

BAKER EXEGETICAL COMMENTARY  
ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

# 1 Peter

SECOND EDITION

Karen H. Jobes



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# Transliteration

## Hebrew

א ' <i>qāmeṣ</i>	ב <i>ā</i>	<i>qāmeṣ</i>
ב <i>b</i>	ב <i>a</i>	<i>pataḥ</i>
ג <i>g</i>	ה <i>a</i>	furtive <i>pataḥ</i>
ד <i>d</i>	ב <i>e</i>	<i>šəgōl</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 ḥātūp</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> (בִּה = <i>āh</i> )
ס <i>s</i>	ב <i>ê</i>	<i>šəgōl yōd</i> (בִּי = <i>éy</i> )
ע ' <i>šērē</i>	ב <i>ê</i>	<i>šērē yōd</i> (בִּי = <i>éy</i> )
פ/ף <i>p</i>	ב <i>î</i>	<i>ḥîreq yōd</i> (בִּי = <i>îy</i> )
צ/ץ <i>ṣ</i>	ב <i>ă</i>	<i>ḥātēp pataḥ</i>
ק <i>q</i>	ב <i>ě</i>	<i>ḥātēp šəgōl</i>
ר <i>r</i>	ב <i>ö</i>	<i>ḥātēp 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

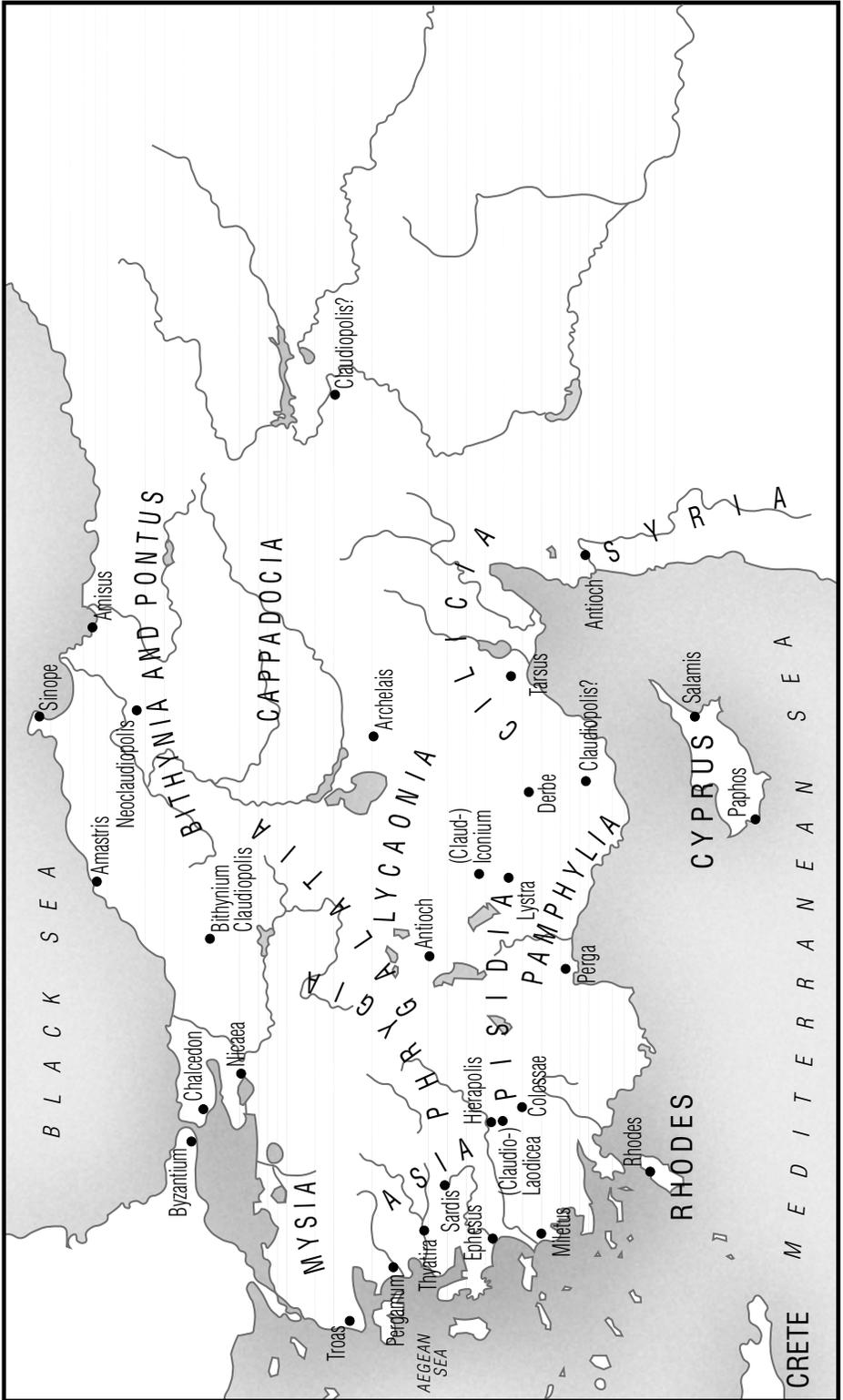
1. Accents are not shown in transliteration.
2. Silent *šəwā'* is not indicated in transliteration.
3. The spirant forms ת פ כ ד ג ב are usually not specially indicated in transliteration.
4. *Dāgēš forte* is indicated by doubling the consonant. Euphonic *dāgēš* and *dāgēš lene* are not indicated in 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.<sup>1</sup> 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

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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).<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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.

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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)

concludes from the separate mention of Galatia in 1:1 that “there is some indication to favour an earlier date [i.e., before AD 72] . . . if one accepts that ‘Galatia’ here denotes the eastern district without qualification.” However, his reluctance to press the point is well taken: the areas of Bithynia and Pontus had been one Roman province since Caesar’s conquest of them, yet they are listed separately in 1:1—with one at the head of the list and the other at the end, no less (Schnabel 2004: 1.725).

In addition to internal evidence relevant to the question of date and authorship, the external evidence of attestation is early and strong for Petrine authorship. From the early second century Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor, uses language in his letters that clearly reflects his knowledge of 1 Peter (Keener 2021: 17). Eusebius recognized quotations from 1 Peter in Polycarp’s letter to the Philippians (*Hist. eccl.* 4.14.9). According to Eusebius, Papias also quoted 1 Peter (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.17), writing in a context of documenting a direct link to the time of the apostles (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.7). Clement of Rome (ca. AD 95) presents more than twenty parallels with 1 Peter, though some may simply reflect shared Christian usage (J. H. Elliott 2000: 139). These early authors would not have quoted 1 Peter as apostolic if they knew Peter’s authority was not behind the letter. This external attestation is strong for early evidence of Petrine authorship, which was undisputed until the nineteenth century.

This study offers further historical evidence that may link the letter of 1 Peter to circumstances that arose during the apostle’s lifetime (see “Recipients” below). If so, the accumulating weight of positive evidence that brings the book into the time of Peter must be reconsidered against the traditional scholarship for late and pseudonymous authorship.

To summarize, the rejection of Peter’s authorship of 1 Peter is a relatively recent development in the history of interpretation, dating from work in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by scholars who included von Soden, Gunkel, Knopf, Loisy, Windisch, Renan, and Harnack. Prior to that time Peter’s authorship was uncontested in the history of the church, and that position continued to be supported by Weiss, Zahn, Lightfoot, Hort, Hatch, Moffatt, and Schlatter. Some recent interpreters have placed the letter’s origin in “the quiet period before the Neronian persecution of 64–68” (Watson and Callan 2012: 6; see also Schreiner 2020: 11–20, 26; J. Green 2007: 10). I would propose that the letter was written sometime during the five years between the Claudian expulsion of the “Jews” from Rome (AD 49?) and the beginning of Nero’s reign in AD 54. Although the late date for 1 Peter arose from source-critical assumptions that have subsequently been rejected, the theory that 1 Peter is a pseudonymous work that dates to between AD 70 and 90 has nevertheless largely been retained. This is primarily because the quality of its Greek remains at issue. However, the pseudonymous hypothesis generally ascribes authorship to a native Greek speaker of the Petrine school in Rome. If syntax criticism has uncovered Semitic interference in the Greek of 1 Peter that is consistent with a native Semitic speaker for whom Greek is a second language, then the pseudonymous hypothesis must be modified accordingly (see

excursus). If, however, a pseudonymous Semitic author in Rome is proposed, then further consideration must be given to Silvanus or Mark, and certainly even to Peter himself.

The number of prominent interpreters who continue to favor pseudonymous authorship may suggest that the issue has been settled.<sup>5</sup> Although the case against Peter's authorship may at one time have seemed "overwhelming" (Beare 1970: 48), it no longer appears to be so. "The book of 1 Peter includes no indication of late origins. It contains no references to Gnosticism . . . , no depreciation of the state, no glowing honors given to Peter," and it does not display the developed apparatus of pseudonymity (Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles 2016: 838). Moreover, the letter does contain some indicators of an earlier rather than a later date. Its theological emphases on the suffering of Jesus, its eschatology of divine judgment, and the expectation of an imminent parousia suggest a time closer to the crucifixion than, for instance, Paul's conception of union with Christ and justification or John's incarnate Word and the eternal state.

Because the evidence used against Petrine authorship is not conclusive and because of further evidence that points the letter to the lifetime of Peter, many other prominent interpreters believe that an amanuensis wrote under Peter's personal direction.<sup>6</sup>

In the midst of all the debate about authorship, we must remember that the simplest explanation may be the likeliest: that the apostle Peter is the author, with amanuensis assistance a possible but not necessary explanatory factor (Carson and Moo 2005: 645; Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles 2016: 834, 838; Marshall 1991: 21; Robinson 1976: 164). "In the end, we surmise that Petrine authorship cannot be proven but remains entirely plausible" (Wright and Bird 2019: 760).

## Destination

The letter of 1 Peter is addressed to Christians residing in Pontus, Cappadocia, Galatia, Asia, and Bithynia, a vast area of approximately 129,000 square miles (J. H. Elliott 2000: 84). (As a comparison, the state of California covers about 159,000 square miles.) Estimates of the number of inhabitants during the last part of the first century range from four to eight million people, with as many as a million Jewish inhabitants (van Rensburg 2011: 5). Population density was uneven throughout these provinces, as some had relatively large

5. Achtemeier 1996: 43; Best 1971: 63; Beare 1970: 47; Bechtler 1998: 46; Bigg 1956: 33; Boring 1999: 30; Brown and Meier 1983: 130; J. H. Elliott 2000: 118–30; Goppelt 1993: 51; Horrell 1998: 2; R. P. Martin 1994: 94; Perkins 1995: 10; Schutter 1989: 17–18.

6. W. Barclay 1976: 163; Carson, Moo, and Morris 1992: 423; Clowney 1988: 21; Congar 1962: 175; Cranfield 1958: 10; Dalton 1974: 265; Davids 1990: 10; Davidson 1981: 318; G. Green 2019: 93; Grudem 1988: 37; Gundry 2003: 480; Guthrie 1970: 796; Hillyer 1992: 3; Kelly 1969: 33; Kistemaker 1987: 9; Marshall 1991: 20; McKnight 1996: 29; Michaels 1988: lxvi–lxvii, with hesitation; Reicke 1964: 71; Robinson 1976: 169; Schreiner 2020: 20; Selwyn 1958: 62; Stibbs 1979: 23; Thiede 1988: 177; van Unnik 1954–55: 93; Wendland 2000: 25.

cities and others were primarily rural. The regions addressed in 1 Peter covered the area of first-century Asia Minor that lay west and north of the Taurus Mountains. Tite (1997: 30) has suggested that the specification of these five provinces is merely metaphorical, but his proposal is unconvincing because he offers no explanation for why these particular provinces would be cited.

Asia Minor, now known as Turkey, is a peninsula bordered on three sides by great seas: to the north the Euxine (now called the Black Sea), on the west the Aegean, and to the south the Mediterranean. Its east–west extent was about 1,000 miles, and north–south about 350 miles. A great salt lake and desert occupied the center of Asia Minor, separating the northern Royal Road (built during the Persian period) from a more southern passage that became the great commercial route of the Greco-Roman period, for it was the shorter and less difficult route to travel. Along this southern route, Roman colonies first appeared, one of which was Antioch in Pisidia, established during Augustus’s reign and not long thereafter visited by Paul, as recorded in Acts 13 (Goodman 1997: 238). The outstanding feature of the geographical destination of 1 Peter “is the enormous diversity of the land, peoples, and cultures” (J. H. Elliott 1981: 61).

The westernmost region of Asia Minor was the point of the Asian continent closest to both Greece and Rome—hence its provincial name of Asia. It was the first region of Asia Minor to be annexed as a Roman province in 133 BC. Within a few decades, the first 173-mile segment of the great southern road from Ephesus to the eastern Cilician Gates had been reconstructed to Roman standards (Ramsay 1890: 164). This route would later become the conduit of the gospel.

The westernmost province of Asia was the most populated area of Asia Minor, with at least forty-two cities in the Roman period, and was also the most Hellenized region of the peninsula (Ramsay 1890: 95). Here the great Pauline mission took root in Ephesus, Colossae, Laodicea, and other locales where the seven churches of Rev. 2–3 were located. Of all the Roman provinces, Asia most wholeheartedly embraced the Roman imperial cult (Alston 1998: 310; S. Johnson 1975: 93; Magie 1950: 1.544). Because of their indigenous religious tradition, the peoples of western Asia Minor easily accepted the emperor as both a monarch and a god (Momigliano 1934: 28–29). Most of the thirty-four cities in Asia Minor with temples dedicated to Augustus were located in this western province of Asia.

East of the province of Asia lay the region of Galatia, which became an imperial province in 25 BC (Frank 1962: 375). The boundaries of Galatia were redrawn during the first century, making it difficult to know with certainty the exact area to which the name referred at a given time. Roman colonization was concentrated along the major southern route in Galatia, leaving the Celtic tribal lands of the northern interior relatively unaffected. Emperor Augustus planted several Roman colonies, among them Pisidian Antioch in 25 BC, which he colonized with “veterans of the fifth Gallic legion—presumably thinking that they might find congenial company near the Galatian country” (Frank

1962: 376). For the first-century emperors, Galatia was important only for military purposes, and the diverse peoples of the province of Galatia were never unified culturally during Roman rule.

The annexation and expansion of the province of Galatia completed the Roman domination of Asia Minor, which had begun with the province of Asia. Between the annexations of Asia and later of Galatia, Julius Caesar had conquered northern Asia Minor on the fifth day after his arrival in its major seacoast city Sinope after only four hours of fighting. This battle has been memorialized by his now-famous words *Veni, vidi, vici*—"I came, I saw, I conquered" (Suetonius, *Julius* 37; Magie 1950: 1.412). Apart from the narrow riviera along the Euxine coast (the legendary home of the Amazons), the Romans found in the interior of Pontus a region more untouched by Western influence than any in Asia Minor except for the adjacent region of Cappadocia (Magie 1950: 1.179). There were only four towns of any size in the entire province (Jones 1971: 155).

The task of organizing these newly conquered lands was given to the great Roman general Pompey, who established eleven urban administrative centers (*politeiai*), which included the three Greek ports of Amisus, Sinope, and Amastris and the ancient capital, Amaseia, as well as seven new Roman colonies (Magie 1950: 1.369–70). In 65 BC Pompey combined his eleven *politeiai* of western Pontus with the province of Bithynia, which had been annexed to the Roman Empire in 74 BC (Ramsay 1890: 191). "On the whole the kingdom of Bithynia remained isolated from the general development of Asia Minor" (Ramsay 1890: 44). According to Pliny, in his time there were but twelve cities in Bithynia, but among them were the cities that would later figure so prominently in Christian history: Chalcedon, Nicaea, and Byzantium (Jones 1971: 164).

Cappadocia, the region farthest east in Asia Minor, remained sparsely populated and culturally separated from the western provinces, making it a place congenial to the monastic life of the eastern Cappadocian fathers even into the fourth century.

According to Strabo, there were only two cities in Cappadocia, one of which, Caesarea, was the major administrative city in the first century (Jones 1971: 174–79). Evidence from inscriptions indicates it had a long-standing Jewish population (Juster 1914: 193). The isolation of Cappadocia from the dominant Greco-Roman culture is evident in the populace's use of the Cappadocian language rather than Greek well into the fourth century AD. Basil observes that "the divine providence had saved his countrymen from a somewhat obscure heresy, since the grammatical structure of their native tongue did not permit the distinction between 'with' and 'and'" (Jones 1971: 175). Furthermore, Jones notes that in Cappadocia "even high officials still used Aramaic beside Greek in the first century BC." There were, however, three Roman colonies in Cappadocia: Archelais, founded by Claudius; Arca, probably founded by Hadrian; and Faustianiana, founded by Marcus Aurelius (Jones 1971: 179).

The picture that emerges of the regions to which Peter wrote is one of several urban centers joined by a network of roads across a vast region, of

a diversified population of indigenous peoples, Greek settlers, and Roman colonists. The residents practiced many religions, spoke several languages, and were never fully assimilated into the Greco-Roman culture (Frank 1969: 374; S. Johnson 1975: 143; Yakar 2000: 61–65). T. Williams describes the extent of Hellenization in Asia Minor, writing, “Although the processes of Hellenization and urbanization were still in their infancy in many parts of this vast expanse, they were nonetheless present and increasing realities in the lives of urban inhabitants” (2012: 63–90, quote on 90). Issues of linguistic diversity and the extent of Hellenization in the provinces other than Asia continue to be debated. These issues touch on the topic of the origin of Christianity in these provinces, presenting challenges to the evangelization of northern Asia Minor and hinting at the nature and extent of the persecution experienced by Peter’s original readers.

And yet Asia Minor became the cradle of Christianity. From it emerged people whose names are immortalized in Christian history. From Pontus came Aquila, the Jewish tentmaker and husband of Priscilla (Acts 18:2), as well as Marcion, the wealthy shipowner and Christian dissident of the second century who resided in the prominent city of Sinope (S. Johnson 1975: 124). Aquila, the famous translator of a Greek version of the OT, hailed from Sinope as well (Juster 1914: 194n6). From Hierapolis in Phrygia (in Roman Galatia of the first century) came Epictetus, the famous Roman slave and Stoic philosopher (S. Johnson 1975: 91), as well as Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, repeatedly quoted by Eusebius (S. Johnson 1975: 109). In the fourth century came the Cappadocian fathers, such as Basil, bishop of Cappadocia’s capital city, Caesarea; his brother Gregory of Nyssa; and Gregory of Nazianzus, bishop of Constantinople—all three defenders of the Nicene Creed against the heresies of Arius.

To this remote and undeveloped region the apostle Peter writes his letter, to Christians whom he addresses as “visiting foreigners and resident aliens” (1:1; 2:11), scattered across the vast reaches of Asia Minor. We may surmise that, in no small part because of this letter and the faithfulness of those who received it, well-established churches flourished in all five of these regions by AD 180. Their bishops attended the great councils of the second through fourth centuries, where the doctrines were forged that Christians hold dear yet today.

## Recipients

Most discussion about the original recipients of 1 Peter has focused on whether the majority of Christians addressed were of Jewish or of Gentile origin (the consensus is Gentile, but with growing support for Jewish) and whether Peter’s description of them as *παρεπίδημοι* (*parepidēmoi*, foreigners, 1:1) and *πάροικοι* (*paroikoi*, resident aliens, 2:11) should be taken literally or metaphorically (the consensus is metaphorically).

*Jewish or Gentile?* In contrast to modern interpreters, most ancient exegetes except Augustine and Jerome understood the recipients of the letter to

be converts from Judaism. Calvin continued the tradition that this letter was addressed to Jewish converts and took the phrase *parepidēmois diasporas* (foreigners of [the] scattering) in 1:1 to be a literal reference. This is plausible, since there was already a sizable Jewish population in Asia Minor by the time of the first century, perhaps as many as a million people (Trebilco 1991: 32; van Rensburg 2011: 5). The Jewish Diaspora<sup>7</sup> in Asia Minor dates at least from the end of the third century BC, when Antiochus III sent two thousand Jews from Babylon to colonize Lydia and Phrygia (Mitchell 1993: 2.32).<sup>8</sup>

On the basis of 1 Pet. 1:18, most modern commentators disagree that the audience was primarily Jewish Christian because that verse refers to “the useless way of life you inherited from your ancestors” (for an opposing view see Stewart-Sykes 1997). This understanding is reinforced by the further description in 4:3: “For the time past was [more than] enough to do what the Gentiles like to do, as you went along with acts of abandon, lust, drunkenness, revelry, carousing, and licentious idolatries.” It is argued that Diaspora Jews of the first century could never have been described in such spiritually bankrupt terms and that the ways of Judaism would never have been described as a “useless way of life.” Therefore, most interpreters today conclude that the original recipients must have been Gentile converts.

However, this argument may not be as compelling as it sounds at first. The context is redemption, as 1:19 goes on to say: “Rather, you have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a blameless and spotless lamb.” The reference to Christ’s blood as “of a blameless and spotless lamb” clearly alludes to the old covenant’s sacrificial system, which *was* in fact empty of ultimate redemptive value in comparison with the blood of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul expresses similar thoughts in Eph. 2:3 and Phil. 3:7–9, where he admits that “all of us”—apparently including Jewish people—once lived to gratify the “cravings of our sinful nature.” Paul further describes all of his achievement in Judaism as “garbage” (Phil. 3:8).

John Calvin (1963: 50) points out that when the NT declares that the true revelation of God is known through the Jews, it is with specific reference to the law, commandments, and temple and does not validate the practices of the contemporaneous Jewish people. Moreover, the possibility that numbers of Diaspora Jews had assimilated pagan values and adopted corrupted lifestyles to a greater or lesser extent is not out of the question. Even synagogues in Galilee were decorated with mosaics representing the zodiac with the sun-god at its center, depictions of Hercules, scenes reminiscent of the Dionysus cult, and other pagan symbols (Baumgarten 1999: 73, 80). (See commentary on 4:3.) The impulse for the incorporation of Hellenistic symbols into synagogue

7. This commentary capitalizes “Diaspora” in reference to the Jewish historical experience of exile and lowercases “diaspora” when it is used as a general term, including in reference to Peter’s metaphorical Christian use.

8. In fact, there may have been Jews in Sardis much earlier, when Obadiah was written, if *Sepharad* in verse 20 may be so understood. There is also a possible reference to Jews in Asia Minor in Herodotus (S. Johnson 1975: 97).

decor came from wealthy Jewish donors as a display of “their acculturation in the Hellenistic world” (Baumgarten 1999: 82). Even though a penchant for decorative artwork does not necessarily imply Hellenistic Jews practiced the pagan vices that Peter lists in 4:3, assimilation to pagan cultural norms and practices cannot be ruled out in the reference to doing what the “Gentiles like to do.” To some extent and in various ways, some Diaspora Jews, though God’s covenant people, may have *lived* like pagans, even while embracing monotheism of their religious heritage, and were in any case as needy as Gentiles of renewing a covenant relationship with God in Christ. J. Green (2007: 6) observes astutely, “The people of God envisioned in this letter is none other than ‘Israel’—so this document’s ‘Jewishness’ intimates less a description of the ethnic origins of its implied audience and more a clarification of its readers’ status before God.”

Whether Peter’s original audience was Jewish or Gentile is an interesting historical question, but it ultimately makes little difference. Both spiritual systems were empty in that in themselves they offered no redemption, and both people groups were equally guilty in God’s sight. Whether converts from paganism or Judaism, the letter’s recipients needed to understand their new covenant relationship with God in Christ and the implications of that relationship for transformed living. Nevertheless, faith in Jesus, the *Jewish* Messiah, brought converts into the religious world of Judaism, not of pagan religions. Therefore, whether Peter’s readers were formerly Jews or Gentiles, Peter addresses them indiscriminately from within the traditions of biblical Israel, in which the author was thoroughly steeped.

*Foreigners and resident aliens: literal or metaphorical?* Modern commentators almost unanimously take the description of the recipients as *parepidēmoi* (visiting foreigners) and *paroikoi* (resident aliens) to be a metaphor for the Christian journey through this earthly life to a homeland in heaven and seek no further explanation. However, J. H. Elliott (1981; 2000) was right to seek a historical background for the letter and to argue that these terms are not metaphors but socioeconomic descriptors (see also van Rensburg 2011: 6). When the historical realities of the original recipients are overlooked, and the descriptors *parepidēmoi* and *paroikoi* are understood as figurative language, interpreters have reached no agreement about the controlling metaphor of the book. T. Martin (1992a) understands *diaspora* to be the controlling metaphor (also Tite 1997: 32), Feldmeier (1992) presents *der Fremde* (the stranger), Seland (2001) argues for the *proselyte* as the key, and Achtemeier (1996) offers the quite general *Israel as the people of God*.

The view that the terms *parepidēmoi* and *paroikoi* are used metaphorically of Peter’s Christian readers is justified because these terms occur in the Greek Old Testament to describe God’s ancient people Israel in their various historical situations.<sup>9</sup> First Peter 2:9–10 uses other terms from the OT as well—chosen

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9. See in the LXX/OG: Gen. 15:13; 23:4; Exod. 2:22; Lev. 25:23; Deut. 23:8 (23:7 Eng.); 1 Chron. 29:15; Pss. 38:13 (39:12 Eng.); 104:12–13 (105:12–13 Eng.); 118:19 (119:19 Eng.).

people, royal priesthood, holy nation, God’s special possession—to describe Peter’s Christian readers who are now understood to be the people of God. The terms *parepidēmoi* and *paroikoi* are similarly understood as descriptions applied metaphorically first to ancient Israel and now to Christians. Schnabel argues this biblical usage elsewhere “suggests that a metaphorical meaning of these terms in 1 Pet 1:1; 2:11 is quite possible, without the assumption that the original meaning was literal” (Schnabel 2004: 2.1524; so also Clowney 1988: 228). Achtemeier (1989: 228), arguing against J. H. Elliott, concludes that “this phrase [*paroikoi*] is drawn not from the political arena of the Greco-Roman world to describe the political status of the readers . . . but rather is again chosen under the influence of the controlling metaphor, the chosen people, and applied to Christians.” While the figurative sense of the description of the addressees is apt, the letter must nevertheless have had some particular social and historical setting, and there must have been some precipitating occasion for its writing. Whatever metaphorical sense these terms carry for the Christian life need not exclude some literal sense related to the letter’s original historical circumstances. This study presents an alternative sociopolitical background from which the metaphorical sense derived its power for this particular group that was originally addressed.

Discussions of Jewish or Gentile Christians and literal or figurative foreigners have proceeded from the unquestioned assumption that the Christians addressed were indigenous to Asia Minor and had been converted to Christ in situ. This assumption raises the issue of how conversions over such a vast area of about 129,000 square miles occurred when there is not a shred of extant historical evidence of first-century evangelism in most of the regions mentioned, much less of apostolic evangelism. The assumption has been that Christianity came to northern Asia Minor by one or more unknown traveling evangelists. Some speculate this was possibly Peter himself or his associates from Jerusalem (Brown and Meier 1983: 131). Others propose a gradual evangelization through believers from the Pauline churches, since Paul himself was explicitly forbidden by the Spirit to enter Bithynia (Acts 16:6–10), and there is no evidence he ever traveled most of the area addressed.

The assumption that Christianity came to northern Asia Minor through the conversion of indigenous people has led to the inference that Christianity spread gradually throughout this area. Thurén (1990: 31) writes that 1 Peter “presupposes a *situatio* in the Christian mission which was hardly achieved before 60 AD.” The distances involved and the language barriers would likely prevent early widespread conversions. The gradual evangelization of these areas of Asia Minor demands a date for 1 Peter much later than the mid-60s (the death of Peter) and possibly as late as the time of Domitian (S. Johnson 1975: 116). On the other hand, Pliny’s writings (ca. AD 110) imply persecution of Christians by the Roman authorities that had been present to some extent for at least twenty years (Pliny, *Letters* 10.96.6). This suggests that by the late 80s or early 90s there must have been a critical mass of Christians who had come to the attention of society and of the authorities.

Those who speculate that the apostle Peter himself evangelized these areas often raise the concern about Peter working in areas that may have overlapped with Paul's mission work in the provinces of Galatia and Asia, although most of the regions addressed lie outside Paul's area of activity. Selwyn (1958: 61) has theorized that Paul was forbidden to enter this area (Acts 16:6–10) specifically because Peter was already at work there. Perhaps as Peter gradually made his way westward from Jerusalem toward his death in Rome twenty-some years later, he passed through these remote areas and later wrote to the Christian converts he left behind there. If so, it is strange that nothing in 1 Peter alludes to such travels or to a firsthand knowledge of any of the areas addressed. Furthermore, 1:12 seems to imply that it had been others who had preached the gospel to Peter's original readers. Moreover, if Peter did travel to these places, his effort would have to have been quite extraordinary, for the shortest route across Asia Minor from the east to the major western port of Ephesus, and on to Corinth or Rome, was the southern Roman road traveled by Paul. That route would have taken him south of the Taurus Mountains, bypassing most of Galatia and avoiding Bithynia, Pontus, and Cappadocia altogether. Furthermore, if the apostle Peter had been the founder of Christianity in northern Asia Minor, it is more than curious that not even a hint of that apostolic heritage has survived in textual form from such a vast area that later became a center of Christianity.

Given the complete lack of historical evidence, the conversion of these regions through evangelization *in situ* is an inference based on sheer speculation. Perhaps an alternative possibility should be considered: that the Christians to whom Peter writes had become Christians elsewhere, had some association with Peter prior to his writing to them, and now found themselves foreigners and resident aliens scattered throughout Asia Minor. While Peter apparently did not originally evangelize those to whom he wrote (1 Pet. 1:12), he could well have been known to his readers from previous geographical proximity (*contra* G. Green 2019: 310, who misreads “association with” as “evangelization of”). Peter writes a word of encouragement, using their life experience to explain that all Christians, regardless of their geographical residence, become foreigners and resident aliens in some sense by virtue of their conversion to Christ. If so, Peter would be transforming the personal situation of those to whom he writes into a powerful spiritual metaphor more broadly applicable to Christians living anywhere society's values clashed with those of the gospel.

Calvin (1963: 230) understands that the power of the metaphor is derived from the historical and social situation of the recipients when he concludes that the “foreigners” of 1:1 were in fact Jews of the Diaspora in Asia Minor. Although there was a sizable Jewish population in Asia Minor at that time (Trebilco 1991: 32), most scholars have concluded it would be extremely unlikely that all converts to Christianity came from the relatively few Jewish synagogues, given what is known of the demographics of the early church. If, however, the description of the recipients as foreigners and resident aliens did have a particular historical significance—in addition to its clear spiritual

significance—can another plausible scenario be found? At least two possibilities present themselves: they were either Pentecost pilgrims or immigrants from elsewhere in the empire.

## The Origin of 1 Peter

Other than what can be inferred from 1 Peter itself, nothing is known of the historical background that links the apostle Peter with Christians in northern Asia Minor. The fact of the letter implies Peter took an apostolic responsibility toward these people, whether or not he knew them personally. No personal names or memories of a past visit are mentioned, as might be expected if Peter had traveled to these regions himself. The tradition that Peter had evangelized this area in person is an inference based only on the existence of this letter. Moreover, Peter refers to others who had first preached the gospel to his readers (1 Pet. 1:12), which implies he himself did not. The lack of historical background invites further investigation of a plausible scenario in which Peter would be associated with the recipients of his letter but in another location.

*Pentecost pilgrims and the origin of 1 Peter.* Three of the regions named in 1 Pet. 1:1—Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia—are also represented by pilgrims to Jerusalem who heard Peter’s first sermon on Pentecost in the year Jesus died (Acts 2:9–11). There is, however, no explicit information in Acts or elsewhere that the people from these regions who heard Peter did in fact convert to faith in Christ and, more to the point, that they carried the gospel back to Asia Minor. If these Jewish pilgrims to Jerusalem are the people to whom Peter writes, then the designation “foreigners and resident aliens” (*parepidēmoi* and *paroikoi*) is apt, as they were God’s people living away from the promised land, as their remote ancestors in the Diaspora had also been (see Gen. 23:4; Ps. 39:12).

However, relatively few people from Asia Minor are likely to have been in Jerusalem, and probably even fewer, if any, converted to Christ. If they were pilgrims to Jerusalem, Peter’s acquaintance with them—if he had any personal contact with them at all—would have been current for only a short time. This short period of spiritual authority would require the letter to have been written soon after Pentecost, probably in the 30s, and just shortly after Peter’s making their acquaintance. But the letter does not seem to have in mind just a few individuals (it mentions no one by name), and it makes no allusion to Jerusalem or Pentecost, as might be expected if this were the origin of the correspondence. Furthermore, when he mentions “those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit” (1:12), Peter implies that he was *not* the first to bring the gospel to them. Moreover, the letter itself suggests a time later than the early 30s. Elders are mentioned in 5:1, although they could have been elders of the synagogue before their conversion in Jerusalem. Persecution for the name of Christ had developed, and Peter already had an association with the church at Rome if “Babylon” in 5:13 is to be so understood. Such factors do not easily allow for a date shortly after Pentecost. Mark Wilson argues that the first churches in Anatolia were founded in Cilicia by the apostle Paul during his “silent years” even before the establishment of the church in Antioch. He