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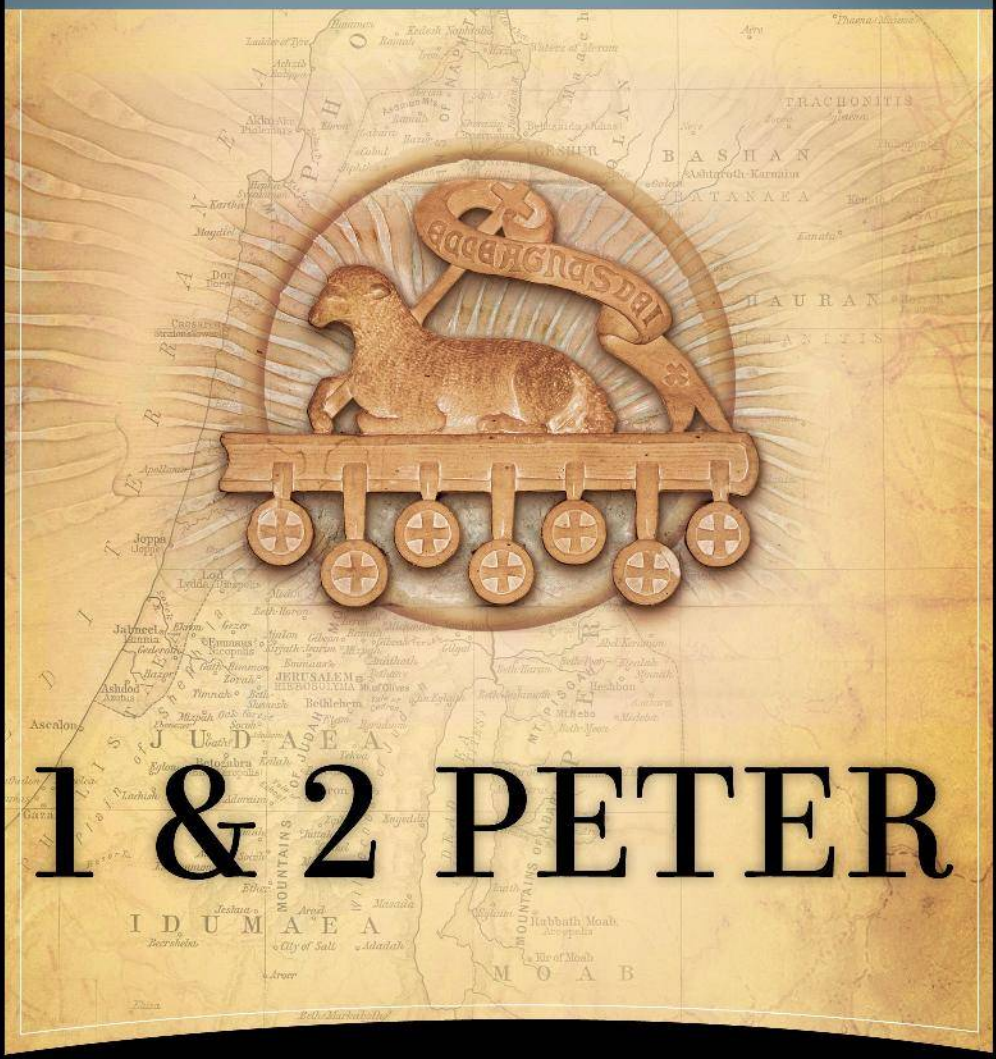

1 & 2 PETER

DOUGLAS HARINK

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INTRODUCTION

Two epistles more different from one another it would be difficult to find in the entire New Testament.

In the one, 1 Peter, we have an extended exhortation for the church to take up, dwell in, and live out of its identity as "the elect, the exiles of the Diaspora" (1:1 DH), a chosen people called out from the wider social and political orders to embody and display God's transforming holiness and love as its peculiar mission among the nations. In this messianic calling, the church, like the Messiah, will often encounter disdain, opposition, and even persecution from those who continue to live under the reign and by the rules of other gods and lords. In carrying out their mission, the people of the Messiah must therefore prepare themselves for suffering. At the very heart of this first epistle stands the figure of Jesus Christ as the one who suffers. As the suffering Messiah he defines the very character of messianic life. The people that has been called by God and redeemed through the Messiah's suffering and death, that shares in his resurrection and fullness of life, does not shrink from the wider world or go into hiding among the nations. It shares in the suffering and destiny of its Lord joyfully and full of confidence and lives without fear in the societies in which it finds itself. For the followers of Jesus know that God's justice is being done through them, and will be done for them, exactly because God demonstrated his justice for them and for the world in the crucifixion and resurrection of the Messiah. Their sharing in the Messiah's suffering, redemption, and resurrection life is their participation in, their enactment of, the hidden revolution in which God is bringing about a new creation. The greatest revolutionary power of this letter comes at that point where its words are likely to strike us as the most objectionable—in the "household code" (2:13–3:8) in which Peter's instruction is summed up in the repeated phrase "be subordinate." As we shall discover, difficult though that instruction is to swallow in our time, the revolutionary history of the world in its messianic sense begins with that phrase.

Douglas Harink, 1 & 2 Peter
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The term "messianic," appearing frequently in the commentary, needs some explanation. Why not simply "Christian"? What is signaled with the term "messianic"? First and most obviously the term links the people and way of life designated *messianic* with the *Messiah* Jesus. The "messianic" in the New Testament is not a free-floating concept awaiting our bestowal of attributes. On the contrary, it is fully enacted, summed up, and defined by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. As the Messiah, he *is* "the messianic." The messianic is originally, truly, and definitively revealed—"apocalypsed"—in him. Nevertheless, the concept also points to the varied but concrete theological, political, and economic messianic expectations that were current among Jews in the time of Jesus: in the gospel accounts the devil tempts Jesus to enact a messiahship in accordance with those very expectations. But Jesus fundamentally interrupts, suspends, and reconfigures them. Jesus trusts the word, will, and way of the Father as he discerns the godly shape of his messiahship on his journey from Bethlehem to Golgotha. In fact, radical trust in the Father is itself the very enactment and definition of the messianic. At the same time, Jesus does not substitute a "spiritual" or "religious" messiahship in the place of social, economic, and political ones. Rather, trusting in the Father, he enacts in his concrete historical life and death, within the concrete historical conditions of his time, an *alternative sociopolitical messianic life* and calls his followers to participate in and imitate that messianic life as their baptismal share in his own being and act as the incarnate Word, crucified, risen, exalted, coming again in glory. Of course, we turn most naturally and immediately to the canonical Gospels to discern just what that alternative sociopolitical vision looks like in Jesus's life and in the life of his followers. Nevertheless, we can also get a clear picture of it through a careful reading of 1 Peter.

Some readers of this commentary may worry that my presentation of the relationship between the messianic people of God and the wider world is insufficiently dialectical, that is, that it presents that relationship in too antithetical a manner. There is some truth to that judgment, but I think it is misplaced. Were I developing a general treatise on the church-world relationship I would indeed have to show greater sensitivity to the complexities intrinsic to shaping, say, a theology of culture or a political theology. In a commentary on 1 Peter, however, I am in the first place obliged to follow the text of this particular epistle. Peter's letter is not very dialectical. The believers to whom he writes are being scorned, abused, and made to suffer in various ways at the hands of their unbelieving neighbors and rulers. Peter instructs them how to live in that situation. If we are to be true to the letter then, we will more likely find ourselves exploring the themes of messianic martyrdom than those of how Christians transform societies in which Christian influence is taken for granted or perhaps even welcomed. Indeed, I will show how Peter's messianic/apocalyptic vision might lead us to reconsider some of our dearest beliefs about how Christians go about influencing and transforming the world.

The messianic interpretation of 1 Peter that I offer here is informed in large measure by those strands of theological tradition that resonate most deeply with

the messianic sociopolitical vision of the epistle. Prominent in this regard is the Radical Reformation tradition, represented for me primarily by the work of John Howard Yoder. The reader familiar with Yoder's work will detect the presence of his messianic/apocalyptic theology throughout my exposition of the letter, even in those places where Yoder is not directly quoted or identified. But not only Yoder: also Karl Barth, whose apocalyptic/messianic theology, whether in the *Römerbrief* or in the *Church Dogmatics*, equips us to plumb the theological, christological, and ethical deeps of 1 Peter like no other. Again, while Barth is only infrequently quoted or referenced in the commentary, his influence is pervasive and will be obvious to those familiar with him. While working on this commentary, I discovered (but in relation to Paul rather than Peter) the work of (secular?) Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), in particular his revolutionary "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in which he develops a concept of the messianic, messianic time, and messianic agency. In his own way Benjamin grasps profoundly the kind of messianic existence that Peter calls forth from the people of the Messiah. Benjamin's theses have come to haunt this work in ways I could not have anticipated, and I commend them to the reader's consideration.[1]

Among the number of modern commentaries on 1 Peter that I use, I rely especially on two superb comprehensive works to guide me through the issues of text, language, history, and culture: Achtemeier 1996 and Elliott 2000. Boring 1999 is also invariably useful, and Calvin 1963 never fails to illuminate, instruct, and kindle a passion for God and his reign. Luther 1967 reveals his love both for the epistle and for the one to whom it testifies.

When we come to 2 Peter we find ourselves in an atmosphere very different from the first epistle, one not frequently breathed by Western (Protestant) Christian readers and that therefore requires a kind of acclimatization. What shall we think, for example, when the language of *gnōsis* ("knowledge") rather than *pistis* ("faith") predominates; when salvation is thought of as rescue from the corruption that comes from desire; when eschatological fulfillment is rendered as participation in the divine nature; when the Christian life is described most fully in terms of knowledge and virtue (*aretē*); when the transfiguration (rather than, say, the cross and resurrection) is put forward as the decisive christological event; when heretics are unremittingly (and ungraciously?) condemned; when the final parousia comes as a great cosmic conflagration? In view of all these things, shall we join Ernst Käsemann in his unrelenting theological attack (a "critical cross-examination," as he called it) on the epistle, concluding with him that 2 Peter is irredeemably

1. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 253–64. Michael Löwy's *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's "On the Concept of History"* (London/New York: Verso, 2005) provides a helpful translation and guide to Benjamin's "Theses."

"Hellenistic," "from beginning to end a document expressing an early Catholic viewpoint . . . perhaps the most dubious writing in the canon"?[2]

That is one option. But it is not the one I pursue in this commentary. How shall we breathe the air of 2 Peter? How shall we become acclimatized to its quite obvious Hellenism? One way is to learn from those who are already used to it. And so I turn to Eastern Orthodoxy. For, which tradition has plumbed to greater depths (sometimes to the point of danger) the mystery of participation in the divine life? And which has meditated with more concentration and profundity—in both word and icon—on the transfiguration of our Lord? And where shall we find the intellectual and spiritual riches of Hellenism so thoroughly redeemed through subsuming and taking them up into the greater and more powerful riches of New Testament apocalypticism? Where, but in Orthodoxy? Maximus the Confessor and Gregory Palamas on deification, the Fathers (McGuckin 1986) and icons[3] on the transfiguration, Sergius Bulgakov and David Bentley Hart on apocalyptic eschatology[4]—these became my primary commentary on 2 Peter. By taking in some of the air of this tradition I was able to develop the lungs I needed to climb the mountain of 2 Peter; and climbing 2 Peter in turn opened up for me a vista on Orthodoxy.

In the first instance, however, I was delivered from Käsemann's hyper-Protestant judgment against 2 Peter not by reading in Orthodoxy, but by reading the outstanding 1983 commentary on the epistle by Richard Bauckham. Bauckham provides a definitive rejoinder to Käsemann. Bauckham's own reading of 2 Peter may be characterized as a kind of cautious hellenization thesis—but certainly not hellenization pure and simple. Bauckham demonstrates persuasively that what we find in 2 Peter is a "surprising combination of Hellenism and [Jewish cosmic] apocalyptic" (1983: 154).[5] That is the lead I followed, and the one that led me to explore some of the treasures of Orthodoxy as a means of discerning and understanding the theological treasures of 2 Peter. At the same time, both Calvin and Luther were again constant and illuminating companions in my journey through the epistle.

At the heart of 2 Peter is a profound and passionate declaration of the divine justice, authority, and glory of Jesus Christ revealed in the transfiguration, of

2. Ernst Käsemann, "An Apologia for Primitive Christian Eschatology," in his *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 169.

3. See Andreas Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis: The Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and Iconography* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005); and Solrunn Nes, *The Uncreated Light: An Iconographical Study of the Transfiguration in the Eastern Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

4. Sergius Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); and David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

5. Cf. Richard Bauckham, "2 Peter," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 923–27. I also found Kraftchick 2002 and Harrington 2003 especially helpful.

his imminent glorious coming that will purify and transform all of creation and make it the home of righteousness, and of the absurdity and indeed great danger of the heresies that deny these truths. In view of these things it is regrettable that 2 Peter often hardly registers on the radar of theologians and ordinary Christian readers of scripture. I hope this commentary encourages another and deeper look at this important text.

Some readers may be troubled that I straightforwardly refer to the author of each of the epistles as Peter. On that, I simply follow the canonical text, and then also follow the connections from the Peter of the epistles to the other canonical accounts of Peter in the Gospels and Acts.[6] I assume the theological legitimacy of both of those moves without making a historical-critical judgment one way or another about the authorship of the epistles. Arguments about authorship are legion in the commentaries.

In the end, the reader of this book may well sense certain theological tensions between the commentaries on the two epistles, as between the epistles themselves. If so, then she or he will be sharing in my own experience. I have not tried to resolve those tensions completely—though perhaps something of a clue to the resolution might be found in the transfiguration as the apocalypse of Christ reigning in full divine glory. But such a resolution will have to be explored on another day. In the meantime I pray that God will use this commentary to guide the reader, in some small measure, into the fullness of truth in Christ Jesus, to whom each epistle is an indispensable witness.

6. See Brevard Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 462–76.

1 PETER 1

Apostle (1 Peter 1:1a)

Petros apostolos Iēsou Christou ("Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ" [DH]). With this self-identification Peter claims no other identity for himself and no other authority for sending his letter than his apostolicity; for in fact Peter's apostolic identity and authority are not his own to claim, but consist in his *having been chosen, called, and commissioned* and *thus* constituted as an apostle by the Lord Jesus Christ. "An Apostle can never come to himself in such a way that he becomes conscious of his apostolic calling as a factor in the development of his life. Apostolic calling is a paradoxical factor, which from first to last in his life stands paradoxically outside his personal identity with himself as the definite person he is."[1] This letter by Peter issues out of Jesus Christ's identity and authority, into which Peter's witness in writing is caught up by the Spirit's own witness, who speaks through the apostles only what he hears from Jesus Christ and who thereby guides us into all truth (John 15:26–27; 16:12–15). "St. Peter wants to say: I am an apostle of Jesus Christ; that is, Jesus Christ has commanded me to preach about Christ. Take note that all who preach human doctrines are immediately excluded. . . . If [Peter] preaches what Christ has commanded, this is no different from hearing Christ Himself in person" (Luther 1967: 5). Achtemeier notes: "Customarily, the second word [*apostolos*] is translated 'an apostle,' since there is no definite article, yet that tends to lessen the implied force of this claim. To be sure, Peter is one among at least twelve, but the force of the title is not that he is one of a group, but that what is being written carries apostolic authority" (1996: 79). Peter is not *an* apostle, as if in writing and sending the letter he is first himself and then also a member of a class; rather, in writing and sending this letter he fully and solely

1. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age* and *Of the Difference between a Genius and an Apostle*, trans. Alexander Dru (London: Collins, 1962), 107.

is apostle, and nothing else. Martyn's comments on Paul's apostleship also apply to Peter's: "Bearing the ultimate message *from God* to human beings, he is a man whose identity is determined by the God who sent him and by the message God gave him to preach. To other human beings . . . , he is himself a stranger, a person who, in a profound sense, 'comes from somewhere else.'"[2] As *apostle* of Jesus Christ, Peter is an exile, homeless in relation to every other factor (genetic, ethnic, sociopolitical, etc.) that might constitute him as the personality that he is. Factors of Peter's personality become apostolic insofar as Jesus Christ appropriates them and renders them serviceable to Peter's calling and commission.

As the Gospels testify, Peter's name itself (*Petros*) is a sign of his exilic existence. In terms of his paternal origin and home, he is *Simōn Bariōna* ("Simon son of Jonah"; Matt. 16:17). But when Jesus calls Simon to be his follower, he gives him the Aramaic name *Kēphas* ("rock"; John 1:42). And when Simon utters the confession that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus declares that Simon is *Petros*, the "rock" upon which Christ will build his church (Matt. 16:17–18). Jesus conscripts Simon son of Jonah into the messianic revolution; he becomes *Petros* and is thereby rendered a stranger among his own people. At the same time he is made a binding sign of the existence of the church that is, not first by social or political circumstance, but by God's election, calling, and sending, perpetually in exile, perpetually in Diaspora among the nations. Peter testifies to this when he writes in 1 Pet. 5:13 that both he and the church in Rome from which he writes—"chosen together with you"—are "in Babylon."

The People of God among the Nations (1 Peter 1:1b)

Peter thus also immediately addresses his readers in these terms: *eklektois parepidēmois diasporas* ("to the elect, to the exiles of the Diaspora"; DH). In these three Greek words we have what we might call Peter's dogmatic ecclesiology, his normative description of the church. With them Peter introduces, brings into sharp focus, and sums up a great deal of what he goes on to write in the letter about God's calling and purpose for the church, which is prefigured in the story of Israel's election, sanctification, and mission. While the themes introduced by these important words come up again throughout the letter, each of them is worthy of some extended reflection at this point.

With *eklektois* ("to the chosen/elect") Peter leads us to pay attention to the divine origin and constitution of the church: God's people is brought into being and constituted in the first place by God's gracious choosing or election. That is why Peter gives this word first place among the designations (recognized in NIV, but not NRSV). We see throughout 1 Peter that aspects of political and

2. J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 95 (emphasis original).

social existence are always immediately intrinsic to the being and character of the people of God,[3] which the terms *parepidēmos* ("exile") and *diaspora* already clearly indicate; those aspects are rooted theologically in God's election of his people. God chooses and calls Abram, "a wandering Aramean" (Deut. 26:5), to be the ancestor of God's people, one whom God blesses with his particular promise and revelation and through whom God brings blessing to all the peoples of the earth (Gen. 12:1–3). "And because he loved your [Israel's] ancestors, he chose their descendants after them" (Deut. 4:37). Israel's very being is founded in God's particular love and choosing:

> For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.
>
> It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the LORD set his heart on you and chose you—for you were the fewest of all peoples. It was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery. (Deut. 7:6–8)

So also, through the reconciling death of Jesus Christ, God graciously reaches out from Israel to the not-chosen nations, that is, the Gentiles, those who "once . . . were not a people" but have now been made God's people (1 Pet. 2:10, quoting Hos. 2:23; cf. Rom. 9:24–26). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ . . . to be holy and blameless before him" (Eph. 1:3–4). These passages indicate that to *be* God's people can never be an achievement of human will. It is possible only by God's election. "The language of election draws attention to the way in which the Church has its being in the ever-fresh work of divine grace. The Church is what it is in the ceaseless gift of its

3. While this matter will be taken up later (→2:4–10), it is important here to explain briefly my frequent use of the phrase "the people of God." In explanation I offer the words of Paul Minear, writing on the word *laos* ("people") in the New Testament: "People in general do not exist [e.g., How many people are in this room?]; there are only particular peoples. Every person belongs to a particular people, just as he belongs to a particular tongue or nation or tribe; and this people is not reducible to the mathematical aggregate of its members." This aspect of peoplehood is especially evident in Gen. 10, where the descendents of each of Noah's sons are described in terms of pluralities of particular peoples distinguished from one another "by their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations" (10:20; cf. also 10:5, 31). "Humanity is not visualized as a world-wide census of individuals [e.g., People are like that!], but as the separate peoples that, taken together, comprise mankind as a whole. Each people retains its own discrete unity. Therefore, to identify a particular society as the people of God is immediately to set it over against all other peoples. This people and it alone has been constituted in a special way by this God's action, by his taking it 'for his own possession.' Henceforth it can be spoken of as his people. To avoid . . . misconceptions, then, it is well to take the phrase as a whole and to accent the article and the prepositional phrase: *the* people *of God*." See Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 68.

being through the risen Christ and the Holy Spirit who accomplish the will of the Father in gathering a holy people to himself."[4]

Throughout history peoples have regularly constituted themselves by self-assertion, territorial control, military might, conquest, and expansion and sustained themselves by walls, weapons, and warfare; but such peoplehood is at best an approximation, at worst a simulacrum or parody of true peoplehood (see Gen. 11:1–9). God's sovereign election of Israel and church—and his appointment of the nations (see Gen. 10; Acts 17:26–27)—founds and sustains peoples in "grace and peace" (1 Pet. 1:2) rather than in self-assertion and violent struggle against neighbors.[5] Ancient conquering empires and modern military nation-states alike stand in contradiction of and resistance to God's will (but not beyond God's sovereignty: God continues to employ, ad hoc, "pagan" peoples [e.g., the Assyrians] and rulers [e.g., Cyrus of Persia] to accomplish his purpose [cf. Rom. 13:1–7]).

God's election of a people founds the biblical politics of peace. God elects Abram and Sarai so that their people might be a blessing to the nations, though they were not always so. When God in Christ elects from among the Gentile nations "a people for his name" (Acts 15:14), he breaks down the ancient wall of hostility between "the commonwealth of Israel" and the nations. Through the cross God reconciles the chosen Gentiles and chosen Israel (without eradicating the difference between them) into "one new humanity"; together they are made "citizens" and "members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:11–22). The people of God is able to put its full confidence in God and thus refuse self-assertion, hostility, violence, and war vis-à-vis its neighbors (a significant emphasis in 1 Peter), because its very being and ongoing life rests originally, perpetually, and finally, not in its self-constitution and self-preservation, but in the Father's sovereign love and election constituted in the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of the Son: "Who will bring any charge against God's elect?" Nothing in all creation can separate God's people from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:33–34). Just so, that people, of all peoples, should be able to dwell nonviolently among the nations, as a visible sign of God's grace and peace. With the word *eklektos* Peter thus acknowledges the whole economy of God's election in the constitution, preservation, and consummation of the people of God. Every-

4. John Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 56.

5. In Gen. 10, the genealogy of the sons of Noah, we see the peaceable founding of numerous peoples ("in their lands, with their own languages, by their families, in their nations"; 10:5; cf. 10:20, 31) according to God's command, appointment, and blessing: "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (9:1). In the tongues of Pentecost and in Paul's speech on the Areopagus (Acts 17:26), the legitimacy of the cultural-linguistic and even political plurality of peoples is again affirmed as God's good arrangement. By contrast, in the story of Babel in Gen. 11:1–9, God judges the imperial and totalitarian will of those who resist cultural-linguistic pluralizing and geographical and political spreading. Against their resistance, God makes it happen.

thing Peter writes in this epistle requires that we understand that economy and the church's identity and mission within it.[6]

With *parepidēmois* ("to the exiles/foreigners/strangers"; see also *paroikos* ["resident alien"] in 2:11) Peter acknowledges that God's choosing of a people for himself is at the same time God's setting that people apart from the other peoples of the earth, rendering it strange and foreign among peoples, making it a "holy" people that witnesses with the whole of its life to the being and character of God: "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession" (Deut. 7:6). "You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine" (Lev. 20:26).[7] Through this kind of "exile" among the nations God establishes the holiness of the people of God in the holiness of God. Israel and the church are the people of this God and no other. "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:3). The whole existence of the people of God—praise, politics, social and economic order, personal responsibility—begins with the distinction marked by the first commandment.

When God chooses Abraham, he also separates—exiles—him from his father's house and homeland and sends him to a land that is Abraham's only by promise, not by possession. "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. . . . By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents. . . . He looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:8–10). Israel is called to be God's people while still in Egypt, a land in which they are foreigners and slaves (but that had become like a homeland to them), and they are led out from that place to the land of promise. Before they enter the land of promise, they are given a law that, by being obeyed, renders them a nation permanently foreign among the nations, insofar as the nations follow other gods and other ways: "I am the LORD your God. You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not follow their statutes. My ordinances you shall observe and my statutes you shall keep, following them: I am the LORD your God" (Lev. 18:2–4). Even as they dwell faithfully in their own lands, therefore, Israel and the church are legal and political strangers among the nations, indicating by their very existence that their true citizenship is held "in

6. Peter develops neither a doctrine of the election of individual persons to salvation (cf. Calvin 1963: 229: "God knew before the world was created those whom He had elected for salvation") nor a doctrine of the relation of divine and human will (cf. Luther 1967: 6: "Our will is unimportant; God's will and choosing are decisive"). Nonetheless, Peter is clearly asserting and emphasizing God's priority and sovereignty in bringing the people of God into being.

7. "Electedness and holiness were traditionally correlated qualities of the people of God . . . that marked it as a covenant community selected and set apart by God from other peoples" (Elliott 2000: 319). On the theme of the holiness of God's people, Webster, *Holiness*, 53–76, is indispensable reading.

heaven," that is, rooted in God's own triune being and action (Phil. 3:20). They eagerly await the advent of their sovereign from heaven and their citizenship in the new Jerusalem that this sovereign will establish in the midst of nations. While they await that advent, exile for the people of God—its being the one holy people of the one holy God—is its normal state until God makes all things new.

The exilic character of the life of the people of God does not make it otherworldly, in the sense that Christians seek their souls' escape or deliverance from bodily and earthly existence or long for their departure to their heavenly home. That understanding has been and is a common error among Christians. A comment on 1 Pet. 1:1 from Didymus the Blind (ca. 313–98) exhibits the tendency: "The souls of all are like strangers who are joined to bodies for as long as they dwell in time. If these souls were thought to be the substance of the body, they would be natives on earth. But these souls are concealed in a covering of flesh and are in fact like strangers on earth" (quoted in Bray 2000: 65–66). Such understandings, many of them hardly avoiding gnostic heresy, are legion throughout the history of Christian theology. But scripture points in another direction altogether. What makes the life of the people of God foreign or exilic in character is that God's reign "as it is in heaven" is already (in some measure) being actualized and made visible, transforming the political, social, economic, and cultural life of God's people on earth according to the divine pattern revealed in the gospel. "Gospel discipline will require us to say both that the church's holiness is real and actual, a perceptible form of common human being and action, and also that the being and action of the church are holy only in so far as they have within themselves a primary reference to the work and the word of the holy God."[8] The church's divine election and holy calling become visible here and now by the power of the Holy Spirit among God's people, setting it apart from and often at odds with those peoples who worship false gods and practice unholy ways of life.

In the story of Israel, exile is largely the result of God's disciplining of an unfaithful, unjust, and rebellious people. But the disciplinary aspect of exile plays little role in Peter's letter. Rather, for Peter, *to be exiled means to be vulnerable with the vulnerability of Christ*, to live "out of control," to suffer under a foreign power, to long for the homeland, as we see profoundly expressed in Ps. 137:

> By the rivers of Babylon—
> there we sat down and there we wept
> when we remembered Zion.
> On the willows there
> we hung up our harps.
> For there our captors
> asked us for songs,
> And our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,
> "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

8. Webster, *Holiness*, 57.

How could we sing the LORD's song
in a foreign land?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither! (Ps. 137:1–5)[9]

The life of exile therefore requires that the people of God put their whole trust in God, since they are at the mercy of those among whom they live: "You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. . . . See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:8–10, 16). When Israel is taken captive into Babylon it must remember once again to put its confidence in God's electing love, forgiving goodness, and redeeming power:

Remember these things, O Jacob,
and Israel, for you are my servant;
I formed you, you are my servant;
O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.
I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud,
and your sins like a mist;
return to me, for I have redeemed you.
Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it;
shout, O depths of the earth;
break forth into singing, O mountains,
O forest, and every tree in it!
For the LORD has redeemed Jacob,
and will be glorified in Israel. (Isa. 44:21–23)

Peter's readers also know suffering and grief, born of their alienation from the wider society because of their trust in God's electing grace and their loyalty to Jesus Christ. Their being formed as God's people in Christ brings about a loss of social and political standing in their cities and villages because they have separated themselves from practices that honor the false "gods and lords" that ruled those cities, villages, lands, and the empire itself. "You shall have no other gods before me." They have been made strangers in their own cultural, social, and political contexts and are unable to control the events under which they suffer.[10] By inscribing their experience of suffering into the story of Israel's exile, Peter not only tells them that

9. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher's *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) provides an important comprehensive study of Israel's exile and its varied significance for the people. He also includes studies of exiled peoples in recent history to deepen and substantiate his understanding of Israel's exilic experience.

10. Recent commentators are generally agreed that Peter's original readers were not facing official, Rome-sponsored persecution; rather they were suffering a variety of forms of local social ostracism. "The persecution in view is the kind carried out not with fire and sword but with words—words of ridicule, slander and sometimes formal accusations of crimes against society (see 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:13–17;

they are not unique and that suffering must be expected; he also reminds them that their precarious existence in the world is their opportunity to know God's gracious care. In its vulnerability the church, like Israel, may joyfully put its hope in God and his power, rather than pine for a time when it will be able to assert its own control over events and nations. Not being in charge (i.e., being "slaves of God"; 1 Pet. 2:16 DH) is our true freedom and participation in Christ. Not being in charge is the normative condition of the people created by the gospel of the crucified Christ—who himself was exiled and cut off from his own people (Isa. 53:8–9), crucified "outside the gate" of Jerusalem (Heb. 13:12).[11] As Peter says later in the letter: "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Pet. 4:12–13 NIV).

Exile always also implies a homeland, a place of citizenship. The apostle Paul writes in Philippians that our "citizenship" (*politeuma*) is "in heaven"; but he goes on: "And it is from there [*ex hou*] that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform [*metaschēmatisei*] the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself" (Phil. 3:20–21). The end of exile comes for the church not when Christ takes it away *to heaven*, but when he comes *from heaven* in sovereign glory and power and radically transfigures the church, the body of Christ, from its current humiliation, conforms it to his own glory, and grants it its rightful place *within the transfigured creation and among the healed nations*. The homeland from which the church for the time being is separated is not heaven, but creation itself, still suffering under bondage to powers opposed to the reign of God. In the fullness of his messianic reign, Jesus the Messiah subdues all rulers and authorities in heaven and on earth that would set themselves against God and his chosen people. According to 2 Pet. 3:13, God will reign finally over the newly purified and transfigured creation, where his justice will be "at home." God's glory will fill the whole earth. The exile of God's people ends when God makes the earth *his own home and kingdom* and, only thus, also the true home for God's people. At that time the members of Israel and the church receive their citizenship in the city of God: "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his people, and God himself will be with them" (Rev. 21:3). Then the peoples of the earth

4:14–16)"; J. R. Michaels, "1 Peter," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 919.

11. This important point is emphasized consistently in the writings of John Howard Yoder, especially *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 168–79 (an essay entitled "On Not Being in Charge"). Peter Ochs, a postliberal Jew responding to Yoder, appreciates Yoder's argument for exile as normative, but nonetheless qualifies this point with respect to the Jewish people, for whom landedness is intrinsic to the Jewish people's being and identity (179–80).

will be drawn to the light of God's glory and bring their glory into the new city of God, the gates of which are eternally open (21:24–26). The new creation is the hope and home of God's people. Until then, however, the people of God is a foreign people among the nations.

While "exile" describes the relationship between God's people and the wider society in terms of the alienation, homelessness, and vulnerability that results from election and obedience to the gospel, "Diaspora" (*diaspora*), in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, introduces another register and completes Peter's preliminary sketch of the existence of God's people. "Diaspora" means literally to be "sown abroad," as in the scattering of seeds in a field. According to Jesus's parable, the purpose of the scattering is that the seeds might land upon good soil, take root, grow, and produce an abundant crop—"some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matt. 13:8). Jesus Christ is the sower, and the people of God scattered among the nations, provinces, and cities of the world are the seeds. "'Though I scattered them among the nations, yet in far countries they shall remember me' (Zech. 10:9). According to God's will, the Christian church is a scattered people, scattered like seed 'to all the kingdoms of the earth' (Deut. 28:25). That is the curse and its promise. God's people must live in distant lands among the unbelievers, but they will be the seed of the kingdom of God in all the world."[12] If exile is the church's *separation-from*, then Diaspora is its *sending-into, taking-root-in, flourishing-among* the pagan nations. These two movements, separation (or sanctification) and sending, are always intrinsic to one another since they are each rooted in God's election of a people through the gospel, a people that is chosen and set apart *to be a witness* of God's grace to the world.

The exile of Israel into Babylon was certainly, from one point of view, a devastation and loss of all that might otherwise (i.e., apart from God's election) constitute Israel as God's people—homeland, monarchy, temple. As we saw above, the lament of Ps. 137 brings that devastation and loss poignantly and powerfully to expression. The exiles who sing this psalm deal with their present distress by refusing to participate in, or perhaps to be forcibly assimilated into, the cultural life of an alien nation. And in certain circumstances that is surely one important and crucial mode of response for the people of God among the nations. But it is not the only one.

Jeremiah sends a letter to the Israelites who have recently been taken into exile in Babylon. In that context the exile is God's discipline of a disobedient people and thus a condition that they must survive. But it is much more than that. It is also a condition in which God calls them to thrive. The exiles are sent away from Judah and Jerusalem with a mission:

12. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* and *Prayerbook of the Bible*, trans. Daniel W. Bloesch and James H. Burtness, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 5 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 28.

> Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare [*shalom*] of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. (Jer. 29:4–7)

God turns exile into dispersion—Diaspora—and the unique kind of cultural, social, and political existence that that came to mean for Jews from that time forward: settling down and making home away from the homeland; flourishing, growing, and sustaining life as a distinct people among the nations; faithfully observing Torah yet participating in many ways in the cultural, social, and political life of the foreign city, working toward its flourishing, and praying to God on its behalf; remembering the homeland and hoping for a return to it. A Diaspora people is a people that is at the same time both separated from its home, which it nonetheless holds in memory, and settled in its present location, toward which it nonetheless sustains a measure of critical distance through specific liturgies, polities, and practices that form and sustain its identity. The social, cultural, and political strangeness of God's Diaspora people often makes it an irritant among the host people, a critical (perhaps even subversive) question to that people about its taken-for-granted way of life and supposed stable identity. Consider how Hasidic and Orthodox Jews and Amish, Hutterite, and Mennonite Christians are often regarded by the wider society. At the same time the residency and participation of God's faithful people in a particular place might also become, in their life together and with their unbelieving neighbors, a witness of cultural, social, and political order obedient to the Lord of the universe, an icon through which the wider society, by God's grace, might behold its own true form and destiny. A Diaspora people among the nations is not simply vulnerable (though it is often that, and thus subject to persecution and expulsion); it is also in the power of the Holy Spirit a site of unique, transformative potentials and powers *for the nations*, precisely because of its diasporic mode of existence.[13]

13. A helpful and important account of the Jewish Diaspora in the period during which 1 Peter is written may be found in Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002). An account of the enduring powers of the Jewish Diaspora both to sustain itself and to unsettle and effect real change in modern societies is given in Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). John Howard Yoder reflects extensively on the significance of the Jewish Diaspora for ecclesiology and Christian witness in his *For the Nations: Essays Public and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) and *Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*. Each of these volumes contributes significantly to our understanding of 1 Peter. See also George A. Lindbeck, *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, ed. James J. Buckley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 223–52; and Arne Rasmussen, "The Politics of Diaspora: The Post-Christendom Theologies of Karl Barth

Yoder invites us to consider whether Jesus himself, in his messianic commission, teaching, and pattern of life and death, was calling first-century Judean Jews to live as if they too were in Diaspora, *even though they were dwelling in "their own" land*. The reign of God comes upon Israel, Jesus taught, not when the people of God control their own territory, temple, and throne, but when "two or three" gather in the "name" of Jesus, that is, when they gather to reenact Jesus's practice, mission, and identity in their life together. Jesus Messiah called Israel to refuse the option of being or seeking to be politically and militarily in charge—that option of garnering a measure of state power that motivated the strategic alliances with Rome by the Herodians and Sadducees, as well as the revolutionary hopes of the Zealots—and instead to enact social and economic justice in the land and entrust their destiny as a people to God while living peaceably, albeit vulnerably, among their enemies. Exactly in that way they would participate in the strange, alternative politics of messianic life, God's right-making justice, otherwise known as mercy, *which is the divine power of history*. "Jesus' impact on the first century added more and deeper authentically Jewish reasons, and reinforced and further validated the already expressed Jewish reasons, for the already well established ethos [in the Diaspora] of not being in charge and not considering any local state structure to be the primary bearer of the movement of history."[14] As it turned out, only a few of the Judean Jews of Jesus's time paid heed to his call. The Romans crushed the subsequent destabilizing attempts of Jewish revolution in 70 and 135.

Remarkably, however, the sociopolitical existence of the Jews that developed in Diaspora following the failed revolts of 70 and 135 in fact bears, according to Yoder, a striking resemblance to the way of life that Jesus had called for:

> Occasionally privileged after the model of Joseph, more often emigrating, frequently suffering martyrdom non-violently, they were able to maintain identity without turf or sword, community without sovereignty. They thereby demonstrated pragmatically the viability of the ethic of Jeremiah and Jesus.
>
> In sum: the Jews of the Diaspora were for over a millennium the closest thing to the ethic of Jesus existing on any significant scale anywhere in Christendom.[15]

When Peter writes of the church in terms of the Jewish Diaspora, he requires the church to learn something of the shape of its own life among the nations from the sociopolitical pattern of Jewish Diaspora, because in that pattern there is a concrete and visible witness to the messianic politics of Jesus.[16]

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and John Howard Yoder," in *God, Truth, and Witness: Engaging Stanley Hauerwas*, ed. L. Gregory Jones et al. (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 88–111.

14. Yoder, *For the Nations*, 69.

15. Yoder, *Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, 81–82. Peter Ochs provides a Jewish response to Yoder's suggestive interpretation of Jesus and Diaspora on pp. 89–92.

16. This is, of course, a Christian assessment and, to some extent, appropriation of Jewish Diaspora existence—without, I hope, being an expropriation; see George A. Lindbeck, "What of

Peter's description of the church under the phrase *eklektois parepidēmois diasporas* is a *normative description* or, as I have suggested, a terse dogmatic ecclesiology, guiding all that Peter writes in his letter. Peter does not address the church in the language of simile, as those who are *like* chosen exiles in Diaspora. Rather, the church is addressed *directly* as those who *are* such. Each word reveals primarily an aspect of *God's own act* in making the church what it is. The church is not created out of its own action; it does not choose itself, does not separate itself, does not send itself, and yet it is truly a chosen, holy, and sent people. When the church takes seriously the normativity of its being "elect exiles of the Diaspora" it must on the one hand be wary of all forms of Constantinianism, Christendom, and other ecclesial subordinations to or identifications with the social, economic, political, and national powers of this age. Under such forms the church has all too readily and frequently confused or substituted its divine messianic identity and mission with an identity and mission defined by the worldly powers under which it lives. The German Christians in the 1930s and '40s are of course the notorious example. American Christians after September 11, 2001, have also been strongly tempted in this direction, and many American churches and Christians have capitulated to a spirit of patriotic nationalism and militarism under which the gospel is subsumed and of which it becomes a servant—thereby ceasing to be the gospel.[17] On the other hand, being defined as "elect exiles of the Diaspora" is not a call for the church to be otherworldly or escapist, but rather to be a called-out people whose political, social, economic, and cultural life is continually being conformed to its divine messianic origin, constitution, and end. As a people thus formed, it enters confidently into critical, creative, and flexible relationships with its wider cultural, social, and political environments, sharing in the life of the nations, seeking the peace and well-being of earthly cities, engaging them hopefully in the confidence that God also works in earthly cities (even through the church) to bring about a measure of justice, good order, and peace. But the people of God does not look to the earthly city's pride, power, progress, or protection to sustain or provide direction for its own life. The power and grace of God given in the Word and Spirit are sufficient for the life of God's people.[18]

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the Future? A Christian Response," in *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, ed. Tikvah Frymer-Kensky et al. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2000), 357–66. Whether Jews see the correspondence between the Diaspora way of life and the life to which Jesus called his disciples is for Jews themselves to decide. The Boyarins (*Powers of Diaspora*, 1–33), who argue for Diaspora as normative Judaism, nonetheless worry about Christians (like 1 Peter) and others co-opting or generalizing the language of Diaspora in such a way that it loses its unique power as a Jewish phenomenon.

17. I show how the apostle Paul (together with the witness of Stanley Hauerwas) equips the church to resist being co-opted by worldly powers in my *Paul among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology beyond Christendom and Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003), 67–103.

18. I show how the apostle Paul critically and creatively engages the wider culture in my *Paul among the Postliberals*, 209–54.

The Holy Trinity Creates the People of God (1 Peter 1:2)

Peter first describes the being of the church in terms of Israel's election, exile, and Diaspora. But he immediately goes on to say that those terms are themselves grounded more fundamentally in the being and work of the Trinity.[19] Translations of 1:2 generally link God the Father's foreknowledge directly to the election of God's people (cf. NIV, NRSV, New King James Version, Revised English Bible), but then they tend to leave the last two phrases of 1:2 dangling on their own and theologically separated from 1:1. However, the Greek text may well be read as drawing all of 1:1 into the theological reality described in the three phrases of 1:2: "To the elect exiles of the Diaspora . . . according to [*kata*] the foreknowledge of God the Father, in [*en*] the sanctification of the Spirit, because of [*eis*] the obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ" (DH).[20] In other words, the church just is what it is, "elect exiles of the Diaspora," because of the foreknowing, sanctifying, and justifying action of God the Father, Spirit, and Son.

By "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" we see that the election, exile, and dispersion of God's people is no afterthought in God's purpose to bring all creation into communion with the Trinity, but the very outworking of that purpose for all creation. The election of Abram and Sarai from among the nations in Gen. 12 is a new creative act of God, an additional act of differentiating, separating, and fructifying within the created order, in keeping with the other such acts described in Gen. 1. The election of Israel creates *another difference*, constituting a distinct people, in all of its ethnic, social, cultural, and political particularity, among the divinely intended plurality of distinct peoples that spread across the face of the earth according to Gen. 10. The election of Abram and Sarai prefigures and prepares for the incarnation, while the incarnation is the eternal basis of the election of Abram and Sarai. We might say, then, that theologically prior to being a *soteriological* act in response to human sin and the fall (which it also is), the election of Abraham as the father of God's "family" among the families of the earth

19. "The referent of the divine activity described in these three phrases [1:2] is to be construed as ἐκλεκτοῖς rather than ἀπόστολος, since the apostolicity of Peter is not at issue in this letter, while the reality of divine election for estranged and persecuted Christians goes to the heart of the problem this epistle is addressing" (Achtemeier 1996: 86). On the theme of the foundation of the church in the work of the Holy Trinity, see Webster, *Holiness*, chaps. 2–3.

20. My translation follows Elliott in rendering *eis* as causative (see *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, 3rd ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 291 #10a) and *Iēsou Christou* as a subjective genitive: "With *Jesus Christ* as subjective genitive, the three phrases of v 2a–c assume a balance in which God, Spirit, and Jesus Christ each is assigned an active role in Christian election, its origin, mediation, and cause. Taking *eis* to indicate purpose and assuming the elect believers to be the subject of *obedience* but Jesus Christ as the subject of *sprinkling*, on the other hand, results in an awkward syntactical construction . . . that obscures the balance of these three phrases [in 1:2], which appear to focus exclusively on the action of God, Spirit, and Jesus Christ" (Elliott 2000: 319). On this understanding, Peter's thought in this phrase is close to Paul's in Rom. 5:12–19.

is another *creational* act by which God separates one people, Israel, from the rest and promises not only to bless this people, but also to bless all peoples in their God-ordained linguistic, cultural, social, and political diversity and particularity through this one people, which from the beginning bears the flesh of the Messiah. The election, sanctification, and witness of Israel furthers God's original creational intent that the Son of God should become incarnate in Israel's flesh and that through him the Spirit of God should be poured out on all flesh—an intent established in God's foreknowledge of the consummation for which he created all things in the first place.[21] As Maximus the Confessor writes:

> He who, by the sheer inclination of his will, established the beginning of all creation, seen and unseen, before all the ages and before that beginning of created beings, had an ineffably good plan for those creatures. The plan [even before the sin and fall] was for him to mingle, without change on his part, with the human nature by true hypostatic union, to unite human nature to himself while remaining immutable, so that he might become a man, as he alone knew how, and so that he might deify humanity in union with himself. Also, according to this plan, it is clear that God wisely divided "the ages" [*aiōnes*] between those intended for God to become human, and those intended for humanity to become divine.[22]

Israel belongs to that age that is fulfilled in the incarnation of the Son as Israel's Messiah,[23] while the church belongs to that age that is fulfilled in the "deification" of humankind and the healing of the nations. These ages meet and are held together forever in Jesus Christ. In God's creational and soteriological purpose the church is thus eternally joined to Israel in Christ, which is precisely the point of Peter's description of the church in Israel's terms: the elect, the exiles of the Diaspora. Paul also makes this clear when he speaks of the "grace given to [him] to bring to the Gentiles [the nations = *tois ethnesin*] the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in

21. The constitutive and enduring (that is, nonsuperseded) place of Israel among the nations in God's economy of creation, blessing, and consummation is crucially argued in R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 109–77. At the same time (going beyond Soulen), Israel itself is created by, in, and for Jesus Christ, who is himself the redemption and consummation of creation. (George Sumner reminded me of this necessary correction of Soulen.)

22. *Ad Thalassium* 22, in Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilkins (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 115.

23. We should also note that in Jesus Christ we have the redemption and glorification not only of human nature (in the generic sense) but also specifically of Israel, inasmuch as the incarnate, crucified, risen, and glorified Messiah is not only "son of Adam, son of God" (Luke 3:38), but also "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1).

Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:8–11). The list of specifically named provinces in 1 Pet. 1:1—"Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia"—reveals that God's eternal purpose, to bless the particular and diverse peoples of the earth with his riches and wisdom in Jesus Christ through Israel and the church, is already coming to fruition in the particular churches of those provinces to which Peter writes. In those churches, sharing in the particular languages and cultures of those places in that time, the triune God is beginning to redeem the nations. That is the eternal divine purpose of God's people in all particular times and places.

While the origin and purpose of the people of God lies in its election according to the foreknowledge and purpose of the Father, its holiness, that is, its distinct exilic existence as a people "set apart" (*hagios*) among the nations, is the work of the Holy Spirit: "in the sanctification of the Spirit" (*en hagiasmō pneumatos*). The Holy Spirit creates and sustains the bond between the election and the holiness of the people of God by distinguishing the people of God from other peoples. Circumcision in Israel is a sign of the Spirit, who is the bond of the covenant between the holy God and his chosen holy people, named and set apart for God's purpose. The Spirit is also the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that both guides the exilic journey of God's people among the nations and guards it from the attack of the enslaving enemy (Exod. 13:21–22; 14:19–20). The Holy Spirit is the power of God's covenant with the church as well as with Israel. The sign of the Spirit's power in the church is baptism, in which we are named and set apart as God's covenant people. "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption" (Rom. 8:14–15). Thus the sanctifying Spirit of God not only creates and sustains God's covenant with his people, but also brings about the visible signs of God's messianic reign among them: "For the kingdom of God is . . . righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (14:17). The Holy Spirit creates "the fruit of the Spirit" among the people of God (Gal. 5:22–25) and pours out "gifts" for building up the body politic of Christ (1 Cor. 12). The Spirit is "the bond of peace" that unites the body politic of Christ as one people (Eph. 4:3–6). It is the very presence and powerful working of the Holy Spirit, rather than their own decision to "be different," that distinguishes God's people from the wider world. "Nothing is holy but the holiness that God works in us" (Luther 1967: 6).

With the words "because of the obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ" we are reminded that we are made participants of God's triune life through the vicarious obedient life and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. The Father's election and foreknowledge rests first and directly upon his Son, Jesus Christ, as Peter says later: "He was destined [*proegnōsmenou*, i.e., having been foreknown] before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake" (1 Pet. 1:20; cf. Eph. 1:4–5). He is the one "chosen and precious in God's sight" (1 Pet. 2:4). It is *through* this same Christ that we ourselves are chosen and made able to put our "trust in God" (1:21). As Paul writes in Rom. 5:19: "By the one

man's [Christ's] obedience the many will be made righteous." We are made righteous "by his [Christ's] blood" (5:9). This is what Paul means when he writes of the *pistis Iēsou Christou* ("the faithfulness of Jesus Christ") in Rom. 3:22, 26; Gal. 2:16; 3:22; Phil. 1:27; 3:9; Eph. 3:12. "*Pistis Christou* is an expression by which Paul speaks of Christ's atoning faithfulness, as, on the cross, he died faithfully for human beings while looking faithfully to God."[24] So too, Peter writes that we were "ransomed . . . with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish" (1 Pet. 1:18–19). With the clause "because of the obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ" the apostle is pointing us to the costly work of the crucified Son, rather than to the believers' obedience, as the creating, confirming, and sustaining power at work in the church. In so doing, Peter completes his description of how the being, life, and mission of the messianic people of God is constituted through the work of the Holy Trinity, and thereby as participation in the life of God.

Peter concludes his greeting (1:2) with words of benediction: "May grace and peace be yours in abundance." These words are not mere formalities or throwaways, because in fact the whole being of the people of God is a testimony to God who, out of sheer grace, elects, justifies, and sanctifies it; and the whole purpose of that people is to witness among the nations to the triune peace in which it is established. "For we who have been captured from among the nations have been overcome and conquered by the grace of his word" (Origen, *First Principles* 4.1.5). The entire message of Peter's letter might well be summed up in the two words "grace and peace," for throughout the letter the apostle exhorts the church to be a people of peace as the quality both of its inner life and of its relationship to the wider world. It is able to be that kind of people because it does not constitute and sustain itself as a people through its own powers or in dependence on any worldly powers: rather the eternal triune God is the one who graciously creates, upholds, works in, and completes it.

Blessing God and Living Hope (1 Peter 1:3–5)

"In this foreword [1:3–9] you see a truly apostolic speech and an introduction to the theme. . . . For here St. Peter begins without further ado to tell us what Christ is and what we have acquired through Him. . . . These are genuinely evangelical words. They must be proclaimed" (Luther 1967: 9–10). Peter begins his "evangelical" introduction to the themes of his letter by *blessing* God. The first and constitutive act of God's people is to praise God (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; and the many psalms of blessing and praise). Praise is our grateful acknowledgement of God's

24. Martyn, *Galatians*, 271. For interpreting Paul's phrase *pistis Iēsou Christou* as "faith(fulness) of Jesus Christ" rather than "faith in Jesus Christ," see Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); and Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals*, 26–45.