 1997). However, even if such a rhetorical

structure does organize 1 Peter, does it follow that its author was deliberately following the principles of formal rhetoric? Or was he simply presenting a well-structured argument consistent with the general practice of the time? Assigning Latin rhetorical terms to various sections of the epistle does not prove that the author had a high level of formal training in Greek rhetoric. But beyond the overall rhetorical structure, it is argued that features such as its “polished Attic style, Classical vocabulary . . . and rhetorical quality . . . make it one of the more refined writings in the NT” (J. H. Elliott 2000: 120). First Peter does contain series of words with similar sounds, accumulation of synonyms, the use of anaphora, antithetic and synthetic parallelism, coordinate parallel expressions first negative and then positive, rhythmic structure, and the frequent use of conjunctive participles and relative clauses (Achtmeier 1996: 3). However, 1 Peter is not nearly as rhetorically ornamented as is, for instance, the book of Hebrews. And one could probably find examples of well-argued modern English discourse that follow the general contours of formal Greek rhetoric. The question remains, on the one hand, whether the traits displayed by 1 Peter would *require* an author formally trained in Greek rhetoric and, on the other hand, whether someone like the apostle Peter could have ever attained that level of proficiency, with or without formal training.

At the level of syntax, the Greek of 1 Peter arguably exhibits bilingual interference that is consistent with a Semitic author for whom Greek is a second language (see the excursus at the end of this commentary). This is perhaps the most telling feature of the Greek of 1 Peter, for a letter’s syntax flows almost subconsciously from an author’s proficiency with the language, unlike the deliberate structure, content, and ornamentation of a discourse. W. L. Schutter (1989: 83) has also observed certain Semitic tendencies in the Greek of 1 Peter. A comparison of 1 Peter with Josephus and Polybius clearly shows that its syntax is not nearly as “good” as that of the classical writer Polybius, or even as good as that of the Palestinian Jewish writer Josephus, if “good” is defined as the Greek style and syntax of a native proficient writer. Syntax criticism (see excursus) shows that the author of 1 Peter had not attained the same mastery of Greek that Josephus had in at least four areas: (a) the use of prepositions, which are notoriously difficult to master in any second language; (b) the use of the genitive personal pronoun; (c) the position of attributive adjectives; and (d) the use of the dative case with the preposition *ἐν* (*en*). And so, regardless of the level of rhetorical achievement, the author of 1 Peter may well have been a Semitic speaker for whom Greek was a second language. Since Semitic languages were limited to Palestine and adjoining areas in the first century, the author of 1 Peter was probably not a Greek- or Latin-speaking Roman or a Christian elder in Asia Minor, as has sometimes been proposed. The issue of whether Peter wrote the letter himself cannot be so summarily dismissed by appeals to the quality of the epistle’s Greek without further critical investigation of several key questions.

The Sitz im Leben of 1 Peter

It is argued, in general terms, that 1 Peter reflects a *Sitz im Leben* most consistent with a time in the development of the Christian church that is much later than Peter's lifetime.¹ This argument is usually based on the points that: (1) the persecution reflected in the book is consistent with that of the last decades of the first century and the opening decades of the second; and (2) the church structure reflects developments toward the end of the first century.

Persecution in 1 Peter. Attempts have been made to date the book to the reign of one of the three early Roman emperors known to have persecuted the church: Nero (AD 54–68), Domitian (81–96), or Trajan (98–117). More recently, however, interpreters have concluded that the nature of the persecution in view in 1 Peter is of no help in dating the book.

German scholars of a past generation argued that the “fiery ordeal” of 1 Pet. 4:12 signaled a time of actual persecution that was more serious than the potential persecution the letter had previously referenced (see “Literary Unity and Genre” below). This perceived increase in the severity of the persecution was tied up with a source-critical theory that understood the previous chapters of 1 Peter to have been written at an earlier time and eventually joined to the latter chapters, allowing time for the development of persecution to occur before the book reached its final redaction (Cross 1954; Perdelwitz 1911; Preisker 1951; Windisch 1930). The presumed combination of more than one source reflecting two different settings of lesser followed by greater persecution was then read against the background of Christian persecution in Bithynia during the reign of Trajan (Beare 1970: 32). That situation in Bithynia was reported by Pliny the Younger, a Roman official sent to Bithynia, who wrote about sixty letters in a three-year period (AD 109–111) to the emperor Trajan concerning many topics, among them how to deal with the persistent problem of Christians (Pliny, *Letters* 10.96–97). This construal of the book's redaction led to the conclusion that the final form of 1 Peter dated from the time of Trajan.

More recently, however, the unity of 1 Peter has been sufficiently demonstrated to persuade most interpreters that it was not written in parts over a long period of time (see “Literary Unity and Genre” below). If so, the character of the persecution referred to throughout the book must then be representative of one period of time when the letter was written. 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). While these problems would also be present in times of martyrdom, the situation in 1 Peter appears to reflect a time when the threat had not yet escalated to that point, which indicates a time in Asia Minor earlier than that indicated in Pliny's letters. Pliny (*Letters* 10.96.6) refers to Christians who had recanted even twenty-some years before he wrote, which would have been about AD

1. There is virtual unanimity that the apostle Peter died in Rome in the mid-60s during the reign of Emperor Nero. Only Ramsay (1893: 282–83) upholds both Peter's authorship and a late date for the book by arguing that Peter actually survived until well toward the end of the century.

90. If the situation in view in 1 Peter is less dire than that in Asia Minor about AD 90, then the letter would have been addressed to Christians living there in an earlier time, whose grief in “various trials” was in hindsight only the precursor of worse things to come.

What then of the “fiery ordeal” in 1 Pet. 4:12? Although the phrase has been read as an allusion to Nero’s horrific persecution against Christians in Rome (e.g., Robinson 1976: 159), the OT is the likely source of the imagery (see commentary on 4:12). Not only are “fiery trials” a motif in OT prophecy; the metaphor of smelting metals was also current in popular secular thought—for instance, in Seneca’s proverb *Ignis aurum probat, miseria fortes viros* (Fire tests gold, affliction tests strong men; *Ep., On Providence* 5.10).² The image of trials as a testing of authentic faith analogous to the smelting of gold is characteristic of 1 Peter. Therefore, the “fiery ordeal” is probably not a reference to physical persecution, such as Nero’s burning of Christians, but to trials faced by Christians that test the mettle of their faith (as also Best 1971: 162; Davids 1990: 164–65; Liebengood 2014).

Since the time of E. G. Selwyn (1958), virtually all commentators understand the persecutions referred to in 1 Peter to be sporadic, personal, and unorganized social ostracism of Christians with varying intensity, probably reinforced at the local level by the increasing suspicions of Roman officials at all levels.³ Peter describes the suffering, and hence the persecution that caused it, as worldwide (5:9), suggesting a type of persecution that potentially threatens all Christians *as Christians* and not the execution of official Roman policy in any one place. P. Achtemeier (1996: 35–36) describes the persecution referred to in 1 Peter as

due more to unofficial harassment than to official policy, more local than regional, and more at the initiation of the general populace as the result of a reaction against the lifestyle of the Christians than at the initiation of Roman officials because of some general policy of seeking out and punishing Christians. That does not rule out the possibility that persecutions occurred over large areas of the empire; they surely did, but they were spasmodic and broke out at different times in different places, the result of the flare-up of local hatreds rather than because Roman officials were engaged in the regular discharge of official policy.

This type of persecution may have started from the moment that the name “Christian” was given (Χριστιανός, *christianos*; Acts 11:26). (See commentary on 4:15, 16.) There are many similar episodes of such hostilities in the early church: 1 Thess. 1:6 (cf. 1 Pet. 4:13); 1 Thess. 2:14–16 and 3:3 (cf. 1 Pet. 2:21);

2. Proverbs 27:21 is sometimes cited as the referent of the allusion, but although that biblical verse mentions the smelting of silver and gold, in both the Hebrew and the OG it is *praise*, not trials, that tests a person’s character.

3. Achtemeier 1996: 35–36; Best 1971: 42; J. H. Elliott 2000: 103; G. Green 2019: 84–85; Keener 2021: 29; Kelly 1969: 10; Perkins 1995: 15–16; Richard 1986: 127; Robinson 1976: 153; Selwyn 1958: 55; Sleeper 1968: 271; van Unnik 1980: 113; for an opposing view see T. Williams 2012.

1 Thess. 3:4–5 (cf. 1 Pet. 2:20); Acts 4:21 and 5:40–41 (cf. 1 Pet. 4:13–14); Matt. 10:16–20 (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15); Gal. 4:29 (cf. 1 Pet. 4:3–4) (Moule 1955–56: 7–9; Robinson 1976: 151). Given the apparent widespread scope, prolonged duration, and relatively mild nature of the persecution, it seems less likely the letter was written during a time of official state-sponsored persecution (Achte-meier 1996: 36; Best 1971: 42; Boring 1999: 33). If so, 1 Peter was written either before Nero’s torture of Christians (Bigg 1956: 33; Hillyer 1992: 5; Hort 1898: 3; Kelly 1969: 30; Schreiner 2020: 26) or during the period of relative peace and stability in Asia Minor before the persecution of Christians that Pliny documents, a persecution that had apparently gone on to some degree for two decades prior to his writing (Pliny, *Letters* 10.96.6). Most interpreters who hold to pseudonymous authorship date 1 Peter after AD 70 but before the persecutions initiated by Domitian’s reign from 81 to 96 (Achte-meier 1996: 50; Best 1971: 63–64; Boring 1999: 33; Blevins 1982: 411; Brown and Meier 1983: 130; J. H. Elliott 2000: 138; cf. also Ramsay 1893: 282). T. Williams, however, considers 1 Pet. 4:15–16 to be evidence that Christians were being arrested as criminals simply for bearing the name, something that he argues could not have happened before Nero’s reign, and so he dates the book to between AD 65 and 90 (T. Williams 2012: 275, 306, 331; see also Goppelt 1993: 39, 43, 45).

In the end, because the situation in the letter cannot be associated with any of the three known officially sponsored persecutions but reflects a situation that pertained throughout the first two hundred years of Christianity, the persecutions are of no help in dating the letter (J. Green 2007: 9–10).

Church structure in 1 Peter. The consideration of what period of ecclesiastical development 1 Peter reflects is a complicated issue but is no more conclusive for dating the letter. The use of the term ἐπισκοποῦντες (*episkopountes*, overseeing) in 5:2 has been construed as a reference to the office of the monarchical bishop of the second century. When the letter was being dated to the second century on other grounds, the ambiguity of this word was naturally resolved by its presumed second-century usage. However, the word had a long history of more general usage before it came to be adopted as the official term for a bishop (see comments on 5:2). Moreover, the participle describes the activity of what appears to be the then-highest level of authority—namely, the πρεσβύτεροι (*presbyteroi*, elders), who in the second century were clearly subordinate to the bishop. Furthermore, since 1 Peter is written not to one local body but to a large area that would have been the territory of probably more than one bishop, the term *episkopountes* in 1 Peter is not likely to have had that later sense. In fact, the development of the office of the ἐπίσκοπος (*episkopos*, bishop) probably motivated the secondary variant reading that omits the participle *episkopountes* in 1 Pet. 5:2, for it would then be somewhat redundant in the immediate context.

The consensus of current interpreters is that if 5:2 reflects the structure of the church in Asia Minor, it is a relatively undeveloped structure, consisting only of *presbyteroi* (elders), and is commensurate with the structure of the early churches of the Pauline missions as found in Acts. Keener (2021: 30n200)

observes, “The identification of elders, shepherds, and the function of overseers is more characteristic of the first century than of the institution of bishoprics that had been widely instituted by the time of Ignatius.” L. Goppelt (1993: 338) argues that “in the Pastorals a further stage of development is already seen,” but he nevertheless dates 1 Peter beyond the lifetime of Peter with the claim that this stage of organization, in which elders functioned as overseers, was “typical for the area from Rome to Asia Minor during the period AD 65–80.” Goppelt (1993: 47) believes that the church structure described in Acts reflects not the actual historical conditions of the church in its earliest decades but the much later time when Acts was written. However, even if Goppelt’s claim were true, it does not preclude this form of church ecclesiology from predating 65 and therefore does not provide a *terminus a quo*.

Achtemeier (1996: 37) agrees that the church order of 1 Pet. 5:2 reflects a time earlier rather than later in the development of church offices, and even Goppelt (1993: 46) considers 1 Peter the only post-Pauline book still recognizing charismatic forms of service, as in 4:10. All of this points to an early stage of development in the Christian church of northern Asia Minor, regardless of *when* that stage actually happened, for Christianity and its full-orbed ecclesiology did not appear in full form everywhere in the empire at the same time. If, however, all the churches in other areas of the empire had a highly developed episcopate at the time 1 Peter was written, it seems likely that the author of 1 Peter would have recommended that structure to his addressees as well. All things considered, the evidence of church structure once cited as supporting a later date for 1 Peter actually points in the opposite direction.

1 Peter’s Dependence on Paul

German source critics in the first half of the twentieth century commonly argued that 1 Peter exhibits a distinct dependency on Pauline thought, if not an actual literary dependence, and could not have been written before Romans and Ephesians. Therefore, this dependency probably implies a pseudonymous author, not of the Petrine school but perhaps of the Pauline school.

However, if the content of 1 Peter is in fact so Pauline and if it is also in fact a pseudonymous letter written by a Pauline disciple, it is difficult to understand why the letter should have been attributed to Peter and not to Paul or one of his associates. This tension is great enough to lead one scholar to propose that the apostolic name in 1:1 originally had been abbreviated ΠΣ (PS) for *Paulus* in the Greek but was later misread by scribes as *Petros* (cited in Boring 1999: 42). In the complete absence of supporting manuscript evidence and scribal motivation, that speculation has been rightly rejected, and the attribution to Peter remains a problem for this theory. Boring (1999: 43) sees 1 Peter representing an “amalgamation” of the Petrine and Pauline traditions where “much Pauline tradition is now set forth under the name of Peter,” who had come to be viewed as the primary apostle of Rome. Horrell (2002: 55) provides a similar answer: while both apostles were associated with the Christian tradition of

the Roman church, Paul had a “shaky status” in parts of Asia Minor. It must be noted that Paul had not traveled to most of the area addressed by 1 Peter and had been forbidden by the Spirit of Jesus to enter Bithynia (Acts 16:7), one of the provinces Peter addresses (1:1). Both Peter and Paul were revered by the Roman church, with Peter’s hegemony emerging much later. But this argument must assume that Petrine hegemony developed within twenty years of the apostles’ deaths if 1 Peter is to be dated not later than 80, the terminus ad quem of modern scholarship.

Not all scholars perceive a dependency of 1 Peter on Paul’s writings. In an appendix to Selwyn’s commentary, Daube (Selwyn 1958: 488) doubts the literary dependency of 1 Peter on Paul, asking, “Why . . . should I Peter, with its good Greek, have put imperative participles for Paul’s clearer imperatives proper?” Schlatter (1999: 64) finds Peter’s statements “antiquated” in comparison to the more highly developed theological reflection of Paul. First Peter contains no references to Paul or to his letters, and the similarities between the two are based on similarities in terms and themes that can be plausibly explained as both authors drawing on common Christian tradition, perhaps particularly the Christian tradition of Rome.⁴

The affinity between Paul and 1 Peter is greatest in Romans. R. Brown argues that Christianity in Rome was originally developed by Jewish Christians who took a conservative stance toward Jewish tradition but that later the church in Rome accepted elements of Paul’s more liberal theology (Brown and Meier 1983: 135–36). Brown cites three particular strains of thought that join the two books, not in a literary dependence but in a synthesizing development of Christian thought: (1) the use of Jewish cultic language regarding atonement and sacrifice; (2) a similar submissive stance toward Roman rule; and (3) a similar perspective on the *charismata* as the basis of Christian service and office, in comparison to the perceived further development of church office in the Pastoral Epistles (Brown and Meier 1983: 137–39). While these features are offered as evidence for the synthesis of Pauline and Petrine thought by a pseudonymous writer after Peter’s death, all three of them also fit easily into the earlier days of the Christian tradition in the 40s and 50s. The alleged contrast between the earlier Paul, who made a sharp break with Judaism as reflected in Galatians, and the later Paul in Romans, who takes a more moderate stance toward the conservative Jewish-Christian tradition, is probably overvalued by Brown (Brown and Meier 1983: 134–36). For it is not clear that Galatians and Romans reflect a substantial difference in Paul’s thought, especially since the situation in Galatia was quite different from that in Rome and called for a sharp demarcation between the truth of the gospel and the practices of Judaism.

4. Achtemeier 1996: 15–19; Best 1971: 34; Bigg 1956: 33; Davidson 1981: 318; J. H. Elliott 2000: 37; Goppelt 1993: 28–29; G. Green 2019: 77–79; Hillyer, 1992: 8; Horrell 2002: 32–38; Kelly 1969: 32; Michaels 1988: xlv; Perkins 1995: 48; Schreiner 2020: 18–19; Snodgrass 1977–78: 105. For a detailed comparison of 1 Peter with the Pauline books, see Selwyn 1958: 365–466; Achtemeier 1996: 15–19; and J. H. Elliott 2000: 37–40.

Therefore, the nature of the affinities between 1 Peter and Paul's writings does not compel the conclusion that 1 Peter is dependent on Paul's writings, even if Peter knew of them (see 2 Pet. 3:15–16).

The Spread of Christianity

The origin of Christianity in Asia Minor. In addition to the question of the quality of the Greek and to the three arguments related to the book's *Sitz im Leben*, two other factors have contributed to a late-first-century date for 1 Peter. Unless Peter himself brought the gospel to Asia Minor (for which there is no extant historical evidence), it is argued the spread of the gospel from the Pauline churches to the remotest areas of Asia Minor would have taken decades. The even further time it would have taken for the persecution of Christians to develop would place the setting for the letter well beyond Peter's lifetime. Furthermore, it is argued that the code word "Babylon" in 5:13 suggests a date after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

In the absence of any historically grounded tradition associating any known apostle with the churches of remote northern Asia Minor, it has been assumed that Christianity spread only gradually to these remote areas through indigenous evangelization by unknown persons, probably from the Pauline churches in the south. This assumption has led to the inference that it would have taken a decade or more after the lifetimes of Peter or Paul for Christianity to have become adopted by enough people to attract the kind of social persecution that 1 Peter addresses (Beare 1970: 30; Goppelt 1993: 46).

Because Pliny's correspondence to Trajan (AD 109–111) mentions that persecution of Christians in Bithynia had been going on for about twenty years, it is inferred that 1 Peter could not have been written much before 80. The gradual growth of the church in these regions over decades is usually presented as a conclusive argument for pseudonymous authorship. If, however, Christianity came relatively quickly to these regions through Roman colonization of Asia Minor, then that assumption is removed and an earlier date, even during Peter's lifetime, becomes more plausible (see a detailed discussion of this theory under "Recipients" below).

Babylon in 1 Peter. The reference to Babylon in 5:13 is almost unanimously understood by interpreters throughout church history to refer to Rome. The substitution of "Rome" for "Babylon" in some minuscule manuscripts underscores this long-standing interpretation (J. Green 2007: 1). But how does this reference function? It is often read as the code word for Rome that is found in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic writings such as the NT book of Revelation. If so, this is offered as evidence for dating 1 Peter in that period of time when Rome had become such a threat that subversive writing must use an encoded reference, a time generally regarded as after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This would place the letter beyond Peter's lifetime and corroborate the theory of pseudonymous authorship (Brown and Meier 1983: 130). However, 1 Peter is not apocalyptic in genre and portrays Rome as neither a great threat nor a great evil. The letter could hardly be viewed as

politically subversive, since it admonishes submission to the governors (2:13) and honor to the emperor (2:17).

The association of the code word “Babylon” with later apocalyptic literature has been confused with a different purpose for its presence in 1 Peter. The reference to Babylon is motivated by the Diaspora framing of the letter (1:1) and functions as the closing *inclusio* of that motif. Just as the Babylonian exile marginalized the religion of the Jews with respect to the dominant society, Roman society of Peter’s day was marginalizing the Christian faith (see comments on 5:13). Thus, Rome could have been referred to as “Babylon” at any time after it gained dominance over Palestine in 63 BC, and the *terminus a quo* of AD 70 is eliminated (Thiede 1986; Schreiner 2020: 19). A more personal reason may have involved Peter’s desire to avoid calling attention to his actual location if Rome was in fact the “other place” to which he fled after being arrested in Jerusalem and narrowly escaping execution (Acts 12:17; see discussion under “Recipients” below).

Evidence for Peter’s Authorship

If the evidence traditionally used to point to a late date and pseudonymous authorship is actually inconclusive because it could pertain to any period of the Christian church in the first century, then a more direct association of the letter with the apostle Peter himself becomes more plausible. “The traditional view that 1 Peter was written by Peter in Rome, perhaps in A.D. 63/64, continues to be a plausible working hypothesis” (Schnabel 2004: 1.724). And there is substantial evidence that would point to a very close association of the apostle Peter with the letter.

First, the letter indisputably claims to be from the apostle Peter (1 Pet. 1:1). In today’s scholarly milieu, this may seem a naive point. But under the assumption that epistolary pseudonymity was frequently practiced and widely accepted in antiquity, the text’s own claim is sometimes not given its due in favor of inferred evidence of questionable weight. The insistence that the letter’s claim to be from the apostle Peter be taken seriously is not an appeal to inspiration and inerrancy. For those doctrines cannot rule out pseudonymous authorship *a priori*, since any legitimate literary form of the time must be allowed a biblical author when so moved by the Holy Spirit to adopt it. Therefore, the question of pseudonymity becomes a question of genre. What genre is 1 Peter, and was pseudonymity a legitimate characteristic of that genre? Specifically, was *epistolary* pseudonymity a recognized and accepted literary form at the time the NT was written?

While it is likely true that pseudonymity was an accepted literary trait of certain genres, such as Wisdom literature (e.g., Wisdom of Solomon) and apocalyptic (e.g., 1 Enoch), it is much more questionable whether it was acceptable in personal correspondence, especially since there is some evidence to the contrary (J. Green 2007: 8; Keener 2021: 12–13, 25; Schreiner 2020: 10–13). Proponents of epistolary pseudonymity claim that it need not be troubling,

for the “feeling that it is somehow fraudulent is a purely modern prejudice” (Beare 1970: 48).

Even though Schlatter (1999: 356), in his discussion of 2 Peter, rejects pseudonymous authorship for 1 Peter, he puts the best spin on how a writing can nevertheless be understood as apostolic even though pseudonymous:

By writing not in his own name but in the name of Peter, a Christian here indicates that the weight of the apostolic word transcends all that is owned by the present community. No message of a contemporary possesses similar authority. This reveals a certain amount of the community’s despair of its own vigor remaining after the death of the apostles, as well as the realization that nothing the community produces can be compared with the apostolic word. By seeking to remind the community in the name of Peter of what it has received, the writer calls the memory that continually draws on the apostolic word the condition for the church’s existence (2 Pet. 1:13).

Such a spin may be a helpful way for understanding a work attributed to an apostle that otherwise bears all the marks of pseudonymity, but 1 Peter does not (Achtmeier 1996: 43; Marshall 1991: 23–24). Furthermore, the claim that the book, though pseudonymous, preserves authentic apostolic teaching is unverifiable when the direct link to apostolic authority is merely inferred. Moreover, even a motive of honoring the apostolic memory may not have been enough to excuse pseudonymous personal correspondence in the early church. The spurious letters to the Laodiceans and to the Corinthians (3 Corinthians), both attributed to Paul, enjoyed some period of acceptance because Pauline authorship was assumed, but were rejected when their pseudonymous origin was recognized (Guthrie 1970: 675–77). Tertullian notes that love for Paul motivated the production of 3 Corinthians (Gupta 2020: 108–9; Metzger 1972: 14). Nevertheless, when a presbyter of Asia Minor was discovered as its author, he was not congratulated for honoring Paul but censured for his action and removed from church office, even though his work apparently contained nothing heretical. Such examples of pseudonymous personal correspondence indicate that epistolary pseudonymity was not so clearly a recognized literary device acceptable to the church.

Nor was it only Christian sensibilities that rejected pseudonymity for some genres. The learned second-century physician Galen felt incensed, not honored, to discover that medical works were being published pseudonymously in his name. He therefore was compelled to publish an essay entitled *On His Own Books* to set the record straight (Metzger 1972: 6).

Pseudonymity appears to have been an acceptable literary device when the alleged author had been dead for centuries, as in the case of Enoch and Solomon. However, when pseudonymous works were generated relatively soon after an alleged author’s death (or during his lifetime as in the case of Galen!), they appear to have been viewed as forgeries and rejected when their true origins were discovered. It is therefore difficult to see how the pseudonymity of NT epistles could have been so clearly understood and widely accepted as a literary

device in the first century. Moreover, both the wide range of words in Greek vocabulary used to condemn forgery and plagiarism and the practices used to detect them show that they were moral offenses even in antiquity (Metzger 1972: 12–13). B. M. Metzger (1972: 19) points out that literary forgeries in antiquity “were of many kinds, from the amusing hoax to the most barefaced and impudent imposture, and that the moral judgment to be passed on each must vary accordingly.” Therefore, F. W. Beare’s facile remark that resistance to pseudonymity is a “modern prejudice” must be seriously challenged. The assumption that pseudonymous personal correspondence, such as 1 Peter, was a completely legitimate practice that carried no moral implications must be critically reexamined.

K. Aland (1961: 41), who argues for the legitimacy of canonical pseudonymous books, seems to appreciate the problem of pseudonymous personal correspondence when he distinguishes “an epistle from a real letter” and defines “the Catholic epistles” as the former, therefore qualifying them for pseudonymous authorship. But Aland gives no reason for distinguishing a real letter from an epistle except that the personality of the writer clearly appears in real letters: real letters “have to introduce their writers,” who “wanted to utter their own opinion on concrete problems to individual addressees and to answer their questions, just as all letters do any time. Here the person of the writer was exceedingly important.” But is this not exactly what the author of 1 Peter intended to do? Therefore, the question of the pseudonymity of 1 Peter turns on the identification of its genre. Was it actual personal correspondence from the apostle to a target audience he had in mind or an open rhetorical form that was a literary creation intended to bring the first-century voice of Peter to Christians of another time and place? Given that it bears the Hellenistic form of actual personal correspondence (1:1; 5:12–14) and that the themes of the epistolary framework cohere with those in the body of the letter, the former seems more likely (see discussion under “Literary Unity and Genre” below). If it is personal correspondence, the claim of legitimate pseudonymity becomes quite suspect.

The reasons for rejecting Peter’s authorship in favor of a pseudonymous author, other than the quality of the Greek, depend on the evidence (discussed above) that dated the letter beyond the apostle’s lifetime. If that evidence is found to be less than compelling, the motivation for accepting pseudonymous authorship is substantially reduced. Furthermore, if there is historical evidence that points to a date before the mid-60s, it would be hard to imagine a pseudonymous author successfully writing in Peter’s name while Peter was still alive. “We have to assume either that the Christians in Asia Minor did not know that Peter had been dead for some fifteen to thirty years or that the pseudepigraphical form did not bother them” (Schnabel 2004: 1.724). This study has found evidence that a historical link between the apostle Peter and the original recipients may in fact exist (see discussion under “Recipients” below).

A second consideration of evidence for Peter’s authorship of the letter lies in its allusions to the teachings of Jesus. The value of these allusions for

the question of authorship is debated (Gundry 1966–67; Gundry 1974; Best 1969–70). Selwyn (1958: 23–24) identifies in 1 Peter at least thirty allusions to words of Jesus, which he believes represent the author’s dependence on Q. He labels these words of Jesus the *verba Christi*, using Latin to denote their ecclesiastical status. R. H. Gundry (1966–67: 345) examines fifteen *verba Christi* in 1 Peter that he observes had parallels in the Gospels, including John’s Gospel, words that strikingly “refer to contexts specially associated with the Apostle Peter.” The phrases in 1 Peter do not quote the Gospels and so do not indicate a literary dependence. Gundry (1966–67: 349) further claims that the *verba Christi* are “worked into the context of the epistle far too allusively to be a deliberate fake for the verisimilitude.” Thus, he concludes that the *verba Christi* both point to Peter as the author of the epistle and authenticate the sayings of Jesus as preserved in the Gospels.

E. Best (1969–70) contradicts Gundry’s conclusions with a number of observations. By way of disagreeing with Gundry on the number of allusions present in 1 Peter, he argues that the contacts between 1 Peter and the Gospel tradition lie only in two blocks of material in Luke. If Peter had actually authored 1 Peter, one would expect “a more haphazard distribution of contacts” (Best 1969–70: 111). Moreover, knowledge of the *verba Christi* does not imply a personal presence when Jesus originally spoke the words if those words had subsequently become codified in some form, whether written or oral (Best 1969–70: 113; cf. Gundry 1974).

The *verba Christi* in 1 Peter as evidence of authorship will no doubt be valued differently by different minds (Schreiner 2020: 11n21). When combined with other evidence that points the epistle to the lifetime of the apostle, they form a striking feature that is consistent with Petrine authorship (as also Hillyer 1992: 1; Helyer 2012: 14, 108).

A third important consideration for the authorship-date question is that the theology of 1 Peter appears to reflect an earlier stage of development rather than a later one (see “Major Themes and Theology” below). The suffering of Jesus Christ and the single-point eschatology that God will one day judge everyone contrast with the more highly developed Christology and eschatology such as that found in the later writings of John’s Gospel and the Revelation of John. Moreover, 1 Peter seems unconcerned with the problem of heresies, such as incipient Gnosticism, that receives so much attention in the last third of the first century, particularly in Asia Minor. Nor is the theology of 1 Peter developed in the direction of later Catholicism. If Schutter (1989: 35) is correct, his conclusion that 1 Peter depends more on oral Christian sources than on written also points in the direction of an earlier composition rather than later (J. Green 2007: 7).

A further historical factor should be considered in the dating of the book and therefore indirectly in determining the authorship question. The names of the areas listed in 1:1 may suggest that the letter was written before AD 72, when Galatia and Cappadocia were combined into one military command marked by a change of terminology in the inscriptions. Hemer (1977–78: 242)