THE SOCIAL SITUATION IN 1 PETER

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that 1 Peter dealt with and responded to the social situation of Christian communities in the provinces of Asia Minor. Having used terms familiar to a Gentile audience with a strong Jewish background, the author described the readers using metaphors of separation and solidarity. He understood his readers to have been a people alienated within their society.

Analysis of ancient Mediterranean societies reveals that alienation would have been the experience of early Christian communities. Though social status within the Christian communities varied, social class was that of a predominately low level. Those who joined the Christian communities were among the masses of the "marginalized" in Roman society. The idea of conversion, prominent among such minority movements as Christianity, ran contrary to the popular religions of the state. As in similar communities, conversion into the Christian community resulted in a high level of social anxiety and rootlessness among the recent converts.

Understanding the perceptions of ancient Mediterranean societies helps to explain the turmoil of such conversions. The group and its honour predominated over the individual; individuals, therefore, discovered identity and experienced

honour through their group associations. Movement, then, to a minority group such as Christianity produced severe social distress. The individual could well be ostracized by his or her previous associations (especially the family) and be the object of social hostilities. Further, minority religious groups, such as Christianity, were disdained by the elite of society. Social pressure against the Christian communities came from all sides.

1 Peter confirms that the persecution suffered by the community was indeed of a social nature. The Christian community was persecuted as a result of the perceived foreignness of their beliefs and practices. Recognizing that society had developed false notions about the Christian community attempting to undermine society, the author appealed to his readers to accept their persecution in the same manner that Christ had accepted his suffering and to behave in a manner that would eliminate these false notions; he urged them to imitate the behaviour of Christ. He also invoked portions of the household code to ensure his readers behaved in a manner acceptable to society and in keeping with his view of the nature of Christianity.

CONTENTS

PREFACE

My initial interest in 1 Peter stemmed from a fascination with its use of sources. Brief study of the social situation of the readers revealed a connection between the manner in which the author used his sources and the social situation of the readers. Initially, I set out to examine this connection in 1 Peter. More study, however, revealed that no comprehensive analysis of the social circumstances behind this letter existed. So, a focus on source adaptation turned into an examination of the social situation behind the writing. I think it would be exciting to examine the correlation between 1 Peter's sources and the author's perspective of the social situation of the readers, and I hope this is undertaken someday.

Stylistically, this thesis will be somewhat different from previous theses in the religious studies field. My biggest complaint of theses was they were so unreadable! My writing style draws somewhat on the newer approaches denoted in Margot Northey and Brian Timney, Making Sense in Psychology and the Life Sciences: A Student's Guide to Writing and Style

(Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986) and Joanne Buckley, Fit to Print: The Canadian Student's Guide to Essay Writing, 2d ed. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991). I hope my clumsy attempts to make this a thesis which is readable do not interfere with the high level of scholarship I have incorporated into the study. Read, learn, and enjoy!

Keir Hammer
November 1994

THE SOCIAL SITUATION IN 1 PETER

Introduction

In 1976 John Elliott labelled 1 Peter "an exegetical stepchild,"[1] a quote which has made it into most of the in-depth studies of 1 Peter since then. The scholarly neglect of 1 Peter in the past means that there still remains much which has not been studied in connection with it. From an anthropological perspective,[2] 1 Peter provides numerous clues as to the type of social interaction which was occurring between its recipients and the greater population of Asia Minor. This thesis is an attempt to get behind the scenes of the letter and to establish both the author's perception of the social situation[3] of his readers[4] and his directives in

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[1]John H. Elliott, "The Rehabilitation of an Exegetical Stepchild: 1 Peter in Recent Research," Journal of Biblical Literature 95, no. 2 (1976): 243-254.

[2]See the following pages (4-7) for information on the terminology used in this study.

[3]See n., 2.

[4]Although the readers spoken of here fall into the category of implied readers (see Robert M. Fowler, "Who is 'the Reader' in Reader Response Criticism?" Semeia 31 (1985): 5-26), I am not fully satisfied with this terminology and will attempt to link the situation of the implied readers of 1 Peter with the real communities and their social structures and social experiences in Roman Asia Minor during the latter part of the first century of

(continued...)

light of that perception.

The question of the authorship of 1 Peter has not been settled, but specific authorship is not at issue here.[5] What needs to be determined for the purpose of this thesis is that the author was familiar with the situation of those who were intended as the recipients.[6] Appeal will be made to evidences of social description in the text itself. Such an approach may receive shocked responses from many in the Social Sciences since the letter was never written to provide evidence of social setting; therefore, it is questionable whether one can reconstruct even a portion of the situation based on textual evidence. Yet the textual evidence provides what Ricoeur calls "traces"[7] and is invaluable in coming to some understanding of the historical situation behind the writing.

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[4](...continued)
the Common Era (C.E.). The readers are also referred to as recipients and addressees in this paper.

[5]I will, however, need to examine the question of the use of Peter's name and the lack of reference to Paul in the letter since these have bearing on the geographic location. See pp., 15-17.

[6]This does not mean that the allusions in 1 Peter to the social situation would not have been applicable to Christian communities elsewhere. The question is whether or not it describes the situation of this readership.

[7]Paul Ricoeur, History and Truth, trans. and with an introduction by Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 23. Ricoeur is dependant on Marc Bloch, The Historians Craft, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: Vintage Books, 1953), 55 who spoke of "tracks" which are left for the historian (or "traces" depending on the translation) and who drew from Simiand's phrase "knowledge through traces."

Questions which must be asked in the pursuit of this goal include: How is the readership portrayed by the writer? Does this coincide with evidence in other biblical books and extra-biblical material? What specific terminology is used to describe the readers and their situation? Do these descriptions fit the situation in which the readers were likely involved? The latter question will be answered by an investigation of Christianity's place in society during the first century and by an appeal to anthropological evidence of first-century Mediterranean society such as found in the early Roman Empire.[8]

The author's stated purpose for the letter will be considered in order to ascertain what were the immediate problems facing the hearers. Some of the questions which need to be answered in this section include: Why did these problems exist? What was the author's advice in light of them? What thinking lies behind the advice of the author? The latter part of this study will focus on providing answers to these questions.

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[8]The Mediterranean world extends over a vast geographical area. To speak of it as one single society or as having one cultural identity is not realistic. Although this study is only concerned with the more specific area of Asia Minor, the Mediterranean world can be spoken of under one label by maintaining a level of abstraction and generalization. Rather than focusing on differences, the spotlight will be on the similarities shared by those in the first century Mediterranean world. See Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, "First-Century Personality: Dyadic, not Individual," in The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 69-72.

Clarification of Terminology and Methodology

Terminology is especially important due to the confusion which exists among those who draw on the Social Sciences for the study of the biblical world. As Bruce Malina states, there is a "lack of precision developing in terminology used in Social Science approaches to biblical interpretation," and he urges that such "imprecisions in terminology" should not be "imported into the lexicon of biblical scholarship,"[9] not only for the sake of consistency in biblical studies, but also so that such studies might be comprehensible to those working in the field of the Social Sciences.

In some studies, social description is often identified as sociological analysis, but social description, or social history, is no more sociological than policy is political.[10] "Social" points to an aspect of social experience but does not

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[9]Bruce Malina, "The Social Sciences and Biblical Interpretation," in The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics, rev. ed. of A Radical Religion Reader, ed. Norman K. Gottwald (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 22.

[10]Malina, "The Social Sciences," 22. Although Robin Scroggs, "The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament: The Present State of Research," in The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics, rev. ed. of A Radical Religion Reader, ed. Norman K. Gottwald (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 337, maintains that social history is a type of sociological interpretation.

indicate how that experience will be approached or interpreted.[11] "Sociological" on the other hand is considered to indicate the theories and hypotheses which characterize the discipline of Sociology.[12] In the words of John Gager, "To oversimplify [the explanation], any sociological approach to early Christianity will be concerned with *explanations* of social facts, whereas a social history need not concern itself with anything more than a *description* of the relevant social data."[13]

Yet, it is clear from a precursory reading of the biblical material in this field that these terms are not considered so clearly differentiated. For example, Malherbe (Social Aspects of Early Christianity) considers his method of social history to be sociological in scope, yet Gager contends that it is not sociological but resolutely social.[14] To add to the difficulties of differentiation, while "social" and "sociological" are differentiated in English, such is not the case in German or French.[15] Thus, English translations of

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[11]John G. Gager, "Social Description and Sociological Explanation in the Study of Early Christianity," in The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics, rev. ed. of A Radical Religion Reader, ed. Norman K. Gottwald (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 429.

[12]Gager, "Social Description," 429.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., 437.

[15]Malina, "The Social Sciences," 22.

French or German works in this field have the potential of further confusing the issue.

Malina contends that in the Social Sciences area, Sociology is concerned with one's own groups and culture, while Anthropology is the study of foreign culture or groups.[16] He goes on to explain that Anthropology is further subdivided into Social Anthropology--if it is concerned with social structures or foreign cultures/groups, and Cultural Anthropology--if it is concerned with the values and meanings of social structures.[17] Unfortunately, the distinction is not so simple, since Anthropology is often considered to be a comparative study of various societies and not a study focused on a single society (be it foreign or otherwise).[18] Moreover, when proper models of Sociology are applied to foreign cultures the result can be considered sociological. The problem with trying to pin down exactly what is anthropological or what is sociological is that the numerous areas of specialization of each of these fields make

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[16]Bruce Malina, "Why Interpret the Bible with the Social Sciences?" American Baptist Quarterly 2 (1983): 129.

[17]Malina draws his approach from Jonathan H. Turner, The Structure of Sociological Theory, rev. ed. (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1978).

[18]Paul G. Hiebert, Cultural Anthropology, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 21 (page references are to reprint edition).

both difficult to define precisely.[19] Obviously, there is an overlap, particularly when it comes to examining an ancient society such as found in the early Roman Empire.[20]

In order to alleviate the confusion between social history and sociological, I will adopt Malina's distinction between Anthropology and Sociology, and his further distinction between Cultural and Social Anthropology.[21] The only place there will be a deviation from such terminology is when interacting with authors who have chosen to employ the term "sociological," and the reader is asked to bear in mind this discussion at those points. This thesis, then, mainly involves traditional exegesis[22] and social description, but at points will also draw on models from Cultural Anthropology to further validate the arguments.

Methodologically, this approach is eclectic--constituting

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[19]Paul Hiebert, 20; Robert Hagedorn, "What is Sociology?," in Sociology, 4th ed., ed. Robert Hagedorn (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, 1990), 3-5 (also preface).

[20]Howard Clark Kee, Knowing the Truth: A Sociological Approach to New Testament Interpretation (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 43-50, classifies Anthropological analysis under the category of Sociological approaches.

[21]See discussion above, p., 6.

[22]Traditional exegesis refers to the use of grammatical-syntactical criticism and historical criticism (which would include source, tradition history, form, and redaction criticism). The term "exegesis" has been expanded by some of the newer methods of interpretation to include their methodologies (the validity of this is not at issue here); thus, the use of traditional exegesis is employed as opposed to simply exegesis.

a combination of traditional exegetical and social-scientific analysis.[23] It is neither a traditional exegetical analysis nor a purely social-scientific criticism but an interaction of these two methodologies. The portions which utilize traditional exegesis (chapters 2 & 4) have as their focus the social description of the addressees. As well, the author's responses (chapter 4) are examined in light of this social description. Further, the author's responses are analyzed in light of the underlying anthropological comprehension of prevalent societal perspectives. Chapter 3 can be subdivided into social description (which draws lightly on traditional exegetical analysis) followed by a cultural anthropological evaluation.

The outline may lead one to surmise that essentially this is traditional exegesis which draws upon social description and cultural anthropology as background material. Yet, the outline could just as well have begun with an analysis of ancient Mediterranean society followed by a comparative evaluation of the material of 1 Peter, and, as such, might have been considered a social-scientific analysis which draws on exegetical analysis for confirmation. Both of these perspectives fall short of the intent, which is to equally

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[23]See n., 22 for discussion of the terminology "traditional exegetical." Social-scientific analysis would include social description and cultural anthropology.

weight the traditional exegetical and the social-scientific methodologies in an attempt to fully evaluate the social situation of the intended readers of this epistle. Naturally, there is a danger to unexamined eclecticism when combining methodologies with varied philosophical undergirdings,[24] but that should not be a problem in this case. The focus of this work (to establish the social situation of the readers and evaluate its effect on the letter's response to the social issues) is philosophically supported from both the traditional exegetical and the social-scientific approach to the biblical text.

Briefly, a note needs to be made on the specific intent of social description. I am only interested in two aspects of social description, namely, a description of the social facts given in Christian materials (mostly the focus is on clues from 1 Peter itself), and a social history of early Christianity.[25] However, I go beyond a social description of early Christianity to include a perspective on the world in which Christianity was arising and on the social interactions

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[24]This danger is pointed out by J. Botha, "Christians and Society in 1 Peter," Scriptura: Journal of Bible and Theology in Southern Africa 24 (1988): 27-28.

[25]Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Social Description of Early Christianity," Religious Studies Review 1 (1975): 17-21, points out four aspects of social description, including also the social organization of early Christianity (in terms of both the social forces which led to its rise and its social institutions) as well as the notion of early Christianity as a social world.

which would have been taking place at that level. Consequently, I am seeking to present a comparative description of Christianity and other social groups in existence at that time, including some of the relevant social forces (both similar and dissimilar) which were shaping these communities. As such, this is much different from most other social descriptions, which focus on social forces only as they are relevant to the inner-workings of the early Christian communities.

The Importance of this Study

Much remains to be studied in relation to 1 Peter. Not surprisingly, John Elliott, who initially labelled 1 Peter an exegetical stepchild, is at the forefront of current studies on the book. The work which comes closest to the material in this study is Elliott's A Home for the Homeless. At first glance, Elliott's sub-title, A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy, gives the impression that his book has already accomplished the goals of this thesis; however, there are some very definite distinctions.

In the first place, Elliott has centred on the use of πάροικος and concluded that the addressees of 1 Peter are members of such a real, socially defined status group. At the risk of simplifying his work I am asserting that πάροικος essentially defines the nucleus of his book, and all other aspects are subservient to this nucleus. Moving beyond this, I am attempting to demonstrate that πάροικος is but one of several terms, all of which combine to provide an overall metaphorical description of the social situation of the addressees in 1 Peter. The metaphorical description finds its source in an actual social experience of a people who find

themselves, in the words of Elliott, "on the fringes of the political and social world."[26] The support for my position comes not merely from the terminology itself,[27] but from a broader base of the social experiences of Christians throughout the empire as well as from an anthropological understanding of ancient Roman societies in general. Furthermore, Elliott's focus is more on the inner-relationships within the Christian communities of Asia Minor, while I stand outside, centred on the relationship between those in the Christian communities and the greater society. I am concerned with the author's perception[28] of the social situation and his response to it. More will be said about Elliott's position later.

Another work connected to this study is a Ph.D. dissertation by David Balch, which has since been published as Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter. It is along much the same lines as Elliott's work, but comes to

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[26]John H. Elliott, A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 148.

[27]If I am going to take much of the descriptive terminology as metaphorical, then I have to demonstrate from other sources what sort of situation these metaphors are describing.

[28]I am still seeking to ground such a perception in reality and demonstrate that it has validity.

different conclusions.[29] Balch is primarily focused on the use of the "household code" in 1 Peter, and this narrow focus is what has defined the direction of his work. His material is pertinent in explaining the response of the author of 1 Peter to the social situation of his readers, especially the question of why the household code was invoked. Although my position is more in tune with Elliott than Balch, I lean towards Balch's assertion that the author calls his readers to live harmoniously in their Greco-Roman environment.[30] As Balch's work suggests, however, he is focused primarily on the household code and has not developed the broader perspective which I hope to present.

One other work bears mentioning, and that is Troy Martin's now published Ph.D. Dissertation, Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter. As the title suggests, Martin has a completely different focus from me. He wants to determine the literary character and structure of 1 Peter. His arguments that much of the language of 1 Peter is metaphorical are foundational for my study. Moreover, his assertion that the

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[29]Elliott himself admits that he and Balch have "conflicting conclusions" because of the different focuses of their research. See "1 Peter, its Situation and Strategy: A Discussion with David Balch," in Perspectives in First Peter, ed. Charles H. Talbert (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 63. Elliott concludes that the letter's focus is inward, while Balch contends it is outward.

[30]I acknowledge Elliott's contention that the author seeks to strengthen the solidarity of the Christian brotherhood, but do so at an earlier point in the thesis. Both views are relevant.

controlling metaphor of the letter is that of the διασπορά has implications for the social standing of the readers. Martin's work is not concerned with the social situation of the readers, but merely with the structural aspects of the letter itself. As with πάροικος, I contend that διασπορά is but one of many metaphors which combine to describe the readers' situation.

Many commentaries and books focusing on 1 Peter recognize that the letter reflects social tensions, but none have established the reality of the social situation behind these tensions. This study is an attempt to set forth a comprehensive analysis of the social situation of the addressees of 1 Peter and then to demonstrate how this situation impacted the author's response. Nothing of this nature has been accomplished in relation to 1 Peter.

I. The Intended Audience

A. A Note on Petrine Authorship

As stated earlier, the issue of authorship is not a concern of this study; nonetheless, the attachment of Peter's name has implications for the composition of the community (i.e. Jews or Gentiles) as well as the geographic location to which it was addressed. The use of Peter's name[31] raises the questions of why a predominately Gentile audience might be addressed and why the letter would be sent to an area which was essentially the mission field of Paul.[32] New Testament evidence is cited as proof that Paul's work was associated with the Gentiles, while that of Peter was connected to the Jews. [33] However, further scrutiny reveals that the issues are not so clearly defined.

Peter is known to be an influence not only outside of Palestine but also among Christian communities which were

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[31]Peter is also known as Simon or Cephas.

[32]Paul's name was connected to the missionary work of some areas of Asia Minor.

[33]Gal 2:8-9.

predominately Gentile.[34] Ironically, the book of Galatians, which often is the support cited to exclude Peter from Gentile work, demonstrates that Peter was known by name to even the distant Galatian converts. Further, after his death, Peter's name came to be associated with Rome, the capital of the then Gentile world.[35] Specific relegation of Peter to only one area of ministry in the Christian church is not possible.

There is evidence not only that Peter was prominent during the life of Jesus but that a "trajectory"[36] of Petrine images developed throughout his lifetime and beyond it. In terms of his missionary career, the image of "Peter as the great Christian fisherman (missionary)" gradually evolved.[37] Further, there is evidence that Peter came to be

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[34]See Acts 10; 15:7; I Cor 1:12; 3:22. Consider also the attachment of Peter's name to the book of 2 Peter which deals with issues that are clearly Gentile in nature. See Tord Fornberg, An Early Church in a Pluralistic Society: A Study of 2 Peter, trans. Jean Gray, Publication of Coniectanea Biblica, New Testament series no. 9 (Lund, Sweden: Carl Bloms Boktryckeri, 1977), 130ff.

[35]Refer to the discussion in Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, and John Reumann, eds., Peter in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1973), 20-21. If Peter was martyred by Nero around 64 C.E., it is not unreasonable to speculate that by the writing of this letter (70-80 C.E.--see p., 103) association of Peter with Rome had been established in the Christian communities.

[36]This terminology comes from J. M. Robinson and H. Koester, Trajectories through Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

[37]See the study by Brown, 163.

understood as an authority figure and a shepherd (pastor) for the Christian church.[38]

It is quite possible that, as traditions developed, Peter came to be considered Paul's superior (authoritatively speaking) in the Church,[39] and, so, the inclusion of Paul's name is not an absolute requirement for a letter addressed to Asia Minor.[40] Peter came to be seen as one of the (if not the) key leader in the Christian movement, and Petrine influence does not have to be limited to Palestine or even to the Jewish community at large. The attachment of Peter's name to this letter does not necessarily influence the area or the audience.

B. Geographic Location

The location of the intended readers of this letter needs to be established to determine the relevancy of any attitudes towards the Christian community which might have been specific to that area. The geographical question pertains to whether the provinces listed in the letter's prologue (Pontus,

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[38]See Matt. 16:19; John 21.

[39]One example is found in the Acts tradition (ch. 15) where Paul and Barnabas are depicted as returning to Jerusalem (where Peter was a leader) for confirmation of their ministry among the Gentiles.

[40]It might not have been worthwhile to include Paul's name in a document which was going to a broad region that would encompass some areas he may not have visited.

Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia) were politically determined Roman provinces or references to older geographic boundaries in Asia Minor.[41] If the former is the case, then the churches to which this letter was directed would be spread over a much larger area.[42]

Two problems arise when one contends that the area refers to political provinces. First, Pontus and Bithynia composed one administrative Roman province, but not only are they mentioned separately, one begins the list in 1 Peter and the other ends the list.[43] Secondly, there is no mention of the work of Paul, who definitely evangelized some of those areas.[44] The issue of Pontus and Bithynia is not difficult to solve. There is evidence in inscriptions that these areas occasionally received independent and separate mention in lists of Asia Minor's provinces.[45]

The argument that this area refers to the older geographic boundaries has several problems that are more

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[41]D. Edmond Hiebert, An Introduction to the New Testament, vol. 3, The Non-Pauline Epistles and Revelation, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 115. Refer to the maps in Appendix A for an outline of the areas in question.

[42]Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1970), 792.

[43]Ibid., 793.

[44]Ernest Best, 1 Peter, New Century Bible Commentary (London: Oliphants, 1971), 15. The section on authorship (pp., 15-17) has dealt with the issue of Paul's exclusion.

[45]Elliott, Home, 60.

difficult to solve. The fact that there were more geographic names (beyond those with names identical to the Roman provinces) and not one is mentioned, tends to support the notion that Roman provincial nomenclature was intended.[46] Furthermore, if these were the geographic boundaries listed in 1 Peter, they would not form a natural area[47] and would be separated by the unmentioned area of Phrygia.[48] Certainly it is the opinion of the overwhelming majority of scholars that Roman provinces were the intent of the author of 1 Peter[49] and this interpretation presents the least amount of

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[46]Elliott, Home, 60; Theodor Zahn, Introduction to the New Testament, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909), 2:134.

[47]See Elliott, Home, 60 who draws on Strabo's (The Geography of Strabo, trans. Horace Leonard Jones, vols 5 and 6 of 8 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928-9)) geographic description.

[48]Best, 15.

[49]Francis W. Beare, The First Epistle of Peter, 2d rev. ed. (Oxford: Basil Balckwell, 1961), 38-9; Peter H. Davids, The First Epistle of Peter, Publication of The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 8; John N. D. Kelly, A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude, Publication of Black's New Testament Commentaries, ed. Henry Chadwick (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 3; Alfred R. C. Leaney, The Letters of Peter and Jude, The Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 6-7; Raymond A. Martin and John J. Elliott, James, I-II Peter/Jude, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), 59. Edward G. Selwyn, The First Epistle of St. Peter (London: Macmillan & Co., 1947; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 45-6 (page references are to reprint edition); and Guthrie, 793, take the position of the older geographic boundaries. Best, 15, acknowledges that it is preferable to accept the interpretation of Roman provinces but cautions that in so doing one is forced to consider this as an area evangelized by Paul. Refer to pp., 15-17 for the discussion of these subjects.

problems.

The position taken here is that 1 Peter 1:1 refers to the administrative Roman provinces; the area includes all of Asia Minor lying north and west of the Taurus mountain range but excludes the southern coastal areas of Asia Minor.[50] Thus the audience would consist of scattered groups spread over a wide geographic area.[51]

Because of the extensive geographic area, the social situation of the recipients was not that of a few communities in a small area but was a more widespread reality. One can maintain, therefore, that any persecution was not on the basis of specific ethnic background but was based on the place of the Christian community in the social world of Roman Asia Minor.[52] The authowas dealing with social problems which were affecting a wide array of isolated communities. Therefore, if persecution is shown to have been a reality

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[50]See Appendix A for a map.

[51]J. Ramsey Michaels, 1 Peter, Publication of Word Biblical Commentary, ed. Ralph P. Martin (Waco: Word Books, 1988), xlv.

[52]The question of the Christian community's place in the social world of Asia Minor is virtually unaffected by the question of whether the issues were urban or rural. Although the methodology of evangelization might be affected by an urban versus a rural setting (see Wayne Meeks, The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 9-50), the emergence of a new group would be greeted with the same responses in either setting--refer to the discussion of low grid/strong group on pp., 89-91, and n., 286. See the exception noted under the discussion of high grid/strong group, n., 290.

behind the writing of 1 Peter, it is reasonable to assume that the author was not dealing with a few incidents of antagonism against Christians but with a widespread social rejection which probably was increasing in scope.

Apart from some of the more prominent sources in Roman literature, which concern official persecutions,[53] there is little known about the persecution of Christians. The evidence then can only come from those who faced persecution, namely the Christians. Such evidence is found in the Pauline corpus, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Revelation of John. The fact that conflicts arose early between the local Asian society and those who heralded the Christian message is apparent from the letters of Paul[54] and the book of Acts. In Acts 19:23-41,[55] the silversmiths who moulded statues for

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[53]Such as the letters of the Younger Pliny to Trajan.

[54]Duane Warden, "Imperial Persecution and the Dating of 1 Peter and Revelation," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 34, no. 2 (June 1991): 208.

[55]The lack of references in Acts to persecution of Christians by Gentiles in Asia Minor is not difficult to understand. One of the themes of Acts is the rejection of Christianity by the Jews and the move of Christianity from the Jewish realm to the Gentile realm (see especially the conclusion of Acts at 28:25-28). Therefore the focus would be on the conflicts brought about by the Jews, not the Gentiles. See Jack T. Sanders, "The Salvation of the Jews in Luke Acts," in Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar, ed. Charles H. Talbert (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 104-128; and John J. Kilgallen, "Persecution in the Acts of the Apostles," in Luke and Acts, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, eds. Gerald O'Collins and Gilberto Marconi (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 145-155. This is not to say that the author of Acts

(continued...)

the worship of Artemis created trouble for Paul in Ephesus.[56] Early in the spread of Christianity in Asia Minor discontent against a religion which rejected the popular pagan habits of worship was evident. In I Cor. 15:32 Paul may allude to this incident when he claims that he fought against "wild beasts" in Ephesus. Later in the same book (I Cor. 16:9) he speaks of the opportunities he presently has for ministry (probably in Asia Minor) yet that he faces many opponents. There is also a reference in Acts 14:5 that an attempt was made by Gentiles (along with Jews) and their rulers to mistreat and stone Paul and Barnabas while they were

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[55](...continued)
rejected the Jewish portion of the Christian movement, for there is evidence that he considered Jerusalem and the Jewish apostles to be the authority centre for Christianity (i.e. the council at Jerusalem makes the decision on what grounds the Gentiles are to be incorporated into the Church--Acts 15). Moreover, the reality of Luke's perspective is that it is both apologetic and irenic; he defends Paul's mission to the Gentiles by citing the Jewish rejection of the gospel while simultaneously presenting Paul's gospel as complete in Jewish terms against those who saw it as deficient. Refer to Robert L. Brawley, "Paul in Acts: Lucan Apology and Conciliation," in Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar, ed. Charles H. Talbert (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1984) as well as Robert L. Brawley, Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology and Conciliation, Publication of the Society of Biblical Literature, eds. Adela Y. Collins and P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., no. 33 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 68-83.

[56]W. H. C. Frend, Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus (New York: New York University Press, 1965), 120, passes off the conflict at Ephesus as mainly coming from individuals worried about their living. As will be pointed out, the concern of individual citizens was the concern of the city and province and it would not have taken long for such discontent to grow. Christianity could have been viewed as undermining the religious and economic foundations of the area.

in Iconium. The book of Revelation, which centres upon the area of Asia Minor, also deals with widespread and intense persecution.[57]

Understanding the Roman method of provincial administration will shed some light on the conflict and persecution in Asia Minor. The proconsul of the first century was very much an independent administrator;[58] consequently, if the citizens in certain provinces were expressing discontentment over matters concerning the Christians, the proconsul could have acted to persecute the Christians, while neither consulting the governor nor promoting a wide scale

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[57]See D. Edmond Hiebert, 252, 257-8. Although Revelation probably deals with the reign of Domitian (81-96 C.E.) (this is far from being absolute, but see J. D. McCaughey, "Three 'Persecution Documents' of the New Testament," Australian Biblical Review 17 (1969): 33-37; Guthrie, 949-957; Leon Morris, Revelation, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 34-40. Against this date see F. Gerald Downing, "Pliny's Prosecutions of Christians: Revelation and 1 Peter," Journal for the Study of the New Testament 34 (1988): 105-123, for the argument that Revelation is later than Domitian, and Duane Warden, "Imperial Persecution and the Dating of 1 Peter and Revelation," who contends that Revelation could well be earlier than Domitian) one can forcibly argue that such persecution had its beginnings at an earlier time, quite possibly during the period covered in 1 Peter. Furthermore, traditions of martyrs developed from the area of Asia Minor (the most prominent being that of Polycarp) provides more evidence of persecutions arising in that area. See Frend, 268ff; Leonhard Goppelt, Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times, trans Robert A. Guelich (London: A. and C. Black Ltd., 1970; reprint, New York: Harper Torchback, 1970), 109ff (page references are to reprint edition).

[58]A. N. Sherwin-White, Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 1.

persecution throughout the empire. Further, city governments were expected to attend to the needs and concerns of their citizens.[59] Both provincial and city governments could act to oppose a new religion if it were deemed harmful to the well-being of the area.[60] The well-being of the area could be the religious patterns of the people, their entertainment, social mores, or economic well-being.[61]

The small glimpse afforded of the area in Acts and through the Apostle Paul's comments certainly lends support to the possibility that strong conflict against the Christian sect rose up in the cities and provinces of Asia Minor due to public disapproval of their lifestyle and their beliefs (i.e. rejection of the pantheon of gods).

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[59]S. R. F. Price, Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2, points out that because of the small staff of the proconsul in the provinces of Asia Minor, the cities handled most of their own affairs and only important legal cases and matters of order were handled by the proconsul. See also John Richardson, Roman Provincial Administration: 227 BC to AD 117, Publication of Inside the Ancient World, ed. M. R. F. Gunningham (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1976), 49, who notes that the city's power came from the fact that, in essence, Rome was a city-state so that much of the administration was in the hands of the local authorities. This freedom of administration seemed to be especially true of Asia Minor in the earlier years of the empire, see G. H. Stevenson, Roman Provincial Administration: Till the Age of the Antonines (New York: G. E. Strechert & Co., 1939), 39.

[60]Warden, 209.

[61]Ibid.

C. Social Composition

Overall, the contents of 1 Peter suggest that there was considerable apprehension among the letter's recipients regarding their situation. The general purpose of the letter was to strengthen and encourage the Christians in the areas of Asia Minor to which it was directed.[62] More specifically, the readers were encountering certain persecutions and the letter was to help them stand firm in their Christian commitment. Who these readers were and how they are designated in the letter will shed some light on the situation in which they found themselves.

Here we turn our attention to determining the composition[63] of these communities to which 1 Peter was written based on evidence in the letter itself. The answer to the question of who they were is quite broad and will come to bear later when specific terms used to describe the readers are examined. The issues here are whether it was a mixed or purely Jewish or Gentile audience and what social groups received mention in the letter. The audience's composition will affect how specific terms would have been understood by

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[62]C. E. B. Cranfield, I & II Peter and Jude (London: S.C.M. Press, 1960), 17-18.

[63]The composition here is concerned with the specific communities to which the letter was addressed based on evidence from the letter and is not to be confused with the composition (social level) of Christian communities in general, which will be examined under the place of Christians in Roman society.

the readers (e.g. do we take the Jewish or Gentile meaning?). Further, the references in the letter to specific groups (i.e. slaves) will have a bearing on whether sections of the letter pertain to specific groups and on how the overall document is to be understood.

1. Jews or Gentiles

J. Dijkman presents numerous Jewish ideas and traditions which are contained within 1 Peter.[64] Dijkman is not necessarily arguing for a Jewish audience (though he does allude to the possibility) but is denying W. Munro's thesis that 1 Peter represents a later pastoral stratum which sought to achieve dissociation from Judaism.[65] The reference to Peter as the writer of the letter has been a factor in the conclusion that the audience must have been Jewish. The support comes from the reference in Galatians 2:9 where Paul reports that while he went to the Gentiles, James, Cephas (Peter), and John would go to the circumcised.[66] Thus, the conclusion is that a Jewish audience must have been intended since Peter's name was attached to the letter.

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[64]J. H. L. Dijkman, "1 Peter: A Later Pastoral Stratum?" New Testament Studies 33, no. 2 (1987): 265-271.

[65]See Winsome Munro, Authority in Paul and Peter: The Identification of a Pastoral Stratum in the Pauline Corpus and 1 Peter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[66]Dijkman, 266: n., 10.

Other elements which point to a Jewish audience are the opening salutation and the extensive use of Old Testament quotations.[67] As will be demonstrated later, the opening salutation is used metaphorically and so lends no support to the argument for a Jewish audience.[68] The argument presented by the Old Testament quotations is convincing with regard to the Jewishness of the audience, especially when research has indicated that New Testament authors made extensive appeal to the Old Testament only when their audience was primarily Jewish.[69] Yet, the letter's internal evidence points to an audience which was largely Gentile in origin.[70]

No doubt the audience had connections with the

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[67]Kelly, 4-5; Dijkman, 266ff; Richard Longenecker, Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1975), 187, 210.

[68]Moreover, it is a simple instance of the early Church's habit of transferring to itself, as the "new" Israel, the language appropriate to the experience of the "old" Israel. See Brawley, Luke-Acts, 153 and Hans Conzelmann, The Theology of St. Luke, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 146, 162ff.

[69]Longenecker, 186ff, 210ff.

[70]There are statements that they have been rescued from a futile way of life inherited from their fathers (i. 18), that having formerly been 'no people' they have now become 'God's people' (ii. 10), and that previously they had been idolaters indulging in typically Gentile excesses (iv.3: cf. i.14; ii.9; iii.5f), Kelly 4-5. See also Gene Green, "The Use of the Old Testament for Christian Ethics in 1 Peter," Tyndale Bulletin 41 (N 1990): 276; D. Edmond Hiebert, 114; James Moffatt, The General Epistles--James, Peter and Judas (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1947), 86.

synagogues,[71] because of t letter's assumption of their knowledge of Jewish customs, concepts, and Scriptures. Gentile converts to Christianity would certainly have had some familiarity with the Old Testament because it would have provided the scriptural basis of their catechetical training.[72] Furthermore, it is quite possible that many Gentile converts, prior to their Christian conversion, had been attached to synagogues as 'God-fearers.[73] Thus the argument that the composition of the Christian communities was mostly Gentile is quite probable, but the existence of some Christian Jews and the obvious Jewish influence upon the Gentiles means that the perspectives of both Jews and Gentiles have a bearing on an interpretation of the terminology.

2. Social Groups

Groups which are mentioned in the letter include: slaves (οἰκέτης; 2:18), husbands (ἀνδρός; 3:1,5,7), wives (γυνή; 3:1,7),

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[71]If the audience were predominately Gentile, they may well have been attached to the Synagogue as 'God-fearers', like the centurion Cornelius--Acts 10:2, see Kelly, 5, and Jacob Jervell, "The Church of Jews and Godfearers," in Luke-Acts and the Jewish People, ed. Joseph B. Tyson (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 11-20.

[72]Kelly, 5.

[73]Kelly, 5. Michaels, lii, points out that though the possibility that they were God-fearers certainly existed, it is not certain if the writer of 1 Peter would have had access to that type of knowledge.

elders (πρεσβύτερος; 5:1,5), and young men (νεώτερος; 5:5).[74] The intent of the letter was clearly not to delineate all the social groups which constituted the community, but the mention of some of these groups offers an initial understanding of the composition of these communities. The absence of any mention of masters in connection with the slaves could be because the writer felt that there was no problem with the masters or, perhaps more likely, because a large proportion of those to whom the author was writing belonged to the slave class.[75]

The section dealing with husbands and wives (3:1-7) was clearly in the context of suffering, being preceded by Christ's sufferings as an example (2:21-25) and followed by an admonition to live in harmony so that suffering might be alleviated (3:8ff,13ff). This would seem to indicate that suffering was occurring within the social context. This is further supported by the mention of household slaves in conjunction with suffering (2:18-25).

The slave group to whom the author directs his writing in

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[74]Elliott, Home, 69, includes "free men" (ἐλεύθερος; 2:16) in this list. However, this designation does not specifically refer to a group in the Christian community but is used as a simile for how they ought to submit themselves to those in authority (ὡς ἐλεύθεροι). Such submission is not a breach of the freedom which they have in Christ from the constraints of paganism but is to be done as slaves of God (ὡς θεοῦ δοῦλοι)--thus the use of δοῦλος should also be considered metaphorical. See Leonhard Goppelt, A Commentary on 1 Peter, trans. and aug. John E. Alsup, ed. Ferdinand Hahn (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 187-9; Michaels, 123, 128-9.

[75]Kelly, 115.

2:18-25 consisted of domestic or household slaves.[76] Many of these slaves were well-educated and held responsible positions in the household.[77] Slaves, who constituted a large portion of the population of the Roman Empire, were the lowest social group of the Empire. Though these slaves would not suffer like the slaves in labour gangs, who worked under appalling conditions,[78] they nonetheless were encountering sufficient persecution in their social environment (most likely the household--2:18-25) for the writer to address them directly.

Husband and wife are obviously household terms. Husbands held the power, especially economically, and were considered to be the leaders of the household. The mention of husbands directly (3:7) is of importance, because it indicates a significant male presence in the Christian community; thus this is not just a "religion of slaves and women." The fact that household heads are mentioned in the context of suffering

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[76]Cranfield, 79. Originally the term οἰκέτης referred to a member of the household, but then it came to specify domestic slaves or even slaves in general, see Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 2nd ed., trans. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, ed. Frederick Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 557.

[77]Fritz Rienecker, A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament, trans. & ed. Cleon Rogers (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1980), 754.

[78]Cranfield, 79; Robert H. Mounce, A Living Hope: a Commentary on 1 and 2 Peter (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982), 34.

may also indicate a persecution which came from outside of the immediate household.

Initially, readers familiar with biblical terminology could consider the term πρεσβύτερος (elders) to refer to a specific group related to the inner workings of the Christian community and not one which affected the Christians' social standing in the greater community. However, closer scrutiny reveals that the term πρεσβύτερος had significant meaning in the culture as a whole. The selection of elders in the Christian community may have been related to society's understanding of the term, and elders of the Christian community could have had special status in the eyes of the greater community.[79] Moreover, there are apparently two uses of πρεσβύτερος, one as a title of office (5:1) and another as a designation of age (5:5).[80] The latter is most likely one of the ways in which society utilized the term.

In comparison with other Greek terms for age, πρεσβύτερος has no negative implications, such as loss of power. Indeed, the case is quite the opposite, for the term contains the

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[79]This is not to say that the definition of the position of πρεσβύτερος (as a leader in the Christian community) was identical inside and outside of the Christian community, merely that such people may have had a certain social status before (and after) they were selected as elders of the Christian church.

[80]The close proximity in 1 Peter 5:5 of these apparent two meanings for πρεσβύτερος may well be explained by the fact that those who were in leadership were the older members of the congregation.

concept of veneration or respect.[81] In some Greek cities, such as Sparta, πρεσβύτερος occurred as a political title to indicate the president of a college.[82]

The clearest background to this term comes from the Jewish world. In ancient Judaism, the elders were the leaders of the great families of the nation.[83] In the later period of Israel's history, πρεσβύτεροι ruled over political, military, and judicial matters.[84] In the exile, when all other political forms were destroyed, elders began to take on more significance as those who exercised limited self-government on behalf of the people.[85]

Hellenistic Judaism relegated distinct political importance to the elders. However, by the first century C.E., especially in the synagogues of the diaspora, πρεσβύτερος came to be replaced by titles more common in Greek constitutional use, most notably γερουσία.[86] Evidence from inscriptions in Asia Minor indicates that πρεσβύτερος, though not designating an

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[81]Günther Bornkamm, "πρέσβυς," in The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964-76), 652.

[82]Ibid., 653.

[83]Ibid., 655.

[84]Ibid., 656-7

[85]Ibid., 658.

[86]Ibid., 661.

official as much in the first century C.E., is used as an honourary title for the heads of leading families.[87]

Whether used officially or not, πρεσβύτερος commonly indicated a person of some age and status who was entitled to respect in the community. In a kin-based society, the eldest male relative was often considered to be the head of the household. To some degree there may have been an overlap between the societal concept of πρεσβύτερος and its use within the Christian community.[88] Even if this overlap were not significant, both Jews and Gentiles understood the term to indicate a person who was considered to be of some status and worthy of a degree of respect. Whether or not this status was acknowledged would have been more dependent on society's assessment of the worth of the Christian community than the worth of the individual person.

The use of νεώτερος, translated most commonly as "young men," does not contribute much to this section on the social groups of the community. But, if one accepts the translation of "new converts," the term has important implications for the status of the Christian community.[89] The presence of a

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[87]Bornkamm, 661.

[88]If it is indeed the case that the older people were those who exercised leadership in the Christian communities (see discussion in n., 80), then there is a greater likelihood that a Christian πρεσβύτερος would have received some acknowledgement by the society of Asia Minor.

[89]Elliott, Home, 69, accepts such an interpretation.

number of new converts, particularly in a community as new as Christianity, would indicate that these communities were constantly needing to train new members. Recent converts would not only be unaware of many of the Christian teachings, but they would be unsure of their status and function as Christians in the larger society. This unsureness would point to a community which was constantly in flux as it sought to both establish itself in society while, simultaneously, incorporating new members into its midst. Yet the uncertainty of this translation makes it unlikely that new converts were specifically mentioned by the writer of this letter.[90] The likelihood, however, of having numerous new converts in a new and growing community such as Christianity was quite high.

The issue of society's recognition of the social groupings which composed the Christian communities is clearest in the case of the πρεσβύτεροι. There it was seen that society's view of a Christian πρεσβύτερος would have been more affected by its view of the Christian community than of the status of the individual. This perspective, I would contend, also holds true in the case of the other social groups, namely slaves (οἰκέτης), husbands (ἀνδρός), and wives (γυνή). The contention is

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[90]νεώτερος is the comparative of νέος and its combination with πρεσβύτερος (comparative of πρέσβυς--elder) in 1 Peter 5:5 makes it highly likely that the intent is young men giving respect to those who are their elders in terms of age. The concept of νεώτερος as either a distinct group in the congregation or as new converts remains unproven. See Bauer, 536; Goppelt, Peter, 350-1; Michaels, 288-9.

that the suffering which these groups were encountering was more a reflection of their connection to the Christian community and its social standing in the greater community than of their individual social positions.

II. The Author's Perception of his Readers

To understand more fully the author's perception of the community, some of the terms he utilizes in the description of his audience need to be examined. The letter begins with an address to the ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπίδημοις διασπορᾶς[91] (elect, strangers of dispersion) in the region of Asia Minor. Clearly this is the terminology of separation; terminology of a people who are distinct. Throughout the letter some of these initial terms are repeated and more are added. The list of all such terms is as follows: ἐκλεκτός, παρεπίδημος, διασπορά, λαὸς θεοῦ, ἀδελφός, πάροικος, and οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ. At no time is there an indication that any of these terms relates to one specific group within the Christian community. They are descriptions which focus upon all the members of the Christian communities throughout the area of Asia Minor. A great deal has been written on each of these terms, and I will try to summarize some of that literature below.

A. ἐκλεκτός

ἐκλεκτός (chosen, elect) occurs not only in 1 Peter 1:1 but

[91]All Greek Scripture references are taken from The Greek New Testament, 3d corr. ed., Publication of the United Bible Societies.

also in 2:4, 2:6, and 2:9. In classical Greek the predominant meaning is "choice" or "selected." In the papyrus and in inscriptions the word has the sense of "choice" of things which are the best quality.[92] This meaning has a sectarian emphasis, and it is doubtful that the writer of 1 Peter intended to draw on such a meaning.[93] Most likely, the word draws its meaning for the Christian community from its Hellenistic Jewish background. In Hellenistic Judaism, ἐκλεκτός is very closely associated with λαὸς θεοῦ.[94] So the two will be combined under the idea of election.

The nuances of ἐκλεκτός draw extensively on the Old Testament's imagery of Israel as God's people chosen from among the nations.[95] In the time of the LXX's formation and

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[92]Gottlob Schrenk, "ἐκλεκτός," s.v. "λέγω," in The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964-76), 4:181.

[93]One might argue that the connotation intended by the use of ἐκλεκτός in 1 Peter is that the Christian community consists of the "choice" people, thereby emphasizing their solidarity. Because of the author's emphasis on the Christian community's need to impact those outside the community, it is unlikely that he would have portrayed the outside community as inferior to the Christian people. Refer to n., 109.

[94]The thinking here is that election entails being a people who are chosen by God and, therefore, are considered to be the people of God. Their racial identity (people of God) is determined by their election--see Paul S. Minear, Images of the Church in the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 72.

[95]Schrenk, "ἐκλεκτός," 4:183. The concept of election was not directed towards individuals but was a corporate concept directed

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the early Jewish Hellenistic writings (approximately 250 B.C.E) the belief that Israel was God's chosen people was often stressed.[96] Those whwe are elect were meant to stand in stark contrast to those who were not elect because the latter lived in unbelief and disobedience.[97] In the New Testament Synoptic Gospels, ἐκλεκτός has eschatological significance.[98] The use of ἐκλεκτός, in the New Testament connects the chosen community to Christ, who is referred to as ὁ ἐκλεκτός[99] and so his work is understood as the basis of election.[100] Underlying the use of ἐκλεκτός is that it implies an obedience corresponding to grace.[101]

The election material can be expanded by the inclusion of καλέω (to call) in reference to the Christian community. The use of καλέω in 1:15 expresses the early Christian belief that

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[95](...continued)
towards the Israelite community. See William W. Klein, The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1990), 25-44.

[96]Schrenk, "ἐκλεκτός," 4:184.

[97]Ibid., 183-5.

[98]Matt. 22:14; 24:22, 24, 31; Mark 13:20, 22, 27; Luke 18:7.

[99]Luke 23:35. John consistently represents Christ as the basis of election: John 6:70; 13:18; 15:16,19.

[100]Lothar Coenen, "Elect," in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 3 vols., ed. Colin Brown, trans. from the German Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament, eds. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther and Hans Bietenhard (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1975-8), 1:540.

[101]Schrenk, "ἐκλεκτός," 4:186-7.

God had called (chosen) them to be His people.[102] Further, the use of καλέω in 2:9 and 5:10 seems to carry the same connotations.[103] As a called and chosen people the Christians were to live a different lifestyle than those around them--as God's people they were called to be those whose lives exemplified holiness.

Goppelt notes that the connection of an elect people who are called to holiness sounds similar to the terminology used in the Damascus Rule.[104] Section IV of that rule states, "The *Priests* are the converts of Israel who departed from the land of Judah . . . The *sons of Zadok* are the elect of Israel . . . (They were the first men of holiness whom God forgave . . ."[105] However, in the Qumran texts, the idea of being chosen developed an exclusive nature and indicated superiority over those who must have been rejected.[106] This sectarian development of ἐκλεκτός sounds similar to its connotation in classical Greek, but, again, such sectarian thinking does not

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[102]Best, 86.

[103]Davids, 93, 194; Michaels, 111, 302.

[104]Leonard Goppelt, Theology of the New Testament, vol. 2, The Variety and Unity of the Apostolic Witness to Christ, trans. John E. Alsup, ed. Jürgen Roloff (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982), 166.

[105]G. Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 3d ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 85.

[106]Coenen, 1:539.

appear to be in the mind of 1 Peter's author.[107]

According to Elliott the use of ἐκλεκτός in 1 Peter 1:1 might well indicate that election permeates and determines the thought of the letter.[108] Indeed, in 1 Peter ἐκλεκτός takes on direct ethical implications fo the readers. Yet, no one term seems to dominate the thought of the writer. 1 Peter 1:1, in fact, contains three terms, any one of which could be seen to dominate the discussion, but which are better regarded as parallel expressions operating in conjunction with each other. The function of ἐκλεκτός, it seems, was to cement in the mind of the readers the unity and distinctness they had in comparison to society around them. However, such a distinction or solidarity was not intended by the author to ostracize the group from those outside, as can be seen by his outward focus in other parts of the letter.[109]

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[107]See n., 93. Wayne Meeks, "Since then you would need to go out of the world': Group Boundaries in Pauline Christianity," in Critical History and Biblical Faith: New Testament Perspectives, ed. J. T. Ryan (Villanova, PA: Catholic Theology Society, 1979), 23, notes that Pauline Christians, although having sectarian emphases, did not emulate the Qumran group's withdrawal from society. The communities addressed in 1 Peter indicate a similar lack of withdrawal. One could conclude that their view of society was not as radically sectarian as that of the Qumran community.

[108]John H. Elliott, The Elect and the Holy: An Exegetical Examination of 1 Peter 2:4-10 and the Phrase βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), 147. This is also the perspective of Schrenk, "ἐκλεκτός," 4:190.

[109]Refer to the discussions on pp., 108-109 and 116-17. Note the difference between the idea of the *chosen* people (Jewish

(continued...)

B. παρεπίδημος

Not much has been written on the function of παρεπίδημος in 1 Peter; rather, παρεπίδημος has been defined by its relation to the other terms with which it occurs.[110] παρεπίδημος occurs twice in 1 Peter.[111] The only other occurrence of παρεπίδημος in the New Testament is in Heb. 11:13, where it refers to the Old Testament people of faith who lived as strangers (ξένοι) and exiles (παρεπίδημοι) while on the earth. παρεπίδημος is often translated as "strangers" or "aliens," but more fully means "one who is (temporarily) a resident alien."[112] παρεπίδημος is noted by Bigg to be a specific diaspora term referring to the Jews living as strangers in the land.[113] Although παρεπίδημος

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[109](...continued)
concept) and the *choice* people (Greek concept); choice indicates a qualitative difference between those who are inside the group and those who are outside (i.e. those outside must constitute the "rejected") while chosen is more quantitative, since more can always join the group and become part of those who are chosen.

[110]This is mostly because its two occurrences (1:1 and 2:11) find it used in parallel with other terms (ἐκλεκτός, διασπορά, and πάροικος).

[111]1:1 and 2:11

[112]W. Grundmann, "παρεπίδημος," s.v. "δῆμος," in The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964-76), 2:64.

[113]Charles Bigg, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude, Publication of The International Critical Commentary, eds. S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910), 90-91.

is often considered to be parallel to πάροικος,[114] it differs from πάροικος in that it has the connotation of a temporary residence, and so can be translated as an "exile."[115]

Nevertheless, Moses Chin, after a detailed examination of use of παρεπίδημος and πάροικος in the LXX, Philo, the New Testament, and the early Fathers, concludes that "a distinction between the two words πάροικος and παρεπίδημος in 1 Peter cannot be convincingly maintained because of the evidence."[116] He proposes that it would make more sense to see the two terms as having similar, if not interchangeable, meanings based on their use in the letter.[117] Chin's point is well taken since the various terms in the letter all appear to be describing the situation of the readers. Yet, while this point has merit, one cannot escape the conclusion that

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[114]Selwyn, 169, considers both terms to be virtually identical.

[115]Hans Bietenhard, "Foreign," in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 3 vols., ed. Colin Brown, trans. from the German Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament, eds. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther and Hans Bietenhard (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1975-8), 1:690. See also Karl L. Schmidt, "πάροικος," in The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964-76), 5:842, who asserts that πάροικος is not temporary like παρεπίδημος but refers to one who has his habitation with the people of the land.

[116]Moses Chin, "A Heavenly Home for the Homeless: Aliens and Strangers in 1 Peter," Tyndale Bulletin 42 (May 1991): 110.

[117]Chin, 110. He is supported in this by Michaels, 116 who points out the traditional Petrine use of words with similar sound or meaning.

overall, the terms do have two separate meanings.

In the LXX the only occurrences of παρεπίδημος are in conjunction with πάροικος (Genesis 23:4 and Psalm 38:12(39:12--Eng.; 39:13--Heb.). Initially, the terms may appear to be parallel, but closer examination indicates that they were probably intended to explain two aspects of an experience. In Gen. 23:4 Abraham proclaims to the Hittites:

> גֵּר־וְתוֹשָׁב אָנֹכִי עִמָּכֶם תְּנוּ לִי אֲחֻזַּת־קֶבֶר עִמָּכֶם וְאֶקְבְּרָה מֵתִי מִלְּפָנָי׃ (Heb.)[118]

> (LXX) **Πάροικος** καὶ **παρεπίδημος** ἐγώ εἰμι μεθ' ὑμῶν· δότε οὖν μοι κτῆσιν τάφου μεθ' ὑμῶν, καὶ θάψω τὸν νεκρόν μου ἀπ' ἐμοῦ.[119]

> (Eng.) I am an **alien** and a **stranger** among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead. [emphases mine][120]

In Psalm 39:13 (38:12--LXX; 39:12--Eng.) the psalmist declares:

> שִׁמְעָה־תְפִלָּתִי יְהוָה וְשַׁוְעָתִי הַאֲזִינָה אֶל־דִּמְעָתִי אַל־תֶּחֱרַשׁ כִּי גֵר אָנֹכִי עִמָּךְ תּוֹשָׁב כְּכָל־אֲבוֹתָי׃ (Heb.)

> (LXX) εἰσάκουσον τῆς προσευχῆς μου, κύριε, καὶ τῆς δεήσεώς μου ἐνώτισαι· τῶν δακρύων μου μὴ παρασιωπήσῃς, ὅτι **πάροικος** ἐγώ εἰμι παρὰ σοὶ καὶ **παρεπίδημος** καθὼς πάντες οἱ πατέρες μου.

> (Eng.) Hear my prayer, O LORD, listen to my cry for help; be not deaf to my weeping. For I dwell with you as

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[118]All Hebrew Texts are from the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.

[119]All Septuagint references are taken from The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English. Compiled and translated by Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton. London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1851; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, n.d.

[120]All English Scripture references are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.

an **alien**, a **stranger**, as all my fathers were. [emphases mine]

Recognizing that a distinction exists between these terms in other instances enables one to see a difference in these verses. In these verses, the use of both παρεπίδημος and πάροικος expresses the temporal status of a person whose home is elsewhere (i.e., with God) yet who finds himself/herself in a fairly permanent residence in a foreign culture.

When determining the meaning of these two terms in 1 Peter, perhaps the assertion by Troy Martin that their combined use in 2:11 is a hendiadys which expresses the concept "non-citizen" solves the dilemma.[121] Certainly it is a beginning, since they are clearly intended to collectively describe the audience, combining both the sense of temporary residence and of being a permanent stranger upon the earth.

c. πάροικος - 2.11

πάροικος is a vital term in the social worlds of both Hellenistic Judaism and the Greco-Roman world. From these two contexts come particular social meanings which influence its

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[121]Troy W. Martin, Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992), 192. Here, hendiadys is understood to mean when two terms (*not* necessarily synonymous) are combined to create a single meaning. The author of 1 Peter can be understood to have combined these two different meanings to produce a merged meaning that takes into account both aspects of alienation.

use in 1 Peter.

πάροικος has been noted to a be diaspora term.[122] Though this distinction is true, it does not indicate the depth of interpretation this term has in its Jewish background. πάροικος in the LXX designated the position of a resident alien and spoke not only of Israel living in foreign lands (Deut. 23:7; Judg. 17:9; Ruth 1:1; Isa. 52:4) but also of non-Israelites living in Israel (Ex. 20:10; Lev. 22:10; II Sam. 4:3).[123] In the Hebrew Bible, πάροικος generally corresponds to either גֵּר[124] or to תּוֹשָׁב. גֵּר, translated as sojourner or alien, refers to a man who leaves his village or tribe and seeks shelter or sojourn elsewhere.[125] תּוֹשָׁב, usually translated alien, though sometimes identical with גֵּר, is often distinguished from it. When distinguished, the תּוֹשָׁב of the Old Testament was understood as being less assimilated into the culture and, therefore, as having less privileges than the

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[122]Troy Martin, 190.

[123]Schmidt, "πάροικος," 5:843-848.

[124]גֵּר is only translated by πάροικος six times and sixty-three times as προσήλυτος. The times it is translated πάροικος the context indicates that it could not possibly mean proselyte. See the thorough examination of this distinction in the article by W. C. Allen, "On the Meaning of προσήλυτος in the Septuagint," The Expositor 4, no. 10 (1894): 264-75.

[125]William L. Holladay, ed., A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 64.

גֵּר.[126] גֵּר is also translated by προσήλυτος, but תּוֹשָׁב is never rendered προσήλυτος.[127] In the nation of Israel, because of the lower status of תּוֹשָׁב which it sometimes translates, πάροικος, though understood as having legal and social rights, is to be clearly distinguished as a non-Israelite.[128] A πάροικος might become well-to-do[129] but still retained a lower status than the Israelite.[130] The use of πάροικος in the land of Israel carried a distinct social connotation.

The Israelites were also πάροικοι, especially during their time in Egypt. Once in the "promised land" the Israelites no longer referred to themselves as πάροικοι--this was a term of the past. With the onset of the exile, Israel came to understand its status as always being πάροικοι in the world.

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[126]Ibid., 388.

[127]προσήλυτος is not meant to be identical with πάροικος but has the rights of an Israelite unlike the πάροικος. Refer to the discussion above in n., 124 as well as the later section on conversion to the Hellenistic Jewish community which describes the status of the προσήλυτος, pp., 81-83.

[128]Schmidt, "πάροικος," 5:844. Christiana van Houten, The Alien in Israelite Law, Publication of the Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, supplement series no. 107 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 182, makes the same assertion regarding the meaning of πάροικος (however she mistakenly contends that תּוֹשָׁב is always translated by πάροικος but it is translated by παρεπίδημος twice, Gen 23:4 and Psalm 39:13 (38:12--LXX)--refer to the above discussion, pp., 41-44, for the distinction between these two terms).

[129]Schmidt, "πάροικος," 5:845.

[130]For a thorough analysis of the varied status of the alien (גֵּר) in the different stages of Israel's history, see the work by van Houten.

Overall, this understanding was quite positive, stemming from the idea that God was not tied to a specific area (i.e. Canaan) and so neither were His people.[131] The term was later applied to Israelites living in the diaspora. The diaspora not only heightened Israel's consciousness of alien status but, in many ways, made it more negative. A πάροικος on the earth came more to suggest a greater distance from the heavenly home.[132] As more and more of Israel came to live in the diaspora their sense of alienation increased.[133] In this setting, πάροικος acquired a metaphorical sense and did not necessarily refer to one's social status.

The meaning of πάροικος expands beyond the context of the diaspora. It was also utilized in the Hellenistic world to refer to the distinct social status of a number of people in the empire. It is upon this perspective that John Elliott draws when seeking to define πάροικος in 1 Peter. Approaching 1 Peter from the sociological-exegetical perspective, Elliott focuses on the terms πάροικος and οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ.[134] The readers, who are referred to as πάροικοι ('resident aliens') in 2:11, are considered by Elliott to be in conflict with society at

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[131]Schmidt, "πάροικος," 5:846-7.

[132]Ibid., 848.

[133]Ibid.

[134]Elliott, Home, 23.

large.[135] He considers the use of παρεπίδημος ('visiting stranger') in the same verse to reemphasize the salutation's initial designation of the readers (1:1 Πέτρος ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκλεκτοῖς **παρεπίδημοις** διασπορᾶς Πόντου, Γαλατίας, Καππαδοκίας, Ἀσίας, καὶ Βιθυνίας [emphasis mine]) while πάροικος describes the social condition of the readers.[136]

Elliott proceeds to contend that πάροικος has reference to an actual social group which existed in the Roman Empire at the time. In a study conducted by Hans Schaefer it is contended that πάροικοι were considered to be a politically recognized group of citizens "which was distinguished legally and socially from the superior full citizens, on the one hand, and the inferior transient strangers, on the other."[137] Slaves were one group for whom the state secured such status in order to obligate them and thereby secure their loyalty. Such a social standing, though with its benefits, had serious drawbacks in the social world of their day according to Elliott. This group found themselves facing disdain and rejection by those above (the full citizens) and competition

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[135]Ibid., 74.

[136]The feminine, noun form of πάροικος is also used in 1:17 as a designation for the readers' social position: Καὶ εἰ πατέρα ἐπικαλεῖσθε τὸν ἀπροσωπολήμπτως κρίνοντα κατὰ τὸ ἑκάστου ἔργον, ἐν φόβῳ τὸν τῆς **παροικίας** ὑμῶν χρόνον ἀναστράφητε [emphasis mine].

[137]Paulys Real-Encyclopedia der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft, 1949 ed., s.v. "paroikoi," by Hans Schaefer, as cited in Elliott, Home, 25.

and envy from those below (the transient strangers).[138] Elliott postulates that such a group would have been attracted to Christianity on a social level[139] because the concept of the οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ held appeal for them as a place to belong.[140] He argues that it is to the πάροικοι turned Christian that 1 Peter was addressed.[141] Instead of finding their status raised by participation in the οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ, these πάροικοι discovered that Christianity left them in an even worse situation socially. When Christianity began to be distinguished from its parent religion, Judaism, Christians came under further rejection and criticism from both Jewish and pagan elements of society, which considered them to be part of a fanatical new religious cult.[142] So, these πάροικοι who had become Christian found themselves to be further estranged without any sense of belonging.[143]

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[138]Elliott, Home, 26.

[139]This is not to say that they might not have been attracted for other reasons.

[140]Elliott, Home, 122.

[141]As will be seen later, it is the position in this paper that πάροικος is being used metaphorically in 1 Peter to refer to Christians estranged by society. Though there probably were πάροικοι who had joined the community, the use of the term does not refer to a specific group which converted and is now part of the Christian community. See the following discussion on pp., 49-51.

[142]Elliott, Home, 73. An anthropological understanding of such an experience will be examined in the next section (pp., 85ff).

[143]Elliott, Home, 49.

As insightful as Elliott's research is in perceiving how the author of 1 Peter described his intended audience, the point of departure with him is when he declares that these terms "have not been used to compose a 'theology of Christian exile or pilgrimage on earth', for the consistent contrast in this letter of abundant contrasts is sociological, not cosmological."[144] The problems that faced the Christian community receiving this epistle did have a social impact and scope similar to that experienced by πάροικοι in the greater society.[145] But, the reality of this social impact does not necessitate that the use of πάροικος in 1 Peter indicates they were literal πάροικοι who had converted to Christianity in an attempt to find a "home."[146] Instead, it can be asserted that the author of the letter picked up on the social

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[144]Ibid.

[145]However, this social sense does not extend to the extreme of Elliott, Home, who would seek to draw too sharp a distinction between the οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ and the non-Christian community, so that the Christian community was like a conversionist sect which refused to have any connection to the society around them. Refer to a critique of Elliott by David L. Balch, "Hellenization/Acculturation in 1 Peter," in Perspectives on First Peter, ed. Charles H. Talbert (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 79-101. As recognized by Valdir R. Steuernagel, "An Exiled Community as a Missionary Community: A Study based on 1 Peter 2:9, 10," Evangelical Review of Theology 10, no. 1 (1986): 8-18, although the author of 1 Peter recognized the distinctions of the Christian community in contrast to the greater society, he also presented the challenge to witness to the outsiders.

[146]There is no indication that the author of 1 Peter considered the Christian community to be composed of actual πάροικοι from the social world of the Roman Empire.

rejection experienced by a group referred to as πάροικοι and utilized this perspective to identify the type of experiences that the Christian community in Asia Minor was undergoing. In other words, the use of πάροικοι is intended metaphorically and Elliott ignores this possibility completely.[147]

The use of πάροικος as a metaphor does not mean that the author of 1 Peter did not connect the social experience of the Christians twith his understanding of the spiritual/cosmological differences between the Christian community and their non-Christian peers. The format of the epistle makes it clear that as Christians the readers had been transformed and were heading towards a different destiny than the rest of their society. As has been pointed out in critiques of Elliott, there is abundant evidence in Greek literature that πάροικος had been used in a spiritual sense which is based on but goes beyond its social meaning.[148] It is the concept of πάροικος as an alienated and persecuted people within society (first in a spiritual sense and then in a social sense) that stands behind its use in 1 Peter.

D. οἶκος

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[147]This is the main critique of Elliott by Troy Martin, Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1992), 142.

[148]Chin, 111. Chin notes that Elliott, Home, 42, 46, himself admits that πάροικος can refer to religious as well as social circumstances.

οἶκος is a prominent term in the development of the societies within both Judaism and the Greco-Roman world. As such, its background requires careful study in order to assess the implications of its use (along with related terminology) in 1 Peter.

In the LXX, οἶκος is mostly used in place of the Hebrew בַּיִת, though it is also the rendering of other terms (אֹהֶל--tent, הֵיכָל--temple, or לִשְׁכָּה--hall).[149] בַּיִת was more than a building (i.e. house) or even the dwelling for people (i.e. home); it was a "social organism that was 'built up' through procreation and adoptions, 'a household'.[150] For Gottwald, בַּיִת can be considered one of the primary subdivisions of the social-structure of ancient Israel (i.e. expanding to unify several previously distinct tribes) although it is frequently used as a tertiary subdivision (i.e. as "father's house").[151] The בַּיִת was a kinship group optimally composed of all the generations alive in a given lineage and expanded to incorporate outsiders (i.e. גֵּרִים) through adoption or

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[149]Otto Michel, "οἶκος," in The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964-76), 5:119-120. See Holladay, 5-6, 79, 179, respectively for the definitions.

[150]Norman K. Gottwald, The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E. (London: S.C.M. Press, 1979), 248.

[151]Ibid., 246-9, 285ff.

assimilation.[152] The בַּיִת stood as the basic unit at the centre of Israel's life socially, economically, and religiously.[153] Based on its connection to בַּיִת, οἶκος was clearly understood to be a foundational and supportive unit in society.[154] οἶκος further served as an expression of community identity and social, political, and religious solidarity.[155] Yahweh entered into special relationship with the "house of Jacob" (Ex. 19:3-8) and the "house of Israel" (Jer. 38:31-34).[156] To belong to the house of Israel was to be included among God's covenantal people.

In the Greco-Roman world, οἶκος had a natural affinity with πόλις because "of the actual social development from household to tribe, confederation, πόλις and state."[157] οἶκος was a way to maintain unity within a group since ethnically, politically, and religiously it allowed for the distinction

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[152]Ibid., 285.

[153]See the work by Christopher J. H. Wright, God's People in God's Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 1-114.

[154]This is not to ignore the plethora of possible meanings for οἶκος such as dwelling, hall, palace, temple, tomb, tribe, nation, household, etc. but, rather, to highlight the social connotations of οἶκος especially in light of the context I am examining in 1 Peter.

[155]Elliott, Home, 182.

[156]Ibid., 183.

[157]Ibid., 174.

between the native (οἰκειος) and the stranger (μέτοικος, πάροικος).[158] In order to gain allegiance from the citizens, the concept of οἶκος was extended to embrace Roman citizens as a family by the references to leaders and ultimately the emperor as fathers of the people.[159] All of this was possible because of the "universal longing for security, order and for a place to call home."[160] As with the secular use, the religious use emphasized the strong communal connections in being a member of a household.

The connection of οἶκος with θεοῦ is a fixed expression for the sanctuary both in the LXX and in the New Testament, with the exception of 1 Timothy 3:15 and 1 Peter 4:17 where it refers to the Christian community.[161] In the New Testament societies, the οἶκος was the primary social unit or group. Acknowledging this, the missionary practice reflected in Acts and the Pauline Epistles was to convert entire households and

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[158]Ibid., 174.

[159]Ibid., 176ff.

[160]Ibid., 179.

[161]Michel, 5:121. Related to these are the οἶκος αὐτοῦ (χριστὸς) of Heb. 3:6, οἶκος πνευματικός of 1 Pet. 2:5, and ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ of I Cor. 3:17. There is speculation that the "house of the congregation" depicted in Enoch 53:15 and other similar concepts in the Jewish apocalyptic literature had contributed to the idea of the Christian community as the οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ.

then radiate the missionary work out of those households.[162] Members of the οἶκος included the immediate family, as well as slaves, freedmen, servants, labourers, and sometimes even business associates and tenants. The loyalty of the members of the οἶκος to its interests could even rival loyalty to the republic.[163] The intimacy of the household offered security and a sense of belonging, and the household bond was both material and social.[164]

Traditionally the meaning of οἶκος, in relation to Christian imagery of the community, was thought to be not "family" but "dwelling" and thus refering to the church as God's dwelling.[165] Elliott looks beyond the theological ideas articulated by these terms to the social structures, needs, and functions that these terms imply.[166] He contends that οἶκος is not a temple but needs to be translated as "house" or "household" based on literary, tradition-

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[162]Abraham J. Malherbe, Social Aspects of Early Christianity (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 68. See Acts 5:42; 10:24, 48; 16:15, 31ff; 18:1-8; I Cor. 1:14-16.

[163]Malherbe, Social Aspects, 69.

[164]E. A. Judge, The Social Pattern of the Christian Groups in the First Century: Some Prolegomena to the Study of the New Testament on Social Obligation (London: Tyndale Press, 1960), 31.

[165]Thereby the church would be seen as a spiritualized replacement of the temple. Refer to Michel, 5:125-8.

[166]Elliott, Home, 165.

historical, and redactional analysis.[167] Although used metaphorically concerning the church, οἶκος undoubtedly drew heavily on its meaning in the social world and the implications this meaning had for the church community.[168]

I have noted Elliott's connection of πάροικος with οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ in 1 Peter but need to examine ὁ οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ and its related terminology (i.e. ἀδελφός, τέκνον) in 1 Peter briefly. The author refers to the Christian community as the οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ in 4:17 and as an οἶκος πνευματικός in 2:5, which is closely related to οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ.[169] The language of kinship is scattered throughout the letter.[170] The community is referred to as a brother- (sister-) hood (ἀδελφότης, 2:17; 5:9). Further, there is familial language in reference to other members. They are encouraged to be brother (sister) lovers (πιλαδέλφοι, 3:8). They are called children (τέκνα, 1:14; 3:6). Silvanus is considered a brother (ἀδελφός, 5:12) (5:9, 12-14). And, very importantly, God himself is designated as their father (πατὴρ, 1:2,3,17). All of this household language drew its metaphorical strength from the social implications of οἶκος

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[167]For the detailed study see Elliott, Elect, 157ff.

[168]Essentially the "church" was made up of groups that met in the homes of some of its members. See Malherbe, Social Aspects, 68, for a discussion of this. See also Rom. 16:3ff; 1 Cor. 16:19; Philem. 2.

[169]Bauer, 560.

[170]See Elliott, Home, 202.

in the Jewish and Roman societies.

So, in 1 Peter, the communities, though not literal households, are treated in many respects like a familial unit, inclusion in which would differentiate people from those not a part of this household. Thus, the references to οἶκος and related terminology bound together the Christian communities and provided a sense of belonging.[171] This needs to be recognized not only on a social plane but also on a spiritual or cosmological level,[172] yet, as with πάροικος, the social understanding of the terminology greatly impacts how its use was understood.

E. διασπορά

Finally we come to examine the term διασπορά (dispersion). Outside of Jewish and Christian writings (including the LXX and the Greek N.T.) διασπορά is found only in Plutarch who states, concerning the decay of the soul--διάλυσιν τῆς ψυχῆς, that Epicurus has made it εἰς κενὸν καὶ ἀτόμους διασποράν ποιῶν (a dispersion into emptiness and atoms).[173] In the LXX, διασπορά is used as

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[171]Although I am indebted to John Elliott for his research and insights into the social impact of οἶκος, I do not agree with his ultimate conclusions that these terms refer to only a social phenomenon.

[172]The reference in 2:5 to a "spiritual house" (οἶκος πνευματικὸς) demonstrates that the author was not speaking on a purely sociological plane.

[173]Plutarch Non Posse Suaviter Vivi Secundum Epicurum II.1105a.

a technical term for the scattering of the Jews among the Gentiles.[174] The question of a Hebrew equivalent for διασπορά is fairly complicated.[175] At times the underlying Hebrew terms were more stark descriptions of the unsettlement and pain of the exile and of God's judgement, yet were replaced with the technical διασπορά.[176] The most plausible reason for the substitution is that history healed the wounds, so that the harsh reality of the exile was forgotten.[177]

For Hellenistic Judaism, being part of the διασπορά could be claimed with a degree of pride, since not only could the Jews no longer be wiped out in one stroke but Judaism could also be expanded through proselytisation.[178] The destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. shook the pride in the διασπορά and revived some of the old pain, because Jerusalem

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[174]Karl L. Schmidt, "διασπορά," in The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964-76), 2:98.

[175]Refer to the discussion by Schmidt, "διασπορά," 2:99.

[176]See, for example, Deuteronomy 28:25:
וְהָיִיתָ לְזַעֲוָה לְכֹל מַמְלְכוֹת הָאָרֶץ: ...(BHS)
(LXX) ... καὶ ἔσῃ ἐν **διασπορᾷ** ἐν πάσαις ταῖς βασιλείαις τῆς γῆς.
(Eng.) ... and you will become **a thing of horror** to all the kingdoms on earth. [emphases mine]

[177]Schmidt, "διασπορά," 2:100. Although one could also contend that the substitution occurred in order to cover up the pain.

[178]Schmidt, "διασπορά," 2:100.

could no longer be the focal point of Judaism.[179] The Jewish διασπορά, after 70 C.E., became a virtually homeless people.

Although, essentially, διασπορά designated the Jews living among the Gentiles,[180] it was picked up by the Christian church, as were other Jewish concepts, to refer to Christian communities.[181] The use in 1 Peter is figuratively or metaphorically referring to the Christian communities whose home is not on earth but in heaven.[182]

For Troy Martin, the use of διασπορά indicates that it is the controlling metaphor of 1 Peter, to which all other metaphors are subject.[183] Martin goes on to describe three other "metaphor clusters" which fall under the main διασπορά metaphor: the elect household of God, aliens in the world, and

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[179]Schmidt, "διασπορά," 2:101. Josephus, however, wrote as though there had never been a destruction of Jerusalem.

[180]G. A. Van Alstine, "Dispersion," in International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 4 vols., rev. ed., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979-1988), 1:962.

[181]Schmidt, "διασπορά," 2:102-4. See James 1:1 as well as the use in 1 Pet. 1:1. In 1 Pet 2:5, 9 we see other instances in this epistle of the transfer of terms, previously related to Israel, onto the Christian church. John 7:35 uses διασπορά in the technical sense referring to Israel.

[182]See such verses as Gal. 4:26 and Phil. 3:20. The argument that διασπορά is meant to refer to a group of Christian Jews is rejected in this thesis because of the composition of the communities addressed (see pp., 26-28) as well as other evidence--see Goppelt, Peter, 64-6; Davids, 46-7.

[183]Troy Martin, 144ff.

sufferers in the dispersion. Unfortunately, Martin argues that each subordinate metaphor controls certain sections of the book in which it is located. This approach does not realistically face the scattering of the terms throughout the book.

Although there is a certain degree of validity to Martin's designations, they do not hold entirely true. For example, the elect household of God metaphor, which supposedly runs from 1:14-2:10, would include numerous terms within the book, among which are ἐκλεκτός (connected to καλέω), λαὸς θεοῦ, as well as several family terms. Yet some of these terms occur outside of the designated area,[184] and even the controlling metaphor for this section (οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ) does not occur until 4:17.[185] Further, the "aliens in the world" metaphor, which supposedly runs from 2:11-3:12, includes πάροικος and παρεπίδημος. Yet, παρεπίδημος appears in 1:1 and a form of πάροικος in 1:17. Clear parameters, therefore, cannot be drawn for specific metaphors being designated for each section.

Moreover, the argument that διασπορά dominates all other metaphors is not necessarily valid either. Despite his arguments, Troy Martin has not convincingly demonstrated that the terms under the elect household of God cluster, though

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[184]ἐκλεκτός occurs in 1:1, καλέω in 5:10, ἀδελφός in 2:17, 5:9 and 5:12, φιλάδελφος in 3:8, υἱός in 5:13, and πατήρ in 1:2,3.

[185]Troy Martin, 164 n. 93, does acknowledge this fact.

perhaps present in διασπορά material, are inexorably linked to the διασπορά. διασπορά cannot be considered **the** controlling metaphor of 1 Peter, just as was concluded regarding ἐκλεκτός and πάροικος. The value of Martin's work is that he has clearly connected all the terms which designate that the Christian community is different from the overall community in which they exist.

Rather than trying to designate one metaphor as dominant over the others, I contend that there is an interplay of metaphors, all of which have the same essential concept: the Christian community exists as an alienated and persecuted people within its society. Further, διασπορά contributes to the community's sense of harmony and their understanding of themselves as a people whose home is elsewhere.

III. Ancient Mediterranean Societies

A. The Place of Christians in Society

1. The Social Level of the Christian Community

Paul's statement in I Cor. 1:26 is invariably quoted when the question of the social level of the early Christian church is raised. Paul wrote, "For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth" (Revised Standard Version--RSV). For many years the trend was to argue on the basis of this verse, as well as other evidence from the gospels and the book of Acts, that the early church was comprised of people from the lower social classes--peasants, slaves, artisans.[186] As a result, an almost romantic image of the early Christians developed as "nothing but a collection of country yokels and impoverished slaves"[187] who formed a social revolution which eventually overtook the entire Roman Empire.

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[186]The person mostly credited with this view is Adolf Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World, rev. ed., trans. R. M. Strachan (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 144, 247, 267.

[187]John G. Gager, Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 95.

More recently, the trend has been to argue, both from the Corinthian passage and from the book of Acts that the social constitution of early Christianity might be best termed as the "middle-class."[188] Some of these studies have also focused on the existence of the well-to-do who are implied in I Cor. 1:26-8. The argument is that conversions of the richer portion of the population were not uncommon, and this group needs to be considered when examining the social composition

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[188]Although it is recognized that no middle class existed as such, this is the best way to describe those who were of some means financially, see the study by Robert H. Smith, "Were the Early Christians Middle-Class?," in The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics, rev. ed. of A Radical Religion Reader, ed. Norman K. Gottwald (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), and the discussion of the awkwardness of such a label despite its "statistical reality" by Ramsey MacMullen, Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. to A.D. 284 (London: Yale University Press, 1974), 89-92. See also Henry J. Cadbury, The Book of Acts in History (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1955), 43 and Robert McQueen Grant, Early Christianity and Society (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977). Although Grant moves far beyond the New Testament period, his concepts find their roots in the world of the early Christian church as depicted in the New Testament documents. Other studies in this area focus on the language and style of the New Testament documents and find them to be of a more "professional" nature, which may have implications for determining the social level of the early Christian community; though this remains to be established. See E. A. Judge, "The Early Christians as a Scholastic Community," Journal of Religious History 1 (1960): 4-15, 125-57.; Arthur D. Nock, "The Vocabulary of the New Testament," in Essays on Religion and the Ancient World, ed. Zeph Stewart (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972) 1: 341-7; Nigel Turner, "Second Thoughts: Papyrus Finds," Expository Times 76 (Nov. 1964): 44-48; Albert Wifstrand "Stylistic Problems in the Epistles of James and Peter," Studia Theologica 1 (1948): 170-182; and the summary in Malherbe, Social Aspects, 35-59.

of the Christian communities.[189]

What I Cor. 1:26 manifests is that the early church, while mostly those of lower social status, also included a minority of those who were of high social status.[190] Combining the messages of the various studies would indicate that the concept of "lower" social status does not necessarily signify a predominance of slaves and of the poorest people, but may well indicate those of more well-to-do circles in comparison with the very poor,[191] yet who were part of the underprivileged masses of the Roman Empire. The existence of such a diverse cross-section of people from the Roman world is much different from other ancient cults and associations--the

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[189]The main argument is that this well-to-do minority dominated the Christian community because of their higher social status. See Malherbe, Social Aspects, 30; Judge, Social Pattern 60.

[190]Judge, Social Pattern, 59. Although Wilhelm H. Wuellner, "The Sociological Implications of I Corinthians 1:26-28 Reconsidered," in Texte und Untersuchungen, vol. 112, Studia Evangelica (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1973), 672, contends that I Cor. 1:26ff cannot be used to support the proletarian beginnings of Christianity and he even concludes that "the Corinthian Christians came by and large from fairly well-to do bourgeois circles with a fair percentage also from the upper class people as well as the very poor."

[191]1 Corinthians 11 reflects conflicts in the church around the Lord's table which may well have been along economic lines. See Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 537; Jerome Murphey-O'Conner, "The Corinth that Saint Paul Saw," Biblical Archaeologist (September 1984): 157; William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, I Corinthians (Garden City NY: Doubleday & Co., 1976), 270; Gerd Theissen, The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity, ed. and trans. John H. Schutz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 151.

memberships of which were more homogeneous.[192] This diversity raises the question of why such socially dissimilar groups would be represented in the Christian community--especially why those of such high social status as implied in I Cor. 1:26 would be associated with those in the "middle" and lower classes.

Perhaps it was the attractiveness of the inclusive concept of the covenant community which produced such a diverse membership,[193] but probably the insights of Robin Scroggs are more appropriate at this juncture. In a critique of Robert Grant, among others seeking to claim that Christianity was composed of more "middle-class" people,[194] Scroggs contends that Grant puts "almost exclusive weight upon economic factors to the exclusion of other socio-cultural dynamics in determining social level."[195] This critique could also be levelled at other studies which attempt to determine social level by arguing from the position of economic standing.

The answer to such a dilemma lies in the distinction between social class and social status. Social status was

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[192]Malherbe, Social Aspects, 87; Judge, Social Pattern, 60.

[193]See Howard Clark Kee, Christian Origins in Sociological Perspective: Methods and Resources (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 98.

[194]See n., 188 above.

[195]Scroggs, "Sociological Interpretation," 343.

economically driven while social class was rooted in the legal structure of Roman society. A history of early Christian literature indicates that primitive Christianity was a subculture somewhat removed from the "general" culture--which was essentially a culture of the upper class.[196] Rome defined its class structure in unmistakeable legal terms: senators and knights constituted the upper echelons (*honestiores*), below whom fell the large mass of free citizens (*humiliores*), and below them came slaves and freedmen.[197] *Humiliores* might have gained tremendous wealth and thereby be of reasonably high social statuses[198] but yet find themselves denied admittance into the higher social class of the *honestiores*.[199] Like many who were of a lower social class, the *humiliores* might have been attracted to

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[196]Gerd Theissen, "The Sociological Interpretation of Religious Traditions: Its Methodological Problems as Exemplified in Early Christianity," in The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics, rev. ed. of A Radical Religion Reader, ed. by Norman K. Gottwald (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 47.

[197]Gager, "Social Description," 439. For a much fuller delineation of class structure and privilege, see Peter Garnsey, Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 221-276.

[198]Many at least equalled and some exceeded the wealth and education of the honestiores. See Gager, "Social Description," 439.

[199]Gager, "Social Description," 439. The basic criteria for determining social class were birth and legal status rather than wealth or education, although the emperor had the power to allow individuals to pass from one class to another--see Gager, Kingdom, 97.

Christianity due to their frustrated social aspirations and due to its apparent revolutionary implications.[200]

Economic alienation, then, was not the only type of alienation. One could argue that attraction to the Christian community stemmed from a humiliation and dehumanization of people by the established Roman Society.[201] This argument further suggests the probability that the Christian community consisted of a large cross-section of society.

2. The Issue of the Marginalized

Recognizing the potential dissatisfaction of some of the richer people of the empire with their social standing enables one to reconcile the view that Christianity attracted the dispriviledged with evidence that the Christian community was

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[200]Gager, "Social Description," 440. MacMullen, 109-119, cautions that because of the very steep social structure, "there could be no revolution of rising expectations when in fact few expected to rise" (119). The issue with most of those of lower class would be the frustration of their class, not necessarily an expectation of "upward mobility."

[201]Refer to the argument by Robin Scroggs, "The Earliest Christian Communities as Sectarian Movement," in Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, ed. Jacob Neusner, vol 12, Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults, part 2, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 3-23. Scroggs is heavily dependent on the sociological understanding of Christianity as sectarian and draws from Werner Stark, The Sociology of Religion: A Study of Christendom, vol. 2, Sectarian Religion (New York: Fordham University Press, 1967), 6-29.

composed of people from "every [social] rank."[202] This recognition necessitates an examination of the issue of the "dispriviledged" or in the words of Hans Mol the "marginalized" in the Roman world.

Marginality, a term borrowed from the sociological literature on race relations, refers essentially to those who have been alienated through the process of social differentiation; it concerns those who stand on the boundary of larger groups or societies.[203] The sense of marginality, which was more a product of the social setting than merely a subjective experience, was widespread in the Roman empire at the time of the early Christian church.[204]

It was during this period that Christianity seemed to provide for the disinherited the promise of better things, whether through their anticipation of social revolution or

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[202]This partial quote (of "omnis ordinis") is taken from the younger Pliny's comments to Trajan (Pliny Epistles 96.C.9) but is also based on the preceding discussion concerning the existence of the well-to-do in the Christian community.

[203]Hans Mol, Identity and the Sacred: A Sketch for a New Social-Scientific Theory of Religion (Agincourt, Canada: The Book Society of Canada, 1976), 31. Mol would assert that those who are marginal do not suffer outright rejection. While that may be true for the individuals or groups who experienced marginality prior to joining the Christian community, it is not necessarily so for Christianity in general. Mol's comments, while not specifically directed at the ancient world, do have some limited correlations with the ancient Mediterranean society.

[204]Kee, Origins, 75.

through the promise of inheritance in another world.[205] Those who were part of the non-privileged classes tended to look elsewhere for rewards when they found that they were cut off from "the immediate compensations of the socioeconomic order,"[206] whether that be wealth or the privilege of social class. Evidence that Christianity did attract to itself the marginalized is apparent by recognizing that beyond the first century into the second century and even the third, Christianity was still largely composed of the disinherited.[207]

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[205]Though I am not concerned with the issue of the eventual downfall of the Roman Empire and Christianity's contribution to it, the issue of whether Christianity created social unrest or whether social unrest was a growing inevitability does affect the argument at this juncture. I contend for the latter view--that Christianity happened to be beginning at a time when social unrest was developing throughout the empire and that its contribution to the unrest was minimal. See Clarence L. Lee, "Social Unrest and Primitive Christianity," in The Catacombs and the Coliseum: The Roman Empire as the Setting of Primitive Christianity, ed. Stephen Benko and John J. O'Rourke (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1971), 121-138, who examines these two opposing perspectives and concludes, regarding the issue of social unrest, that, "From a purely historical point of view, Christianity's relationship to all of this is, at best, incidental."

[206]Gager, Kingdom, 107.

[207]E. R. Dodds, Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Conversion from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 134. In light of the previous discussion we need to understand such social terms as "disinherited" to refer to people from all social statuses who were powerless in the Roman world and who may have been locked out of the primary social classes. See also Judith Willer, The Social Determination of Knowledge (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 83-4, for a brief discussion of the susceptibility of all persons, regardless of social standing, to a sense of powerlessness and thereby an attraction to religion, especially Christianity.

3. Attitudes towards Christians

As an "army of the disinherited" Christianity generally received criticism both from the upper classes, who represented the general culture, and from other groups or communities which regarded the Christian communities as "competitors." The hostility from both these sources (the upper class and other groups) will become obvious in the later anthropological analysis of the society.[208] Here I will briefly establish the existence of hostilities directed towards the Christian community. Although much of the evidence is from later time periods, the assumption here is that such attitudes were indicative of problems which began much earlier in the life of the Christian church (i.e., in the time period of the New Testament writings).

Though they had very little to hold against the Christian community, the ruling class was intent on being antagonistic towards it. Despite numerous charges, the lack of participation by Christians in the divine honours to the gods was the only charge that the ruling class was able to level against Christianity.[209] The Christians were initially linked to the Jews and shared in their unpopularity. As Dodds

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[208]See pp., 89-92.

[209]This charge stems from the letter of the younger Pliny to Trajan (Pliny Epistles 96.C.3-5). Obviously the ruling class somehow felt that Christians were disloyal to the empire. See Dodds, 113.

reports,

> Like the Jews, they appeared to be a 'godless' people who paid no proper respect to images and temples. But whereas the Jews were an ancient nation, and as such legally entitled to follow their ancestral custom in matters of religion, the Christians as an upstart sect could claim no such privilege. They appeared, moreover, to constitute a secret society[210]

Christians also served as scapegoats by being linked to contemporary itinerant denouncers of the status quo (such as the Stoics) who could potentially cause uprisings of the lower classes.[211]

The Christian community further received criticism from and were resented by other groups in the empire, the most important of which was the family unit.[212] Households in which only some of the members converted to Christianity experienced tensions which were in part due to the claim of total allegiance upon the individual to the cause of Christ.[213] There is evidence presented by Harnack that as a result of Christian conversion households were divided and

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[210]Dodds, 111.

[211]Kee, Origins, 70.

[212]Definition of the family unit includes not only immediate kinsmen, but also slaves, freedmen, servants, labourers, and even business associates and tenants connected with the household. See p., 54.

[213]Dodds, 115.

persecution resulted.[214] The general practice of Christian missionaries was to convert entire households,[215] but undoubtedly this was not always the case.[216] Evidence is also prevalent that other groups, such as the Jews, harassed the Christian community.[217]

The feelings evidenced by the upper classes and other societal groups indicate a widespread distrust of Christian groups. New converts were the most susceptible to hostility. The newness of the Christian community as a whole presupposes that it was an extremely vulnerable group.

B. The Experiences of New Converts

1. General Comments

The idea that Christianity attracted those who were "looking for a place to belong" has been briefly discussed under the subject of πάροικος and at length under the subject of the place of Christians in society. Mention will be made of

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[214]Adolf Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries, 3 vols., trans. and ed. James Moffatt, 2d enlarg. and rev. ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908), 1:393-398.

[215]Refer to the discussion on p., 54.

[216]Some evidence comes from New Testament passages indicating the tensions among kin caused by conversion to Christianity. See Matt. 10:21; Mark 13:12; Luke 21:16.

[217]Primary evidence comes from Acts (i.e. 8:1; 13:50; 14:5; 14:19; 17:5ff; 19:28ff), but Paul also speaks of the harassment and persecution he encountered (i.e. II Cor. 11:23ff)

the subject here in a discussion about conversion and its impact upon the new converts. Perspectives on new converts in Epicureanism and Judaism will be examined and then compared with the types of experiences those converting to Christianity might have undergone. Granted, these are three different groups, but in first century Mediterranean society new converts to any group, especially a minority religion, would have undergone similar social experiences. Further, many of the phenomena experienced by primitive Christianity would have had parallels in other "non-Christian" groups because of a shared social system. Such parallels need to be examined to understand the societal pressures Christianity may have encountered.[218]

2. State Religion and the Idea of Conversion

Conversion as a reorientation of one's life was not a concept initially known in the Greek world or in the early Greco-Roman world. In the Greek world, each geographical area had its traditional rites and beliefs which were faithfully

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[218]Theissen, "Sociological Interpretation," 51. Kee, Origins, 81, argues that one cannot simply assume identities between early Christian and pagan conversions. Yet, he is concerned with the philosophic differences between the groups to which one converts and not with the social process of that conversion.

observed.[219] Greeks who lived in alien cultures generally paid homage to the gods of that area;[220] however, new beliefs imported into one's home area that seriously interfered with an area's religious homogeneity were not tolerated.[221] People could worship whoever/whatever they wanted in addition to their civic worship as long as it created no tensions in the community or household;[222] although often people who did add to their civic worship were the subject of ridicule.[223]

The Greco-Roman world took on much the same form as the Greek world but developed more openness to foreign worship, which was assimilated into the worship of the city cultus.[224] Gradually, under Roman rule, the state took on more of the religious responsibility, so that the religion of the people became a religion of the state.[225] People

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[219]Arthur D. Nock, Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 17-18.

[220]Ibid., 19.

[221]Nock, Conversion, 21. Those who did not believe in an area's gods and introduced new daemonia were persecuted and often killed--see also Nock, Conversion, 26ff.

[222]Nock, Conversion, 32.

[223]Ibid., 20.

[224]Ibid., 56.

[225]Frend, 79; Nock, Conversion, 67. It was a characteristic Roman conviction that religion was to serve the state and

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submitted to the state and its beliefs and, in turn, the state ensured the gods' pleasure. The individual simply submitted to the state as one would to the head of the household. From time to time the state would absorb other gods in order to satisfy popular emotion in times of panic.[226] The whole process was unobtrusive, and movements which attracted too much attention or were considered politically subversive were suppressed.[227] Religion needed to be controlled by and serve the ruling aristocracy.[228] Mass movements of people to a new religion, especially one which threatened the status of the gods, were despised.[229] New things were not to be substituted for old; unity and conformity of individuals was to be emphasized.[230]

Many of the cults and movements which arose in the Greco-

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[225](...continued)
guarantee political prosperity--Donald Winslow, "Religion and the Early Roman Empire," in The Catacombs and the Coliseum: The Roman Empire as the Setting of Primitive Christianity, eds. Stephen Benko and John J. O'Rourke (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1971), 239.

[226]Nock, Conversion, 68.

[227]Nock, Conversion, 71, 74; Winslow, 241.

[228]Frend, 81.

[229]Nock, Conversion, 73, 137.

[230]The development of the imperial Ruler-Cult was a further attempt at maintaining conformity by providing a specific focus for the unity of the empire, Winslow, 247. The imperial Ruler-Cult was not merely a religion of the upper class but was intended to promote a degree of social solidarity among all the people, see S. R. F. Price, Rituals and Power, 107-121.

Roman world fit in because they did conform; they were able to consolidate their position in the culture while having surprisingly little effect on the fundamental temper of the people.[231] People feared the loss of security and benefits if this relationship between the individual, the state, and the gods appeared to have been jeopardized.[232] Some philosophical movements, along with Judaism and then Christianity, were seen to threaten this harmony because they called for conversion which involved a degree of denunciation of the past. Judaism was expressly disliked because it called for a radical reorientation of life and a break with the past worship. Christianity also called for a radical reorientation of life, but this was not always the case with philosophical communities.

Conversion was clearly the experience of the individual yet it also carried with it a commitment to a new community, which of course implied a dissatisfaction with the old.[233] Conversions to Christianity by the marginalized and socially devalued were often depicted as conversions to groups where people discovered a sense of belonging as they waited to

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[231]Nock, Conversion, 160. There were also numerous "foreign" cults which experienced persecution in the Roman world; some survived while others disappeared. See Frend, 77-93.

[232]Nock, Conversion, 162.

[233]Kee, Origins, 74.

inherit another world,[234] but this view of the Church as a refuge is quite romanticized.[235] In reality, converts to Christianity would have experienced social turmoil as a result of being uprooted from their old community[236] and associated with a new community. These ordeals were similar in the Epicurean, Jewish, and Christian communities.

3. The Epicurean Community

The common philosophical understanding of conversion was not of an experience which led to a placid life but one which was a disturbing experience requiring radical reorientation and social, intellectual, and moral transformation.[237] Embracing the philosophic life implied abandoning one's comrades, haunts, and customary social relationships.[238]

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[234]Dodds, 135.

[235]Abraham J. Malherbe, Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 36.

[236]I use community quite broadly and am drawing on the later discussion of this society as a strong group society--see pp., 92-94. As such, there was not the idea of a "loner" which we might have in our society (with the possible exception of such categories as widows or orphans, though this is not entirely the case; however, this discussion is peripheral to this argument and is too complex to be included here). Regardless of one's status in the larger society, virtually everyone was connected to a social and familial network. Whatever one's status, conversion generally would result in being uprooted from some group and planted in another.

[237]Malherbe, Paul, 36.

[238]Ibid., 38.

The dominant culture (i.e., the upper class) looked down on the philosophers as outsiders who were of low status and had little choice as to their association.[239] The masses also held a low opinion of the philosophic communities. The Epicurean community was in many ways similar to an early Christian community[240] and, as such, will offer some insight into the Christian community.

Especially pertinent, in contrast to the subcultures offered by other philosophical communities, is that Epicureanism presented an alternative community.[241] The Epicureans offered to the uprooted and alienated in society a safe harbour and a home as an alternative to the dominate culture.[242] Social policy of the community--such as calling

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[239]Bernard Frischer, The Sculpted Word: Epicureanism and Philosophical Recruitment in Ancient Greece (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 55. He quotes a comedy fragment in which it is stated that "The poor must be either philosophers or slaves."

[240]Malherbe, Paul, 40; See also Frischer, 49-52, for a description of the Epicurean community which is remarkably similar in many respects to the early Christian community.

[241]Frischer, 52. Simply, a subculture is organized around values and patterns of behaviour consciously opposed to those of the dominant culture while an alternative community is a "positively constituted and autonomous group coexisting with a larger culture." See Michael Clarke, "On the Concept of Sub-Culture," British Journal of Sociology 25 (1974): 428-41, for a review of the concept of subculture.

[242]Frischer, 40. This is to say that they offered an alternative community while simultaneously coexisting with the dominant culture. Kee's objection (Origins, 81) that the Christian and Epicurean communities were vastly different in

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Epicurus "father" and encouraging intermarriage, stimulated feelings of kinship.[243] Despite the "sense of belonging" understood in connection with the community, converts to Epicureanism did not immediately find life to be a "safe harbour" within their community.

As with philosophic communities generally, Epicurean converts found the transition difficult. In constructing the Epicurean view of conversion, Bernard Frischer accepts the understanding of conversion as

> a radical redefinition of personal identity . . . [that] comes about through dual insight, at once painful and exhilarating, into the inadequacies of the old self, felt to be sick and impoverished, and the path to be taken toward a new self, perceived as more healthy and whole."[244]

Such a redefinition of personal identity was a slow process,

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[242](...continued)
their outlook on life should be noted at this point. The Epicureans presented their community as a "garden," a safe haven from the difficulties of life in contrast to the Christian community with its "conviction of the impending end of the age and its commitment to spread the good news by word and act so that as many as possible would be ready to enter the kingdom of God." However, the common point that will be emphasized is the perception by people that the community of which they were a part was a "place to belong."

[243]Frischer, 64.

[244]Frischer, 71-2. For support of Frischer's view see also William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1978), 196ff; Francis L. Strickland, "The Meaning of Conversion," in Readings in the Psychology of Religion, ed. Orlo Strunk, Jr. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959), 136-7; Robert H. Thouless, An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 187-204. Thouless, 201, would label a conversion which tears an individual from his previous relationships as a *social conversion*.

and new converts were simultaneously faced with assimilating new relationships while "grieving" over lost relationships. Sometimes their new relationships caused them pain so that they became confused, weak, and subject to error or even desertion.[245] Entire households did not always convert to Epicureanism and the resulting strain in relationships divided the households and posed major problems.[246]

In addition to relationship crises, the Epicurean community was bombarded with criticism from other groups and from the masses as a whole--criticism to which they were extremely sensitive.[247] New converts were especially prone to all of these negative influences, feeling without honour,[248] lonely, more out of place than they had felt before, so that they became quite depressed over their

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[245]See Malherbe, Paul, 42, who discusses especially some of the implications of the Epicurean habit of being frank within the community. Malherbe draws on Philodemus, On Frankness (περὶ Παρρέσιας) for evidence.

[246]Malherbe, Paul, 50. This strain has been noted before as the result of connecting to a new community and thereby disconnecting from the old community. I emphasize this strain because the household was the core group in the society--the foundation from which many other groups derived their importance. See the discussion earlier on pp., 52-54.

[247]Plutarch Adversus Colotem 1125c, indicates the societal dislike of the Epicureans.

[248]For a discussion of the importance of honour in this society see pp., 92-94.

situation.[249] The Epicurean emphasis upon kinship and the attempt to form genuine communities were very important in bolstering the faith of the new convert. The Epicureans also emphasized friendship which became a means of supporting not only the new converts but the whole community from the buffeting they received and the sense of alienation they experienced as a result of their new philosophical associations.[250]

The sense of alienation, loneliness, and anxiety which Epicurean converts experienced was undoubtedly parallel in many respects to the sort of struggles Christian converts would have undergone.

4. The Hellenistic Jewish Community

Before turning to the Christian community, however, we need to survey another group of new converts whose ordeals

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[249]Malherbe, Paul, 38, 40, 43. Malherbe draws on information from another philosophical community, that of Epictetus, which he contends would have had experiences similar to those of the Epicurean converts. Epictetus The Encheiridion (The Manual) 24, exhorts his converts not to be depressed over the idea that they may live without honour and be nobodies Οὗτοί σε οἱ διαλογισμοί μὴ θλιβέτωσαν· 'ἄτιμος ἐγὼ βιώσομαι καὶ οὐδεὶς οὐδαμοῦ' [Emphasis mine].

[250]Refer to A. J. Festugière, Epicurus and His Gods, trans. C. W. Chilton (New York: Russell & Russell, 1969), 27-50, where he devotes an entire chapter to the notion of Epicurean friendship. Benjamin Farrington, The Faith of Epicurus (New York: Basic Books, 1967), 26, considers Epicureanism to be a "religion of friendship," and it is perhaps this aspect which caused the community to survive for seven hundred years.

will help to shed light on the experiences of Christian converts. These are the proselytes[251] to Judaism.[252] Judaism had created a special grouping for those who would convert, since they were unique in comparison to a native Israelite and a resident alien (πάροικος).[253] Jewish proselytes are the best illustration of the state of a person who has moved from one community to become associated with another.

The proselytes were, technically, neither "true" Jews[254] nor were they any longer outside of Judaism. Their movement from one community to the other is described by Philo as a journey or a passage;[255] the implication is that it was

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[251]The word underlying this is primarily προσήλυτος (*one who has come over* from paganism to Judaism; a *convert*--see Bauer, 715) but Philo also uses ἐπήλυτος (*come after; followers; imitators; incomers*--see Bauer, 285). His connection of these two terms can be most clearly seen in De Specialibus Legibus I.308-9.

[252]Because this study focuses on Asia Minor, of special concern here are the proselytes who converted into Hellenistic Judaism.

[253]George F. Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), 1:329-30. Refer to the discussion of πάροικος on pp., 46-47, and nn., 124 & 127.

[254]I recognize that legally the proselyte was considered to have full standing in the religious community, and like a Jew by birth was subject to all the Law having entered into the covenant (see Moore, 1:327ff). I am here speaking of the initial social experience of the convert who would find that he or she does not immediately "fit" into the community as would one who had been born a Jew.

[255]Philo De Specialibus Legibus I.51; De Virtutibus 102.

a **process** of releasing one group and being assimilated into another. The entrance into Judaism was a radical experience because it called for a complete renunciation of the worship of other gods.[256] There were many who did not want to go to such extremes. Instead of converting and bringing on social disapproval and even ostracism, these people assimilated some of the Jewish beliefs with their own.[257]

For those who pursued the full status of the proselyte, part of the rite of admission included confession of both the negative attitudes society held towards their new community and the negative experiences they would have because of their participation in this new community.[258] This confession forced them to recognize the unequivocal break with their former lives that would result from their conversion. Philo describes their break in numerous ways:

> "those who have left their homes"[259]
>
> "they have left . . . their country, their kinsfolk and their friends"[260]
>
> "forsaking the ancestral customs in which they were

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[256]Nock, Conversion, 63.

[257]Ibid., 62-3.

[258]Malherbe, Paul, 44.

[259]Philo De Somniis II.273.

[260]Philo De Specialibus Legibus I.52.

bred"[261]

"he has turned his kinsfolk, who in the ordinary course of things would be his sole confederates, into mortal enemies"[262]

"leaving the mythical fables and multiplicity of sovereigns, so highly honoured by the parents and grandparents and ancestors and blood relations"[263]

"abandoning their kinsfolk by blood, their country, their customs"[264]

The breaking of all their old ties, especially their family ties, would have been extremely traumatic for new converts. Once in the Judaic community, the proselyte was considered to be "like a new-born child."[265] Philo compares the state of the proselyte with that of the widow and orphan.[266] The proselyte had no family ties on which to draw;[267] in many ways, she or he was at the mercy of the new community for both emotional and physical support.

The Jewish people were obviously aware of the fragile

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[261]Philo De Specialibus Legibus I.309.

[262]Ibid., IV.178.

[263]Ibid., IV.178.

[264]Philo De Virtutibus 102.

[265]Moore, 1:335. Although this reference concerns their legal status under the law, it highlights what the experience may have been like socially for the convert.

[266]Philo De Somniis II.273; De Specialibus Legibus I.308; IV.176.

[267]Specifically, the proselyte had no responsible patriarch to offer him/her protection and care.

state of the proselyte and sought to pay special attention to him or her. Because the proselytes were portrayed as having taken refuge with God,[268] the Jewish community was encouraged to treat them as "dearest friends and closest kinsmen."[269] The proselytes were not to "be denied another citizenship or other ties of family and friendship, and let them find places of shelter standing ready for refugees to the camp of piety."[270]

Jewish proselytes experienced much the same turmoil (sometimes even more) as those who converted to Epicureanism.

5. The Christian Community

In many respects those who were converts to Christianity would have experienced the same sense of uprootedness, distress, and anxiety that philosophical converts or Jewish proselytes endured. This can be argued solely from the viewpoint that sharing the same social world would have resulted in similar social experiences when moving from one group to another. Further, because Christianity, as a fledgling movement, was initially identified with Judaism, converts to Christianity would have experienced turmoil

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[268]Philo De Somniis 273.

[269]Philo De Virtutibus 179. See also De Virtutibus 103-4.

[270]Philo De Specialibus Legibus I.52.

virtually identical to that of proselytes to Judaism.

Gradually, as Christianity came to be viewed as separate from Judaism, converts to Christianity would have endured additional distress as they joined a community which had not established a place in society.[271] Conversion to Christianity would have been difficult during the early years. Converts would not be joining a stable group consisting mostly of those who had been raised in the community from an early age. They would be joining a group that consisted of many who were undergoing or had recently undergone a similar transition. The majority of the members of a Christian community were newcomers, so they were all susceptible to distress, anxiety, and a sense of uprootedness.

The New Testament records some evidence of the anxiety faced by new converts. Abraham Malherbe, in a study of the Thessalonian Church, contends that the use of θλῖψις[272] (affliction) in the first letter to the Thessalonians (1:6,

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[271]As a new group, the Christian community would have had to begin establishing boundaries between them and the State, society, and other groups (see group boundaries discussion on pp., 90-91, 94-96), so that the time during which these social parameters were forming would have been one of social uncertainty within the group itself. See Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, trans. Olive Wyon (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), I:79ff

[272]Note the affinity of θλῖψις (noun form) with θλίβω (verb form) which was used to describe the condition of the disciples of Epictetus. Refer to n., 249.

3:3-4,7) is not immediately clear.[273] After careful study, Malherbe concludes that θλῖψις can refer to "the distress and anguish of heart experienced by persons who broke with their past as they received the gospel."[274] Moreover, Paul's frequent use of kinship language in 1 Thessalonians parallels the attempts in philosophic communities and Judaism to reinforce the new converts' sense of community in the difficult time of transition.[275]

The letter of 1 Peter is not only replete with similar kinship language[276] but is structured in such a way as to give the impression that the writer was trying to reestablish the sense of community for members who were questioning why it was they had joined the community in the first place.[277] Even if the communities had existed for a while and most of the members had progressed past the stage of the new convert,

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[273]Malherbe, Paul, 46.

[274]Ibid., 48.

[275]Malherbe, Paul, 49. Malherbe acknowledges that kinship language can be used to attempt to heal divisions in a church (such as in Corinth) but sees no evidence of such divisions in Thessalonica.

[276]Refer to the implications of kinship under the earlier study of οἶκος on pp., 52-54.

[277]Refer to the discussion surrounding the terms used by the author to describe his readers (pp., 36ff). Each term emphasizes the solidarity of the community and the reason for its distinctiveness. Further, the entire first chapter is a reminder to the church of who they are and what makes them distinct. Refer to pp., 98, 104.

continued social persecution could cause them to relive some of the anxiety they had experienced during their periods of transition. The letter contains the language of conversion which emphasizes discontinuity between who the readers were before and who they were after joining the community. The concept of conversion as a new birth was emphasized as being "born anew" (1:3,23), "obedient children" (1:14), and "newborn babes" (2:2).[278] This type of language helped establish the boundary between the believing community and those outside.[279]

Such an attitude towards conversion created in the new converts a strong sense of separation from their past and led to the type of anxiety already seen in the Epicurean and Jewish communities. Further, in making a distinction between themselves and others, the Christian community would have contributed to antagonism from other groups who would have been more likely to view the community as hostile and as outsiders.

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[278]Beverly Roberts Gaventa, From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament, Publication of Overtures to Biblical Theology, eds. Walter Brueggemann and John R. Donahue, no. 20 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 138-9.

[279]Ibid., 141-2.

C. The Group and the Individual in Society

1. The Individual versus the Group

a. Grid and Group--An Anthropological Model

The reason for such intense anxiety on the part of the converts and for increased hostility from outside groups will become clearer through an analysis of the make-up of the first century Mediterranean society from a cultural-anthropological perspective. Bruce Malina has adapted Mary Douglas' anthropological model of grid and group[280] and combined it with other models;[281] the result presents a clear picture of the type of society which would have been in existence during the period in which the books of the New Testament were being written.

Nearly all of the New Testament writings derive from

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[280]See Mary T. Douglas, Cultural Bias, Publication of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, occasional paper no. 35 (London: royal Anthropological Institute, 1978); Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology (New York: Vintage Books, 1973); Risk and Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

[281]Other models include those from Donald Black, The Behaviour of Law (New York: Academic Press, 1976); Paul Bohannan, "The Differing Realms of the Law," in The Social Organization of Law, eds. Donald Black and Maureen Mileski (New York: Seminar Press, 1973); Robert Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (New York: The Free Press, 1968); Marshall Sahlins, Stone Age Economics (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton Inc.); Talcott Parsons, Politics and Social Structure (New York: The Free Press, 1969); Rene Thom, "Topological Models in Biology," in Topology, vol. 3, ed. C. H. Waddington (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1970); and Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973).

persons who are anchored in what is called the strong group/low grid script.[282] Groups that followed such scripts were prevalent throughout the Roman Empire, and were composed of those who did not "fit in" to or were dissatisfied with Roman societal structure, which was established and controlled by the ruling elite.[283] Simply stated, strong group "indicates a great pressure to conform to socially held values, a strong corporate identity, and a clear distinction between ingroup and outgroup with clear sets of boundaries separating the two."[284] Low grid "indicates a low degree of fit or match between an individual's experiences and society's patterns of perception and evaluation."[285]

This type of society generally consisted of a large number of competing groups, each vying for self-containment and striving to win out over the other groups.[286] The

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[282]Bruce Malina, Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986), 37. Script, here, refers to a collectively shared interpretation of persons, things, and events which are presumed and automatically followed by persons in a given society or portion of society. Scripts, if you will, are the "rules for playing" in that society.

[283]Malina, Christian Origins, 37-43.

[284]Ibid., 19.

[285]Ibid., 18.

[286]Malina, Christian Origins, 38. Although the type of groups in rural and urban settings may vary (except for family relations)--refer to the descriptions in Ramsey MacMullen, Roman Social Relations, relations between groups would deal with virtually the same issues.

tendency was to focus on group boundaries, both for those who were within the group (recognized by initiation procedures) and those who did not belong (indicated by expulsion, shunning, excommunication).[287] Generally, all human beings were divided into insiders and outsiders; outsiders were considered to be hostile.[288] Outside the group, permanence did not exist; it was only within the group that there was stability.[289] Although there would have been "membership" in multiple groups at one time, these groups were generally considered acceptable to the other groups with whom one was associated (i.e. family, work guild, temple), and these multiple associations did not result in high tension. However, when one crossed over to a group which was considered "beyond the boundaries" or a competitor (i.e. philosophical community, Christian church), tension and hostility resulted.

The situation becomes more complicated when one recognizes that, while a significant portion of the ancient Mediterranean world fit into strong group/low grid, those who fit into the societal structure (which was controlled by the elite[290]) would fit into the strong group/high grid

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[287]Malina, Christian Origins, 38.

[288]Ibid., 41.

[289]Ibid., 38.

[290]It is at this point that the argument that rural and urban issues are the same for this study (see n., 52) breaks down somewhat. Those in a rural setting would be less prone to

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script.[291] In strong group scripts in general, innovation involves "the search for and development of new means, new structures, and new forms of grouping to realize the success goals of the society."[292] The communities addressed in the letter of 1 Peter would fit into the category of such "innovative" groups. But such groups (with a strong group/low grid outlook) would be considered "illegitimate" by the strong group/high grid society in which they were embedded.[293]

On top of the pressure from hostile strong group/low grid communities, there would have been negative pressure from the strong group/high grid elite of society on the Christian community. Christian groups such as those located in Asia Minor would have faced intense social malevolence.

b. Individual Identity and the Concept of Honour

Unlike weak group societies, strong group societies do

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[290](...continued)
experiencing social tension connected to the aristocracy. However, this tension was still quite prevalent in both the rural and urban settings, see Ramsay MacMullen, 88-120, (especially p., 97).

[291]This is not to say that other combinations of scripts were not followed in the complex ancient Roman Empire (see Malina, Christian Origins, 65), but that these two group scripts are the ones most pertinent to this study.

[292]Malina, Christian Origins, 125-6.

[293]Ibid., 126.

not consider individualism a pivotal value;[294] therefore, they do not place much emphasis upon individual identity. Generally, the individual in a strong group society tends to perceive himself or herself (i.e., form a self-image) in terms of other's opinions.[295] The group is everything and the individual receives identity only through association with the group, since he or she perceives himself or herself as embedded and emotionally anchored in the group.[296] Instead of being individualistic the society was dyadic (i.e., one person continually needs another in order to discover who he or she is).[297]

The perception of viewing oneself through the eyes of others has its roots, generally, in the strong group script

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[294]Bruce Malina, The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 39.

[295]Bruce Malina, "The Individual and the Community--Personality in the Social World of Early Christianity," Biblical Theology Bulletin 9 (1979): 128-9. Identifying exactly what an individual would be like is difficult in cross-cultural analysis, especially in one which cannot be studied directly. The focus here is on what would be termed a modal personality in social psychology, which is simply "a model of the typical qualities expected in a society's ideal, stereotypical, successful person who embodies a culture's definition of the ideal human being," see Malina and Neyrey, "First-Century Personality," 68-9.

[296]Malina, Christian Origins, 18.

[297]Malina, "The Individual," 127. See George M. Foster, "The Dyadic Contract: A Model for the Social Structure of a Mexican Peasant Village," American Anthropologist 63 (1961): 1173-1192 and Henry A. Selby, Zapotec Deviance: The convergence of Folk and Modern Sociology (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974), for more detailed information on the dyadic personality.

and, specifically, in the concept of honour.[298] Honour requires that one's perception of oneself be built upon a grant of reputation by others.[299] What others perceive has far reaching consequences. Because the first-century society was not individualistic (due in part to their concept of honour--at this point the argument is somewhat circular) there was no personal honour, rather only collective or corporate honour.[300] In the words of Bruce Malina, "Social groups, like the family, village, or region, possess a collective honor in which members participate . . . this perception might be expressed as 'I am who I am and with whom I associate'."[301]

Movement, then, to the Christian community involved a break with one's identity. The dyadic individual was drastically altering who he or she was as a result of

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[298]Honour really only has reference to the males of society. The female equivalent of honour was shame, and to be dishonoured was to be considered "shameless"--usually in reference to sexuality. See Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, "Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World," in The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 44.

[299]Malina, New Testament, 51.

[300]At least the assertion must be made that collective or corporate honour received a much greater focus than any concept of individual honour. The only focus on individual honour resulted from concern over the honour of the head of the group, but even then the concern was because the head was responsible for the honour of the group. See Malina and Neyrey, "Honor and Shame," 38-9.

[301]Malina, New Testament, 39.

conversion. Moreover, the convert was temporarily without honour in a society which placed abundant value on honour. He or she had to begin the process of regaining both identity and honour through the new group to which he or she had moved.

2. Group Perceptions of those "outside"

Since the first-century Mediterranean society did not consider individualism a pivotal value, the movement of an individual from one group to another was focused on the relationship between the groups, not on the decisions of the individual. The dyadic personality made sense of an individual based on his or her group association and on the values of that group.[302] Norms were established, not for the sake of the individual but for the sake of the social body.[303] Norms were instituted in order to draw lines between groups, to delineate between "us" and "them."[304] The tightest and most obvious social body was that of the family or the kinship group.

When an individual crossed over those lines, and associated with a group with the obvious social stigma of Christianity,[305] he or she became the focus of concern

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[302]Malina, New Testament, 56.

[303]Ibid., 58.

[304]Ibid., 95.

[305]Refer to pp., 70-72 for a discussion of the attitudes towards those who converted to Christianity.

because the honour of the group had been brought into question.[306] The individual had now moved outside the proper boundaries; he or she was now an "outsider" and, as such, was subject to stigmas, rejection, and whatever else was considered necessary to re-establish the honour of the group.

The process tested intra-group relations in an ongoing attempt to determine where one group stood in light of its relationship to other groups. This identity or positive picture of a group was, as Theissen states, "constructed on the basis of an adequate consensus and . . . balanced with the picture of other groups which has been arrived at."[307] Relationships between groups were thus a very complex assessment of how they perceived those on the "outside" as well as how outsiders perceived them.

New groups advanced through a long process before they established a place in the society--if they ever did. Success was based on relationships with other groups--how the "outside" groups perceived the relationship with the new group and how the new group perceived the relationship. The Christian community was beginning this identification process.

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[306]The groups' honour rating is determined relative to other groups in this society. See Malina, New Testament, 67; Gerd Theissen, Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), [also published under Jesus: A Sociological Analysis of the Earliest Christianity, trans. John Bowden (London: S.C.M. Press, 1978)], 31 (page numbering refers to Fortress Press publication).

[307]Theissen, Sociology, 31.

IV. The Letter's Response to Social Issues

A. General Comments

It is an understatement to declare that scholars disagree over the structure of 1 Peter, but, without becoming entangled in the debate, one point of structural integrity needs to be established. Some scholars contend that the book is divided into two parts, 1:1-4:11 and 4:12-5:14, the first of which is only concerned with "the blessings of redemption and the responsibilities of Christians in society."[308] Thus the argument is that not until 4:12ff does the letter actually deal with any real threat of suffering.[309] Though it is beyond the scope of this work to examine the apparent changes that occur after 4:11,[310] the contention in this thesis is that 1:1-4:11, like 4:12-5:14, focuses on actual persecution and suffering in the Christian community and contains

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[308]Such as Beare, 162.

[309]G. R. Beasley-Murray, The General Epistles: James, 1 Peter, Jude, 2 Peter (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), 47-8.

[310]Longenecker, 192, keeps the two sections unified by contending that the difference is due to Petrine sermonic and catechetical material being added to direct Petrine exhortations at the beginning and end of the letter. Clearly there is the possibility that different materials form this letter--see Goppelt, Peter, 20-22. The issue, however, is whether the final redactor(s) of this material intended two notions of persecutions--one theoretical the other tangible, or whether the same persecution is intended throughout.

information as to how the Christian community should react in light of their struggles. J. de Villiers has studied the differences between these sections in 1 Peter and concludes that "there is nothing in the references to persecution in 4:12-19 and 5:9 which necessitates regarding them as relating to a period other than that of 1:6 and 3:13-17."[311]

The first chapter preseneds the implications of Christ's death and resurrection for the Christian community. This was done to accomplish two purposes. The first purpose was to suggest to the Christian community the differences between them and their non-Christian peers as an explanation for the alienation and conflict they are experiencing. The second purpose set before the community the sure foundation upon which their responses to any persecution were to be built and the hope that lay beyond any suffering.[312]

The section from chapter 1 to 4:11 certainly deals with the issue of persecution. Suffering is a major theme within this section. Of the twelve uses of πάσχω (to suffer) in 1 Peter, nine occur before 4:12.[313] πάθημα (suffering--noun) is

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[311]J. L. de Villiers, "Joy In Suffering in 1 Peter," in Neotestamentica, vol. 9, Essays on the General Epistles of the New Testament, 2d ed. (Pretoria: The New Testament Society of South Africa, 1980), 67. Part of the reason for the divisions may be a result of attempts to locate references to Imperial or state persecutions within letter.

[312]David W. Kendall, "1 Peter 1:3-9," Interpretation 41 (Ja 1987): 68.

[313]See 2:19, 20, 21, 23; 3:14, 17, 18; and 4:1-(2x's).

found as early as 1:11, and the only occurrence of λυπέω (to suffer) is at 1:6. Furthermore, 4:12, which is supposedly the pivotal point when focus on suffering occurs, speaks of the πειρασμὸς (trial), but this term has already been introduced at 1:6. Finally, the portrayal of the suffering servant, as depicted in Isaiah 53, at 2:22-25 is extreme if persecution is not an underlying factor in the situation.

B. Type of Persecution

The question, then, is what type of suffering did the community endure? For a long period of time, the suffering portrayed in 1 Peter was deemed to be the result of official persecution by the state; it had been argued that the persecution stemmed from the Neronian persecutions, the Domitianic persecutions, and, finally, from the persecutions undertaken in the reign of Trajan.[314] Virtually all these views found support in the assertion that the latter part of the letter (4:12-5:14) dealt with the reality of official persecution by the state whereas in the earlier portion of the letter the author was only alluding to the possibility of persecution.[315] Examination of the letter's structure has

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[314]See Beare, 10-15, who holds the third view, that the persecutions occurred under the reign of Trajan.

[315]The argument for persecution under Trajan does find support from the fact that some literary affinities exist between 1 Peter and the letters of Pliny the Younger. See John Knox,

(continued...)

indicated, however, that the letter need not be divided into two separate persecution sections;[316] therefore, the argument that the letter refers to a state initiated wide-scale persecution is seriously weakened. Direct evidence within the letter only indicates persecution in the form of assaults and verbal harassment,[317] which would be more conducive to the assertion that it refers to unofficial, social persecution. Technical terminology for official persecution[318] is absent from the letter as is unambiguous mention of any formal accusation, imprisonment, or execution.[319]

One should not be too quick to dismiss the role of provincial and city governments in opposing this new religion, but one should also be careful not to assume that the mention of persecution indicates an official state persecution. Earlier I had explained that Rome's set-up as a city-state allowed city and district leaders to oppose new movements if

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[315](...continued)
"Pliny and 1 Peter: A Note on 1 Pt. 4:14-16 and 3:15," Journal of Biblical Literature 72 (1953): 187-189.

[316]See discussion on pp., 97-98.

[317]See pp., 104-105.

[318]Such as διωγμός (persecutions for religious reasons--see Bauer, 201) and related terminology. The use of πύρωσις in 4:12 does not indicate an *imperial* persecution--see Elliott, "Rehabilitation," 252 n. 51 for a discussion of the potential intent.

[319]Kelly, 10.

they were deemed harmful to the well-being of the area.[320] Albeit, such opposition would not arise without reason but would result from a growing discontent with the Christian communities at the social level.[321] Thus, as Elliott argues, those who favour the theory of persecution at the state level need to first refute the "more likely explanation of the situation, viz., the hostility, harassment, and ostracism of a local, social, and 'unofficial' nature."[322]

C. Time Period of Persecution

Because official persecution is not deemed to be the impetus behind this letter, there is no need to conceive the date of writing as being in the 2nd century C.E. Any dating has to be cautious because there is still little scholarly consensus concerning not only the date but external factors which may have contributed to the writing (i.e. authorship, literary affinities, etc.).[323] Without attempting to engage

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[320]See discussion under Geographical location, pp., 23-24.

[321]Obviously such discontent would attract the attention of local magistrates but action by the authorities would only come after sustained social unrest.

[322]Elliott, "Rehabilitation," 252. David L. Balch, Let Wives be Submissive: the domestic code in 1 Peter (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 137, agrees with Elliott's assessment. I have broadened Elliott's reference to imperial persecution to include any official persecution by the state.

[323]Compare, for example, the varieties of opinion in such works as David L. Barr, New Testament Story: An Introduction

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these issues in a comprehensive manner, I would like to propose a general range for the date of the letter based on the discussion to this point.

John Elliott has postulated that the date for 1 Peter should fall within the period from 69-96 C.E., based on the external evidence of: (1) the social situation and composition of the recipients; (2) the relation of 1 Peter and its addressees to the larger stream of early Christian literature and social development; and (3) the general political and social conditions of the early Roman empire.[324] Such external evidence presented by Elliott is supported by previous points demonstrated in this thesis; therefore the date of 69-96 C.E. is plausible for the purpose of this study.

Appeal to internal evidence could push the date back even earlier. Leonhard Goppelt, when examining the internal evidence, contends that the date of the letter should be between 65-80 C.E.[325] The summary of Goppelt's evidence is as follows: (1) the letter deals with first generation

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[323](...continued)
(Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1987), 316-7; Beare, 324-31; Guthrie, 773-790; Everett F. Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), 403-7.

[324]Elliott, Home, 84ff.

[325]Goppelt, Peter, 46-7. Balch, Wives, 137-8 depends much on Goppelt but, with Elliott, extends the date into 90 C.E.

Christians in Asia Minor;[326] (2) the organization of the church under elders reveals the preliminary stage of the monarchial episcopate and would have been before Domitian;[327] (3) 1 Peter is not concerned with the Christian relation to the cult of the emperor;[328] and (4) the Christian view of Rome as "Babylon" (1 Pet. 5:13) occurred from the time of Nero's actions against Christians in Rome onward.[329]

The combination of internal and external evidence convincingly places the social persecutions of the addressees of 1 Peter around 65-80 C.E.

D. Reasons for Persecution

Although the reasons for the persecution and suffering

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[326]Goppelt, Peter, 46. The point of first generation Christians can be questioned if the date is considered to be between 65-80 C.E., and is not of major relevance at this point. The importance of this observation is that the issues are not clearly second generation. If the concerns were definitely considered second generation issues, the date might be pushed closer to 100 C.E.

[327]Goppelt, Peter, 46-7.

[328]Goppelt, Peter 44-5. Evidence of a well developed emperor cult is as early as the reign of Domitian (81-96 C.E.). In Ephesus, a temple with a colossal statue of Domitian, which was destroyed after his death (96 C.E.), has been discovered, see Bo Reicke, The New Testament Era: The World of the Bible from 500 B.C. to A.D. 100, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 279; and S. R. F. Price, Rituals and Power: The Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 156.

[329]Goppelt, Peter, 22.

have already been dealt with somewhat indirectly, they need to be clearly demonstrated.[330] The reasons for the persecution undergird the author's presentation of his material to the community. In chapter 1, the Christian community is understood to have been set apart--to be different from the greater community around them.[331] 2:1-10 continues to emphasize the cosmological differences between the Christians and their society.[332]

The Christian communities had rejected the lifestyle and beliefs of the larger society and were, consequently, considered hostile by other groups and persecuted.[333] The social pressure was intense, as evil was spoken of the Christians, and they were reviled, insulted, blasphemed, and denounced.[334] They were in a vulnerable position; at any time they might have been called to give an account of their

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[330]External evidence has been examined which demonstrates the possibility of social persecution, but internal evidence will be the focus of this discussion.

[331]Refer to the discussion on p., 98. The author is working from the perspective that the spiritual differences between his readers and the rest of society have resulted in the social distinctions which now exist. Note, the author was not intending to convey that, because of these differences, the Christian groups had to be alienated from their society. In fact, his approach indicates that he would have liked to see the alienation dissipated, without compromising the Christian message.

[332]F. F. Bruce, New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1968), 62-7

[333]Green, 277. See 4:3-4.

[334]See 2:12; 3:9, 16; 4:4, 14.

faith.[335] While verbal abuse and social rejection were the main forms of persecution, in some cases the hostility may have taken the form of physical attacks.[336] The pressures on the Christians were especially acute where the closest social relationships existed, viz., slaves/masters/husbands/wives.[337]

As the new Israel, the Christian communities had embarked on an exodus, not out of society (as the Qumran sectaries)[338] but out of the immorality of paganism.[339] They were paying for it through persecution by the greater community whose values they had rejected. Unquestionably, the persecution was socially based.

E. Enduring Suffering (as a Christian)

The author's perspective on the purpose and function of suffering can be seen in his requirements for the community's response to their suffering. His perspective was influenced by expectations of ethical demands and community obligations.

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[335]See 3:15-16.

[336]See 2:10; 3:6; 4:1.

[337]Green, 277. See 2:18-3:6.

[338]See the discussion of subculture on p., 78, and n., 241, and on the attitude of 1 Peter towards those outside the community on pp., 108-109, 116-117.

[339]F. L. Cross, 1 Peter: A Paschal Liturgy (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1954), 24-27; Goppelt, Theology, 2:165.

In some New Testament passages, suffering is to be endured because of what lies beyond it.[340] Suffering is future directed and is upheld because of its eschatological significance; suffering can be endured not only because it was the example of Christ but because present identification with Christ means future exaltation with Christ. Though this eschatological aspect is present in 1 Peter,[341] the author also tenderss suffering for doing good (i.e., for being a Christian in a hostile society) as a grace in and of itself.[342] Suffering is something which accomplishes grace in the present circumstances.[343]

1 Peter 2:19 begins by stating τοῦτο γὰρ χάρις εἰ διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ. Suffering for doing good, literally, "is grace because of conscience of God." τοῦτο γὰρ χάρις, which is essentially repeated in 2:20, can be interpreted in several ways: 1) it is a gracious act; 2) it is an act deserving gratitude; 3) it is

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[340]Heb. 13:12-14 would be one of those passages.

[341]Most singularly in 1:3ff and 4:12-5:11 is hope in the participation in the Kingdom of God connected to suffering. See Beasley-Murray, 45.

[342]In the section from 2:11-25 grace does have present implications for the readers.

[343]The basis for this perspective is the author's concept of obedience. Suffering comes as a result of the community's obedience to the example of Christ. Because it was understood as part of obedience, suffering became closely associated with grace. See Stephen C. Frederick, "The Theme of Obedience in the First Epistle of Peter" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1975), 73ff.

an act that brings God's favour; 4) it is an act that leads to an experience of grace.[344] Goppelt defends the fourth view,[345] which, though theologically intriguing, does not fit the context. Inspection of the parallel phrase in 2:20, τοῦτο χάρις παρὰ θεῷ, as well as a similar use of the word in Luke 6:32-34,[346] gives strong support to the third view--that suffering unjustly is an act which brings God's favour (i.e., God is pleased with how the suffering is handled, not with the occurrence of suffering itself).[347]

The author continues with the assertion that Christ's suffering and death are unique as a "suffering for you" (χριστὸς ἔπαθεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν--2:21). Nowhere else in the New Testament is

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[344]I. Howard Marshall, 1 Peter, Publication of The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), p., 89--in notes.

[345]Goppelt, Theology, 2:175.

[346]Although Luke uses the word in a negative manner, his meaning still corresponds. Luke 6:32-34 refers to achieving grace or favour before [God]. See A. R. C. Leaney, A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke, Publication Black's New Testament Commentaries, ed. Henry Chadwick (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1958), 137-8.

[347]Esser Hans-Helmut, "Grace," in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 3 vols., ed. Colin Brown, trans. from the German Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament, eds. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther and Hans Bietenhard (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1975-8), 2:123; Marshall, 89; Mounce, 35. This is definitely not a Pauline concept--refer to Kelly, 116.

ἔπαθεν used with ὑπέρ to refer to Christ's sufferings for people.[348] At this point, some make the mistake of simply equating "suffered for you" with the formulaic statement of the primitive kerygma, that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures."[349] Equating suffering (πάσχω) only with dying (ἀποθνήσκω) misses the unique thrust intended by the author's substitution of ἔπαθεν for the more common ἀπέθανεν.[350] This is not intended as a substitution of synonyms, but a substitution which is able to carry the weight of the author's intention.

The author's intention was twofold: Christ's suffering was, first of all, on behalf of those Christians who were experiencing suffering and, secondly, it was a suffering which was meant to be followed. Suffering was considered to be an evidence of one's connection to Christ. Suffering was also intended to stand as a witness of Christian faith and hope.

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[348]Michaels, 143. Albeit, problems with this view arise because the reading ἔπαθεν is not entirely certain. ἀπέθανεν (or its variant ἐπέθανεν--'he died') is found in a number of key texts including ℵ and Ψ, yet overall ἔπαθεν is the preferred reading. Moreover, both the uniqueness of ἔπαθεν (ἀποθνήσκειν ὑπέρ is commonly used in the New Testament to refer to Christ's redemptive work whereas πάσχειν ὑπέρ is used only here, Michaels, 134, n. f) and its ability to include "died for you" within its meaning, contribute to its validity in this passage.

[349]Goppelt, Theology, 2:92, and Marinus de Jonge, Christology in Context: The Earliest Christian Response to Jesus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 37, make this mistake to a degree. Such a formulaic statement is found in 1 Cor. 15:3.

[350]If ἀπέθανεν replaces ἐπαθεν then the author's intention is obscured, if not eliminated.

This view is seen most distinctly in the section following 3:12. 3:13-17, which is closely related to 2:11-3:12, has as its focus the need to give a defense of the Christian hope. The implication is that enduring suffering, as Christ did, provides this defense. The persecution was based on a maligning of Christians,[351] so that they were being called upon to endure the persecutions as a demonstration of the true nature of Christianity and thereby follow in Christ's example.

However, one needs to differentiate between the two types of persecution presented in this letter: suffering for doing good and suffering for doing evil. The author informed the readers that they were to endure persecution as a sign of the true nature of Christianity,[352] but at the same time they were to ensure that any suffering they did undergo was due to their Christian beliefs and practices and not to other reasons.[353] The societal and group dislike of the Christian community had caused spurious charges to be levelled against the Christian community,[354] and the members were called to live exemplarily, so that, if possible, they might not be

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[351]de Villiers, 67. The stance in this paper is that the persecutions were not the result of actions by the state but the result of hostility from the surrounding population in which the Christian groups were a minority--see pp., 103-105.

[352]See 2:12; 3:13-16; 4:12-19.

[353]See 3:17; 4:14-15.

[354]See 2:12; 4:4.

falsely accused.

1 Peter did not condone suffering that was brought about by living in a manner that encouraged accusations of criminality, mischief, etc.[355] Suffering as a result of Christian virtues was to be endured; suffering for improper accusations was to be avoided.

F. Avoiding Persecution

1. General Comments

Recognizing that suffering for reasons untrue to the Christian faith was unacceptable to the author of 1 Peter is vital to understanding his responses. The author is not unlike the authors of other New Testament books in his view that one would probably be persecuted as a Christian and that such persecution was to be expected and endured.[356] Because the author did not address the why of suffering to any degree, he is not necessarily different from the author of Hebrews who urged his readers to endure suffering--viewing it as a discipline from God intended to bring them to Christian maturity.[357] ,Yet when the author of 1 Peter exhorted his readers to ensure they suffered for the right reasons, he

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[355]Such as the list of accusations in 5:15.

[356]Among such views are those in the gospels, see Matt. 5:10-11; Mark 10:30; 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-19; John 15:20.

[357]See especially Heb. 12:1-11.

presented a position unique in the New Testament.[358]

His stance (of avoiding any persecution that stems from a distorted perception of the Christian community) is opposite to some persecution texts, or at least to the later interpretation of them by the early church fathers and others who exalted Christian martyrdom.[359] Such a text as Luke 21:19, "[concerning persecution] By your endurance you will gain your souls" (RSV) was picked up by the church in the times of more violent persecution to indicate that those who suffered persecution, especially martyrs, had a special place in the Kingdom of God.[360] Persecution, at times, was actively sought by Christians. Further, no questions were raised regarding the underlying reasons for persecution--all persecution was understood to be the outcome of one's Christian faith.[361]

Contrary to this later attitude, the author of 1 Peter

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[358]This is not to say that such a view does not undergird some of the other persecution texts, but that it is never explicitly stated.

[359]Henri Daniel-Rops, The Church of the Apostles and Martyrs, 2 vols., trans. Audrey Butler (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1960), 1:246-54; Frend, 196-200.

[360]See Henry Chadwick, The Early Church (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1967), 29-31; Frend, 63ff. See also Rev. 6:9-11; 12:11.

[361]See especially the comments by Ignatius of Antioch in his letter To the Smyrnaeans (4:1-2) and his attitude throughout his letter To the Romans where he appeals to the Christians in Rome not to keep him from the beasts in the arena and thereby rob him of the crown of martyrdom.

contended that there were times when persecution could be avoided. For the author of 1 Peter persecution was to be expected and endured. At the same time, however, he wanted to ensure that Christians suffered persecution for the right reasons, because of their true beliefs and not because people had misunderstood those beliefs. Suffering that stemmed from misunderstandings was to be avoided.

2. Essence of the Household Code

Explicit advice on how the community was to respond to their situation is found in the section from 2:11 to 3:12. This section is considered by David Balch to be formed from a household code that was common in the Roman world at the time.[362] Certainly the section from 2:11 to 3:12 deals with household matters since it focuses on slaves, husbands, and wives. David Balch proposes a viable theory that the 'household exhortations' of 1 Peter are based upon classical τόποι[363] about ruling in the city and house.

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[362]Balch, Wives, 118.

[363]τόπος generally refers to a territory or area. Here, it corresponds with the special meaning of everything having its own place. See Helmut Köster, "τόπος," in The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964-76), 190-191. τόποι about ruling focused on the place certain people should have in society; they were "stereotypical ways of understanding the nature of love, justice, anger, and the like," see Malina and Neyrey, "First-Century Personality," 79.

As early as Plato, these τόποι about ruling were set forth. They remained a concern well into the Roman empire, Among these τόποι were assertions that some people were inferior and others superior. Pairs were established of those who should rule and those who should be ruled (i.e. husbands and wives, masters and slaves, fathers and children).[364] Improper rule, such as wives ruling over their husbands, according to Aristotle, resulted in a corruption of the household order which eventually would corrupt the constitution of the state.[365] There is evidence that the arrangement of ethical instruction in classified lists of this kind (e.g. duties to one's gods, country, parents, brothers, wife, children, etc.) had become conventional practice in popular Stoic morality,[366] as well as in Hellenistic Judaism.[367] These Platonic-Aristotelian ideas were also fairly pervasive, as can be seen by Philo's use of them to interpret the Old Testament Decalogue.[368] The widespread influence of these codes of duties for each particular class

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[364]Balch, Wives, 24ff.

[365]Balch, Wives, 35; Wayne A. Meeks, The Moral World of the First Christians (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 113.

[366]See Epictetus Discourses II.14.8; II.17.31; Seneca Seneca Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales 94.1

[367]See Tobit 4:3-21; Ecclesiasticus 7:18-35; Josephus Against Apion II.25.

[368]Balch, Wives, 117.

of people is made evident by the use of various occurrences throughout the New Testament,[369] and in other early Christian literature.[370]

Because of the importance of the household code in the Roman world, the Romans regularly made stereotypical criticisms of new, foreign cults, especially if there was reason to suspect that the cults were subverting the proper order of the state.[371] The Egyptian Isis cult was criticized because it was thought to have reversed the proper household relationship between husbands and wives.[372] In Roman culture it was inevitable that Judaism and especially Christianity would be charged with practices which undermined the functioning of the state.[373] 1 Peter presents a varied form of this household code.[374]

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[369]See Eph. 5:21-6:9; Col. 3:18-5:1; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; Tit. 2:1-10.

[370]See Didache 4: 9-11; I Clement 1:3; 21:6-9; Barnabas 19:5-7; Polycarp The Epistle to the Philippians 4:2-3.

[371]Balch, Wives, 76.

[372]This argument was used by Octavian in his propaganda against Antony and Cleopatra.

[373]Balch, Wives, 118.

[374]In contrast to other Biblical and non-Biblical codes, the writer of 1 Peter addresses only slaves, wives and husbands, instead of three matching pairs: wives/husbands, children/fathers, slaves/masters. Although the "pairs" are lacking in 1 Peter, the traditional three-fold structure, albeit in a different order, is still evident. See Carl D. Gross, "Are the Wives of 1 Peter 3.7 Christians?" Journal for the Study of the New Testament 35 (1989): 91.

3. Reasons for "Invoking" the Code

When he considered the situation of his readers, the author of 1 Peter suggested actions which would have been deemed appropriate in light of the household code, so as to alleviate some of the support for the persecution. Christians were facing difficult problems because of their close social relationships in a society which had begun to slander and persecute their community.[375] Apparently, people believed that the Christian community was undermining the fabric of the society through their blatant disregard for the household code.

The Christian community had begun to react to the rejection and persecution. As Green points out, "They had begun to be ashamed of their faith.[376] They were tempted to retaliate,[377] and to conform to a more socially acceptable lifestyle."[378] Initially, the Christian community was called upon not to react but to endure the persecution as a means to undermine the slanders which were being levelled against them, especially in terms of their social behaviour.[379]

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[375]Green, 277.

[376]See 4:16.

[377]See 3:9; cf. 2:23.

[378]Green, 278. See 1:14; 4:2-3.

[379]Balch, Wives, 119.

Further, the writer indicated that Christians should have made every effort to conform to the standards of household rulings in their society.[380] The purpose for such conformity was twofold, 1) so that any persecutions they faced might not result from what was considered improper behaviour, and 2) so that they might maintain behaviour which clearly reflected the hope fundamental to the Christian religion,[381] which would both act as a positive testimony and potentially lead to the conversion of the pagan members of the household.[382] The design was both to disarm the

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[380]The slaves were encouraged (they may perhaps have even been commanded if, as Selwyn, 467-88, states, the participle ὑποτασσόμενοι in verse 18 was intended as an imperative, see Michaels, 138) in verse 18 to 'be subject to their masters in all fear' (φόβος). Though φόβος most likely refers to a fear of God (see Michaels, 138), the verse clearly directed the slaves to submit themselves to their masters whether such masters were kind or cruel. The implications of this verse have bothered commentators through the years because it apparently condones slave abuse (see Goppelt, Peter, 191-4, for a brief discussion on the position of slaves as viewed by early Christians). But its purpose, as described in the next sentence, provides a reasonable explanation for such instruction to slaves in those times, especially if the masters of those slaves were pagans, since this might aid in the conversion of those masters (see Marshall, 87).

[381]J. Rawson Lumby, The Epistles of St. Peter, Publication of The Expositor's Bible, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1893), 97. Lumby proposes that the Christians' lives were to be a daily sermon to the non-Christian members of the household. Robert J. Daly, The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 66, notes that the previous section (2:1-10) emphasized "that true Christian sacrifice means putting oneself totally, body & soul, at the disposition of God and neighbor."

[382]Households that were divided between pagan and Christian appears to be a definite problem for the recipients of this letter. Pagan masters (2:18-20), pagan husbands (3:1f), and

(continued...)

critics[383] and, if possible, to win them over.[384]

This could be considered a social adaptation necessary for survival in a hostile environment.[385] Therefore,

> The author of 1 Peter exhorted the recipients of his letter to the behaviour outlined in the code with the intention of encouraging conduct which would contradict the Roman slanders. Such behaviour would have been demanded not only by pagan masters and husbands but also by the aristocratic Roman 'governors' mentioned in 1 Pet 2:14. Christians were instructed to give ' a defense to anyone who asks'; in this context Christians would outline their constitution, the household code, to outsiders, even to the governor concerned with maintaining the Roman constitution.[386]

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[382](...continued)
possibly even pagan wives (3:7) are mentioned. See Gross, 95; Meeks, Moral World, 111.

[383]See 2:12, 15; 3:16.

[384]See 3:1b-2, 18.

[385]Charles H. Talbert, "Once Again: The Plan of 1 Peter," in Perspectives on First Peter, ed. Charles H. Talbert (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 146.

[386]Balch, Wives, 119.

Conclusions

The social situation of the Christian communities of Asia Minor which was addressed by the author of 1 Peter has been reasonably established. Having written to the Christians spread throughout the Roman provinces of Asia Minor, 1 Peter dealt with their social situation and how to respond in the midst of it. Having written to a mainly Gentile audience which had strong Jewish influence or background, the author addressed various identifiable social groups. The variations of the social standing of members of the community should have impacted them differently, but, instead, these social standings were subservient to the overall situation in which the members found themselves socially, due to their Christian associations. Describing the readers using a variety of metaphors--ἐκλεκτός, παρεπίδημος, πάροικος, οἶκος, διασπορά--the author drew a picture of how the Christian community was viewed within their society. These terms were not necessarily describing 'the way it should have been' as much as 'the way it was'. Although these terms emphasize the solidarity of the community, the concept of separation was balanced by the integration of some social norms in order to present those

"outside" with a favourable view of the community.

Moving beyond the letter of 1 Peter, an examination of ancient Mediterranean society both confirms the possibility of the author's outlook and explains why it was so. The social level of the Christian community, though not generally very high, consisted of people from a wide variety of social statuses. The general factor which had drawn such a diverse group to the Christian community was the sense of marginalization which the individuals had experienced. The make-up of the Christian community combined with its religious character caused it to be the object of societal hostility.

An overview of the experiences of new converts exposes some of the turmoil which converts to minority groups, Christianity in particular, would have experienced. The idea of conversion was relatively new to the Greco-Roman states, which tended to stress homogeneous acceptance of a plurality of gods by the state which the people attested in order to ensure their safety and peace of mind. Evidence from Epicurean as well as Jewish communities indicates that new converts (or proselytes) were subject to depression and a sense of rootlessness as a result of having moved from one group to another. Conversion brought with it a sense of having abandoned family (if the entire household was not converted), friends, customs, etc. to embark on a new life in a new set of relationships. Clearly, such anxiety was a part

of the lives of those who converted to Christianity, especially since Christianity was a new movement and could not offer the stability of other, more established, groups.

Cultural Anthropology not only further confirms the evidence of the Christian community's experience but also offers insight into the factors which contributed to such attitudes (by those "outside" the group) and the resulting experiences (by those "inside" the group). In a society such as that of the ancient Mediterranean world, the individual was swallowed up by the concept of group. The group and its honour were what mattered--there was little or no understanding of an individual's concerns or honour. The individual perceived life and himself or herself through the eyes of others and, so, group association played an essential role in self-understanding. Although an individual may well be a member of several groups without any problems, association with groups (especially minority groups) which were considered "hostile" could result in ostracization, hostility and even persecution. Such was the case with the Christian community. Moreover, minority groups, such as Christianity in its early stages, tended to be resented by the upper echelons of Roman society.

In the letter of 1 Peter, the author responded to the Christian community's social situation in a definite manner. Firstly, however, it is important to recognize that the

suffering (or persecution) spoken of in the letter referred to an unofficial persecution of the Christian community at the social level. Considered to be "outsiders" and disrespectful of family, city, and state concerns, the Christian community experienced slander and attacks from those living around them. In response to these hostilities, the writer of 1 Peter contended that the Christian community was to endure suffering patiently, but they were simultaneously to ensure that any persecution levelled at them was a result of their Christian living and not of improper or misconceived conduct.

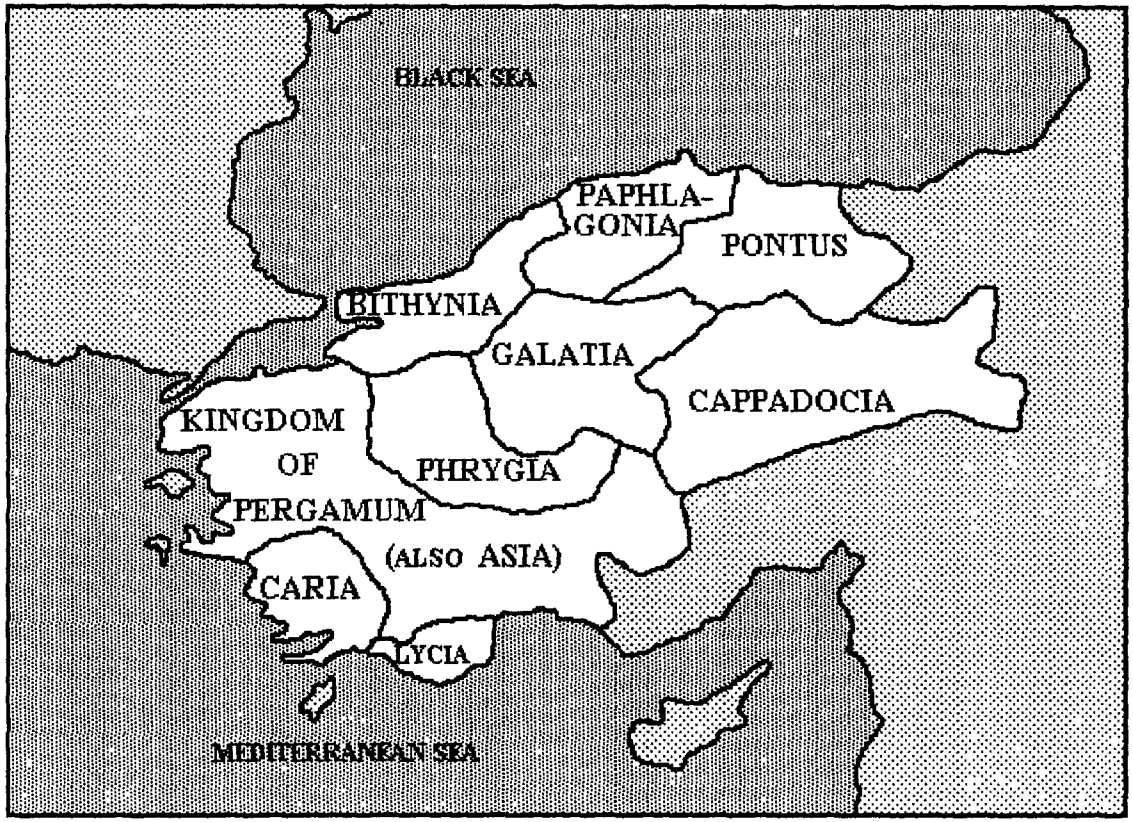
The main method by which the author instructed the community to respond was the invocation of pertinent concepts from the household code. Because the household was the foundation upon which the city and state were built, actions perceived to undermine the household were also considered to adversely affect city and state. Urging Christians to respond to the household code gave opportunity for the Christian community to demonstrate that it was not intent on dividing or destroying households; any persecution which had resulted from this misnomer would hopefully be alleviated. The author had taken an approach which exhorted the community to be outward looking and to attempt to make positive connections with those with whom they related socially.

Overall, this study has set out the basic data regarding the social situation of the Christian community of Asia Minor

addressed in 1 Peter. Suffering as a minority group in their culture, they were exhorted to respond with humility and with concern that they be properly understood by those around them.

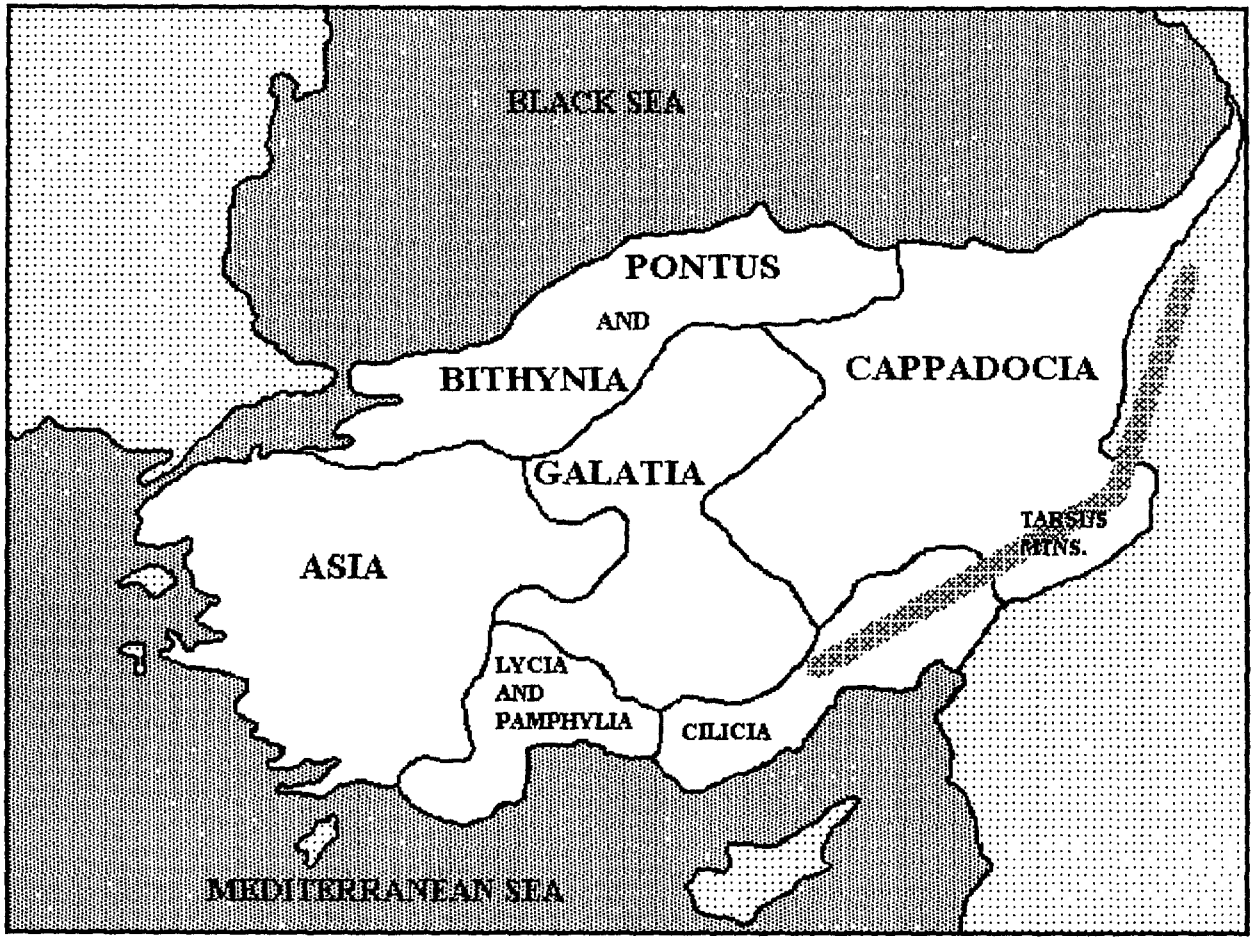
APPENDIX A: MAPS

Older Geographic Boundaries in Asia Minor[387]



[387]Adapted from the Harper Atlas of World History, rev. and updated ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 51; Emil G. Kraeling, Rand McNally Bible Atlas (New York: Rand McNally & Co., 1956), 248-49, 260-61; Reader's Digest Atlas of the Bible: An Illustrated Guide to the Holy Land (Pleasantville, NY: The Reader's Digest Association, 1981), 193.

Roman Provinces in Asia Minor[388]



[388]Adapted from Jim Cornell and John Matthews, Atlas of the Roman World (New York: Facts on File, 1982), 106-7; Rand McNally Bible Atlas, 260-61; Merrill C. Tenney, New Testament Survey, rev. Walter M. Dunnett (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1985), 348.

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