Chapter 22

1 Peter

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Introduction

"Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people." First Peter 2:10 describes a group identity for its Christian audience. J. Brian Tucker has proposed six criteria for identifying a text that seeks to form the hearers' social identity: (1) the text offers a narrative that rivals those of the surrounding culture; (2) the text renames its audience; (3) the text relates new markers of identity to old markers in a way that recognizes the intersectional nature of identity; (4) the text addresses the implications of the new identity in areas of ethics and ethos; (5) the text suggests performances that will embody the new identity; and (6) the text uses discursive practices from the environment to negotiate the new identity (Tucker, *Remain,* 51–57). First Peter fits all of these criteria.

Textual Identity Formation

First, the text appropriates the identity-forming Jewish narrative of exile and diaspora and applies it, somewhat reframed, for its auditors (e.g., 1:1). Second, 1 Peter repeatedly names the people he is writing to, starting at the beginning of the letter with "exiles," "chosen and destined by God" in 1:1. Third, the crosscutting nature of identity will form a major topic in the discussion below. The addressees are not only Christians (1:1–2), but household slaves (2:18–20); wives (3:1–6), some of whom had some wealth (3:3); husbands (3:7); and perhaps heads of households (5:1–5; Horrell, *Becoming*, 123–28). As such, they had group norms and role expectations from the local culture that conflicted with their Christian calling. First Peter offers them guidance for navigating these intersections (Hogg and Abrams, *Social Identifications*, 19). Whereas the addressees have been used to thinking of themselves as Romans or Jews or Galatians, the slave of this one, the wife of that one, the devotee of this deity, this letter attempts to redraw the boundaries such that, while still functioning in some of those capacities, the people he is writing to begin to make salient their identity as the chosen slaves of God (2:16). This identity would then become that through which all other identities are evaluated. Fourth and fifth, 1 Peter regularly addresses the ethos and ethics of Christian identity, particularly a nuanced obedience (e.g., 1:2; 2:13) to holiness (1:14–15) and a normalization of the suffering that may come as a result (4:12). It then proposes specific behaviors that would enact these values, such as non-retaliation (2:23; 3:9; 4:4, 14), a life that mirrors the Lord's (2:21; 3:15–18; 4:1) and witnesses to those outside the group with both

word (2:9; 3:15; 4:11) and deed (2:12; 3:1; 4:11), and "mutual love" for ingroup members (1:22; 5:1–5). Sixth, this letter takes people who are disobeying in some key areas the human authorities that are ostensibly placed over them (2:13) and renames them "obedient children" (1:14) and "servants of God" (2:16). The outgroup is renamed as well: "Those who do not obey the gospel of God" (4:17). Thus, Christians who, in their discursive environment, are labeled disobedient are instead called obedient, and those masters and rulers of the outgroup who see themselves as obedient to cultural norms are, according to 1 Peter, the disobedient ones. Another reappropriated term is the name "Christian" (Horrell, *Becoming*, 164–210). Originally used to dishonor the believers, it is claimed and repurposed in this letter as a label of honor in God's sight, one for which the bearers should "glorify God" (4:16). By redefining obedience and adopting the label "Christian," ingroup status is improved (Hogg and Abrams, *Social Identifications*, 28). These six elements of identity formation will provide the main focus of this commentary.

Genre, Dating, Authorship, and Addressees

For the purposes of this chapter, I understand 1 Peter to be a unified composition in the epistolary genre (Elliott, *Conflict*, 7–9). The multiple proposals for the dating of the letter lead me to leave the date of composition fairly open but rather early, broadly between 65–90 CE. Thus, the identity of the author, too, is left undetermined, although "Peter" will be used for convenience.

The addressees have variously been understood as Jewish or gentile Christians of Asia Minor. The author's expectation that those addressed in this letter would both recognize Hebrew Bible references and his comment that they have "spent enough time in doing what the gentiles like to do" (4:3–4; cf. 1:14, 18) suggest mixed backgrounds either of the congregation (Elliott, *Conflict*, 16) or of individuals, likely both.

The addressees are suffering not only from verbal abuse and shaming in the local cultures but also, in some cases, from physical abuse within their homes (2:20; 3:6, 13–14, 16; 4:1). The form of suffering was dependent on the specific ways in which Christians were embedded in the larger community, whether in pagan households (4:3), local communities (2:7), and/or the Roman world (2:13–17; Williams, *Persecution*, 179–236).

Discussions of good conduct and bad are difficult to follow in this letter because Peter does not always explain whether he means good conduct according to God or good conduct according to those who have power over the Christians: the emperor, governors, slave masters, husbands, or the cultural standards of their local area. First Peter 2:12 is a good example: "Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles [presumably according to gentile standards], so that, though they malign you as evil-doers [for your obedience to God], they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God [either for deeds that are honorable according to their own standards or that are revealed to be honorable] when he comes to judge." Still, if Christians are being treated poorly, it must be because either those with power over them are arbitrarily abusive or they are not obeying them. And while the former is certainly a possibility, it seems unlikely that the arbitrary abuse was so widespread as to require comment. More probably, Christians are behaving well according to God which effectively causes them to disobey their masters (e.g., 4:14). At least for some, it is specifically their identity as Christians which is causing the conflict (Jobes, 2005, 113).

Commentary

Initial Naming (1:1–2)

The letter begins by immediately naming the addressees. The meaning of the term "exiles" has been disputed; some suggest it refers to actual "resident aliens and temporary visitors" (Elliott, *Conflict*, e.g., 32) and others propose that the reference is metaphorical (e.g., Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 82). It does not, however, seem necessary to strictly choose (Green, *1 Peter*, 16–17). Peter is writing to people who previously were integrated into the roles and functions assigned to them by birth, marriage, or ancestry (4:4), whether that consisted of being actual foreigners or not. They are now, though, dealing with a new sense of alienation brought about by their birth into this new family (1:3; 2:2). This very alienation would have contributed to the development of ingroup cohesion (Hogg and Abrams, *Social Identifications*, 104). While naming them "exiles" might seem negative, it valorizes their distance from their previous identity groups and connects them to Abraham (LXX Gen 23:4) and the people of Israel (2 Macc 1:27; Isa 49:6). The same is true of the words "Dispersion" (LXX 2 Macc 1:27; LXX Ps 146:2; LXX Isa 49:6) and "chosen" (LXX 1 Chr 16:13; LXX Ps 104:6, 43; LXX Is 42:1). Furthermore, these words hearken back to the Babylonian exile during which the Israelites had to develop the same negotiation between obedience and resistance toward which Peter urges his audience (Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology*, 24). The list of provinces in v. 1 highlights the variety of backgrounds and cultures these Christians have to negotiate. So from the beginning, 1 Peter speaks to a people living at the intersection of competing identities: foreign, local, and attached, in some way, to Judaism.

A New Birth Narrative (1:3–12)

In this section of the letter, Peter begins to form the social identity of his hearers by telling them a new story of origin and, using the first-person plural (1:3), Peter includes himself within the same ingroup. The story starts with a "new birth" (v. 3), as is appropriate for a story of origin, but this birth differs from usual ones because it is an eschatological one—a birth "into a living hope" (v. 3), into "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading" (v. 4), into "a salvation ready to be revealed," that is both now and not yet. The ingroup is thus united by their expectation of a future of "praise and glory and honor" (1:7) in which all will share (Hogg and Abrams, *Social Identifications*, 96).

The metaphor of the purifying of gold is brought in to explain why this future is so different from the experience of these Christians at the moment. If even perishable gold has to be refined, how much more the ingroup, which has an everlasting inheritance (1:4). It is important to note two things about this metaphor. First, v. 7 is connected to the previous verse with the phrase "so that," indicating that the purpose of the trials is to reveal the "genuineness of your faith." This purpose is connected, not only in 1 Peter but in the various uses of the same metaphor in the Hebrew Bible, to the intentionality of God in purifying the people of God (Mal 3:2–3; Zech 13:9; Ps 66:10; Prov 17:3; Sir 2:1–5; and Wis 3:5–6; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 94–95; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 102 n. 36). Ultimate power, then, no longer resides in human authorities but in God, who is, as

v. 5 notes, protecting them for their future. But that leads to the second point. The community is being purified, not the individuals in it. (Every use of the second-person "you" throughout this book is plural.) The dross in the metaphor, then, are the people who do not stay faithful to God and do not remain within the community because of the suffering they are undergoing. These are the people who respond to a group-level threat with individual social mobility (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje, "Self," 174–76). They are able to disassociate with the Christians because their commitment to that identity is low and also because there are no visible, physical markers for Christianity that would cause others to immediately recognize them as Christians. Thus, they can choose a different primary ingroup. In vv. 7–9, Peter strengthens the group identity of those that remain. The community is valorized as pure, the suffering is explained as purposeful to remove from their midst those who left, who are then stereotyped as dross. By defining an outgroup that is differentiated on the important criterion of purity, 1 Peter leads people to categorize themselves more readily into the ingroup (Haslam et al., "Today," 348–49).

Next, Peter strengthens the Christians' ingroup identity by positively comparing them with two other groups: Hebrew prophets and angels. The prophets investigated and foretold "the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory" (1:11), presumably *Christ's* glory. This pattern of suffering and glory becomes, later in the letter (e.g., 2:21–24), the model for the Christians to follow as well. However, Peter may instead be referring to prophetic predictions about the salvation, suffering in Christ's cause, and the glories (the Greek is plural) that refer to the holier state of the people of God now that they are purified (Mal 3:3–4; Zech 13:9; Ps 66:12; Wis 5–8). In either case, by their very suffering, the Christians are envied, and therefore honored, by both prophets and angels (1:12). So far, then, this letter has renamed the Christians and valorized their identity by not only rooting it in a Jewish narrative but also making them the master identity for prophets and angels. Such social creativity discursively creates an improved positive distinctiveness for Christian identity, increasing the self-categorization of individual Christians within that group (Hogg and Abrams, *Social Identifications*, 22–23, 28, 74; Horrell, *Becoming*, 205).

An Ethos of Holiness (1:13–25)

Now that Peter has established an origin story for the Christians, he begins to give them the ethics and ethos of the group: they are to become holy by "obedience to the truth," and to "love one another deeply" (1:22). These ethical injunctions are to be worked out in the context of hope (1:13), and although the NRSV suggests that this is a hope in a future grace, the Greek and the context (e.g., 1:5) suggest rather that this grace is both present (partially) *and* future (fully).

This section is marked by the interconnecting and repeated ideas of obedience (v. 14, 22), good conduct (15, 17, 18), and imperishability (18, 23; Schutter, *Hermeneutic*, 53; Edwards, *1 Peter*, 53). Furthermore, although the letter does not address every aspect of a believers' previous identity, and later on, in fact, specifically leaves some aspects of it unchanged, in this section the places where that identity needs to be reformed are addressed.

The letter calls its readers "obedient children" (1:14) and "you [who] have come to trust in God" (1:21). It asks them to reject certain aspects of their gentile identities by stereotyping them as "desires that you formerly had in ignorance" (1:14), "the futile ways inherited from your ancestors" (1:18), and "perishable . . . seed" (1:23) of which they formerly were born. At this

stage in the letter, Peter describes more of an ethos than specific ethical behaviors. They are to "be holy" (1:16), to "live in reverent fear" (1:17), to "trust God" (1:21), to set their "faith and hope . . . on God" (1:21), and to obey the truth (1:22).

One specific element of the Christians' changed identity is ransom "with perishable things like silver or gold" (1:18). This verse opposes Christian identity to gentile identity in two ways. First, the holiness of Christians (1:16) is opposed to the traditions of gentile ancestors (1:18), and God will judge between the two (1:17). Yet, at this stage in the letter the details of these behaviors remain somewhat vague. In the second opposition, ransom by "the precious blood of Christ" is compared with ransom by "silver or gold." Silver and gold are regularly mentioned in the Hebrew Bible in the context of idol worship (Exod 20:23; Wis 13:10; 14:8; see also Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 128 n. 57). So Israelite identity is, in this instance, enjoined onto the Christians, and God becomes their exemplar, particularly for holiness. Thus, the social comparison of worship practices highlights the value of the ingroup ransom on a dimension where the outgroup compares poorly: perishable silver and gold (Hogg and Abrams, *Social Identifications*, 52). The result is a heightening of ingroup status and an ethic that rejects idolatry.

Verse 1:16 quotes LXX Lev 19:2 where the whole people of God was set apart by obedience to the Ten Commandments (Jobes, *1 Peter*, 112, 114, 161–62) as well as "genuine mutual love" (1:22; Lev 19:18; Schutter, *Hermeneutic*, 57). These ethics created a clear boundary between the ingroup and the outgroup which consisted of the gentiles living around the Israelites (Lev 20:26; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 121). The reference to obedience particularly in a context that creates clear boundaries marks the beginning of a discursive negotiation with the environment in which these Christians are embedded. The holiness to which they are called, entailing as it did a rejection of idolatry, likely marked them precisely as *disobedient*, particularly those who were slaves (2:18–20) or wives (3:1–6), but also those who were embedded in local economic and political relationships (2:12–17). We will see this negotiation continue as the letter progresses.

In this section, then, the Christian ingroup is given continuity with the people of Israel (1:14–17, 19–20, 22–25) and the eschatological purposes of God (1:13; 1:23–25). Topics or themes mentioned elsewhere in the canon are personalized for the Petrine audience. The depiction of God as a judge is connected both to their prayers and their behavior (1:17; Green, *1 Peter*, 45), and this connection between good deeds and effective prayer will be repeated three more times (3:7, 12; 4:7). The concept of blood redemption is applied specifically to them, through Christ (vv. 18–19). The former associates of the Christians, however, become the outgroup (1:14). And that outgroup is stereotyped as those who will be judged, because the God these Christians worship also has authority over the outgroup, to judge them as well (1:17). The ingroup, however, is dependent on Christ as their benefactor (1:19–21). They are formed by the word of the Lord which is connected to the eschatological future by the quotation of Isa. 40:6–8 (1 Peter 1:24–25), and they are called to a particular ethic of mutual love (1:22).

Social Creativity: Valorizing Ingroup Identity (2:1–12)

Next, the author takes his auditors through four different metaphor clusters, each of which provides a different aspect of Christian identity. First, as the "new birth" given to them by God has previously

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been announced (1:3), the addressees also must assume a new role in the family, that of "newborn infants" (2:2). In this snapshot, they are expected to get rid of a list of poor practices (2:1) and instead to develop a longing for the milk of high quality that God provides. This milk is Christ himself, and to drink of him is, according to ancient understandings of breastfeeding, to become transformed into his image (2:3; Hunt, "Alien"). The obedience of the Christians will result in a greater dependence on God, a transformation into the group exemplar, and also a dropping away of the ethics of their previous identity (1:18, 23, 24; 2:1; Schutter, *Hermeneutic*, 58).

Second, the Christians are called "living stones." Like the Lord (2:3), their exemplar, the ingroup is valued as "chosen and precious" in contrast to the rejection they experience from the outgroup. Then, the image shifts back into a Jewish narrative once again (Exod 19:5–6; Isa 43:20–21; Elliott, *Conflict*, 77), this time in a description of the temple, in which Peter's addressees are both the stones and the priesthood. The ethos of the community in this metaphor is less one of positive obedience and more one of passive reception (note the passive in 2:5) of their positive status in the sight of God (Elliott, *Conflict*, 31–32, 76–77; for more on the honor 1 Peter insists accrues to Christians, see 69, 73–76). In a letter that leaves the boundaries for entry into the ingroup open, metaphors such as new birth and a temple building in which one finds oneself a stone decrease the tendency toward social mobility and instead engage in social creativity to heighten the ingroup status as a whole (Haslam et al., "Tomorrow," 359).

The sacrifices, which in this context likely refer to the suffering that rejection entails (Eve, "1 Peter," 1266), are "acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (2:5). The work has been done; the only thing required of the Christians is that they would "believe" (2:6–7; see also 1:8), and the Greek incorporates not just mental assent but also trust (BDAG 817). The temple metaphor assumes a certain structure, and the ingroup ("you who believe"; 2:7) is thus once again implicitly valued above the outgroup, which is stereotyped as those who are "put to shame" (2:6), "those who do not believe" (2:7), those who stumble and fall (2:8–9), those who were "destined" to "disobey the word" (2:8). In this second metaphor, then, the honorable status of the ingroup is emphasized. Furthermore, the obedient/disobedient discourse continues. Although the obedience of the ingroup is not mentioned, the outgroup, the very people who mark the Christians as disobedient, are now characterized as the disobedient ones themselves: they "disobey the word" (2:8; 3:1); they "do not obey the gospel of God" (4:17), and they are compared to "the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey" (3:19–20). If these people were regularly accusing some of the Christians of disobedience, this way of turning these accusations back on them would be especially powerful in shaping Christian identity.

In the third metaphor cluster, the addressees have now become a nation of priests. Verses 9–10 might be called identity formation *extraordinaire*. Any previous identity they might have carried is supplemented, since they were "not a people," but now they are "God's own people" (2:9, 10). Being set apart (Exod 19:5–6, 10–14) as priests continues the call to holiness from 1:15–16 (Exod 19:14). It again valorizes the distance between Christians and the outgroup, those they previously identified with, and grounds their group identity within the OT narrative. However, holiness entails more than simply being distinct; it includes a vocation toward something, not just a separation from something else (Edwards, *1 Peter*, 62).

In Exod 19:21–25, Moses becomes an intermediary between God and the people encamped at the base of the mountain, but the whole nation of Israel is also to become "a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" in the midst of an earth that belongs to God (Exod 19:5). We have already

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seen an emphasis on God's sovereignty even over the outgroup in 1 Peter (1:7, 17). As priests for the world, however, the separation between ingroup and outgroup is mitigated. The Christians' devotion includes an element of proclamation of God's actions. At this point in the letter, one could argue that to "proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (2:9) does not specify the recipients of the proclamation and therefore may simply refer to ingroup praise. However, the light/dark metaphor implies a light that carries out into the darkness, and the missional element of the ethic of proclamation will be made more explicit in sections to come (e.g., 2:9; 3:15; 4:11; Goppelt, *Commentary*, 150). Also, the fact that their move from darkness to light is due to God's call leaves the boundaries of the ingroup porous and suggests a purpose for their proclamation: the incorporation of individuals from the outgroup into the ingroup. The boundary is permeable, but only in one direction.

The fourth metaphor (vv. 11–12) returns to the language used at the opening of the letter. The tension between outgroup stereotyping and porous boundaries continues as God's people are named "aliens and exiles." This naming has the effect of connecting the people once again to Israel's narrative (see above) and simultaneously of detaching them from their outgroup by naming it "the gentiles" despite the likelihood that at least some of the Christians would have been categorized as such before they believed. They would not have categorized *themselves* in such a way, however; thus, the label is available for them to use for the outgroup. And with the phrase "among the gentiles," Christian identity rooted in Judaism is made salient even in social locations where the Christians are in the presence of the outgroup (Haslam et al., "Tomorrow," 367–69; Hogg and Abrams, *Social Identifications*, 117, 123, 175).

The group ethos of these "exiles" is to "abstain from the desires of the flesh" (2:11), although these are not developed into specific ethical practices at this stage. Verse 12 picks up a reframing of the suffering first mentioned in 1:6–7. The salience of their Christian identity ought to cause these Christians to prioritize the ethos of honorable behavior, even though this does not stop the slander visited on them at the present moment. Yet Peter promises that from an eschatological perspective, the praise that they ought to be receiving from the gentiles today will eventually be given to God. Thus, the obedience to God which their human lords now characterize as disobedience will one day draw praise, when they, too, adapt the ethos of Christian identity in the light of God's coming judgment. The holiness of God's people, then, like God's own holiness, does not merely exist for itself, but also works for the sake of the inclusion of others.

Intersectional Identities: The Ethics of Obedient Disobedience (2:13—3:9)

This section begins (2:13) and ends (3:8–9) with general instructions involving submission to "every human institution" outside of the group (2:13; 3:9), and "love for one another" (3:8; 2:17) within the ingroup. In between, the crosscutting identities of the listeners are addressed with participles of means (Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 194) that are examples of the ways different people could "accept the authority of every human institution" (2:13). Christians are not only called on to obey God and disobey those around them. Instead, they are repeatedly called to a measure of obedience (e.g., 2:13). What does it mean to be a Christian and a house "slave" (2:18)? What

about wives with unbelieving husbands (3:1–6)? Finally, how should husbands behave toward their Christian (Green, *1 Peter*, 99–100) wives (3:7)?

So far, insiders disobedient to the outgroup have been characterized as obedient to the Lord and the outgroup has been stereotyped as disobedient. Now ingroup identity is nuanced somewhat. Christians are not to *always* disobey their human lords but instead are called to a measure of obedience (e.g., 2:13). When possible, they are to "silence the ignorance of the foolish" (2:15, more outgroup characterization) by honoring the outgroup (2:13–17) and "by doing right" (2:15). By behaving according to cultural norms, the Christian expresses his or her broader cultural identity thus making that salient. Such crossed categorization reduces bias and allows Christians to continue to live with non-Christians while also reducing the likelihood of bias against Christians that leads to persecution (Dovidio, "Recategorization," 77).

Horrell (*Becoming*, 231) notes the nuancing in 2:17 that enjoins only "honor" to "the emperor" as, indeed, to "everyone," and "fear," or, better, worship, only to God. The instructions to slaves, wives, and husbands should be seen in the light of a nuanced obedience that Horrell calls "polite resistance" (*Becoming*, 236–38). Thus, while Christians are to "accept the authority of every human institution" (2:13), "do right" according to the governors (2:14–15), and honor "everyone" including the "emperor" (2:17), their Christian identity is made salient even with regard to those authorities by the reminders that they belong to God, are "free people" with respect to the human authorities. The household to which they primarily belong is that of the "believers" (2:16–17).

The ethics of honorability are brought up next. The giving of honor in 2:17 can be connected to the behavior of Christ mentioned in 2:22–23, since his exemplar dishonors those who were abusing him. That same dishonor accrues to unbelievers (4:5; 3:16; 2:7b–8; 4:17–18; Elliott, *Conflict*, 75). But honor accrues to slaves and wives, slaves for their suffering (2:19–20), wives for their lack of ostentation and their gentleness (3:4).

The obedience due to human authorities is "for the Lord's sake" (2:13) and is thus predicated not on the just or unjust decisions of the rulers but on the Lord. This phrase pushes back against a simple dichotomy that might have suggested that obedience to the Lord always meant disobedience to other authorities. Here, some obedience to these other authorities is categorized as a way to bring honor to the Lord. In 1976, Robinson expressed the tension well: "The parallel today might be a warning to Christians in South Africa to make certain that, if they are going to oppose *apartheid* (as of course they must), they do not allow themselves to be convicted for doing wrong rather than for doing good" (*Redating*, 152). Slaves, wives, husbands, and people in general will, when acting as "obedient children" (1:14), inevitably act in ways that those around them and even those in close relationships with them will oppose. This behavior is called "do[ing] right" (2:20), appropriating and redefining outgroup terminology (Williams, *Good Works*, 268–70). Yet, there will be many cases where they will be constrained to live with consideration, respect, and even obedience to those in power (258). Although there might exist "those who do wrong" (2:14), "the foolish" (2:15), those who "use [their] freedom as a pretext for evil" (2:16), as well as some who "repay evil for evil" and "abuse for abuse" (3:8), these people are othered. As mentioned above, this cross-categorization may allow Christians some measure of self-protection.

First Peter 2:18–3:7 repeats these ethics for three different identities—to "endure pain while suffering unjustly" (2:19; cf. 2:20). The slaves are particularly enjoined to defer to their masters even when they are unjustly beaten (2:18, 20). Note that the type of slave addressed here is specifically a house slave, so one must assume either that these instructions were not intended for

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other types of slaves or, more likely, that this was the most common crosscutting identity among the letter's recipients. Slaves may be suffering unjustly not so much "being aware of God" as the NRSV has it, but rather "because of conscientiousness towards God" (2:19; BDAG 968); in other words, they are prioritizing duty to God over duty to masters (Goppelt, *Commentary*, 18–20). Their behavior is modeled on the exemplar of the group, Christ, who also suffered unjustly (vv. 21–25; Elliott, *Conflict*, 73). A few differences are mentioned, however. Christ endured suffering for the salvation of the listeners (vv. 21, 24–25), whereas provincials, slaves, and wives should obey because "it is God's will" to "silence the ignorance of the foolish" (2:15) and so that unbelieving husbands would "be won over" (3:1), to gain "credit" with God (2:19–20), to fulfill their calling (2:21) and to "live for righteousness" (2:24).

Furthermore, although the NRSV suggests that Christ "entrusted himself" to the justice of God (2:23), the Greek does not include the reflexive (Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 201). Rather than entrusting himself, Christ entrusted the situation and thus also his revilers to God (BDAG 762). Thus, the injustice of Christ's abusers, and by extension of those who abuse the provincials, the slaves, and the wives, is also left to the justice of God. The ambiguity of this phrase highlights the letter's reluctance to strongly stereotype the outgroup as ultimately condemned, and this reluctance contributes to the maintenance of porous group boundaries (see also 3:1–2, 15–16).

Wives are specifically proffered an ethos of "purity and reverence" (3:2), fiscal modesty in apparel (3:3), and "a gentle and quiet spirit" (3:4). For this, wives are given a different exemplar, Sarah. The submission of Sarah in Gen 18:12 (Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 215), which is the only place where she calls Abraham "Lord," is in reference to her willingness (although full of doubt) to bear a child (*pace* Martin, "The TestAbr"). Thus, the obedience enjoined may relate to a wife's willingness to continue to bear children for her unbelieving husband (Mattingly, *Imperialism*, 98). Since wives are also told to "do what is good and never let fears alarm" them, the fears would be of disabilities or death from childbirth. This interpretation is strengthened by the passage related to husbands (see below). Furthermore, the emphasis on "your [own] husbands" (3:1) may also carry with it the implication that unmarried household women are free to reject the authority of other men, if they can.

Wives are also to receive honor from their Christian husbands (3:7). This verse is particularly poorly translated in the NRSV, as well as in several other English translations; the Greek suggests that "consideration" be connected to "weaker sex" and "honor" to "heirs" (Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 204–05; Goppelt, *Commentary*, 225; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 202; Green, *1 Peter*, 90): "Husbands, in the same way, [accept the authority of every human institution] by sharing a home with your wife, knowing that she is a weaker vessel, and showing them honor, as co-heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing may hinder your prayers" (my translation; see also foreign language translations such as, for example, Bible en français courant). With the reference to Sarah's submission to Abraham in the matter of her pregnancy, consideration for a woman's limited capacity to bear children and remain in good health may be in view by the characterization of women as weak, particularly if (as suggested by LXX Deut 22:13; 24:1; and 25:5; Davids, *First Epistle*, 122) "sharing a home" could be a euphemism for sex. Although one could argue that references to women as "vessels" in connection with childbearing are Rabbinical (b. Meg. 12b; b. B. Meṣ. 84b) and therefore too late to be used in this discussion, it was in any case in childbearing that a woman was most vulnerable in the ancient world, and therefore, that her weakness was most evident, and she had the most to fear (3:6). Thus, while

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Christian women are told to submit to their husbands, particularly in bringing children into the world, Christian husbands, correspondingly, are enjoined not to forget the frailty of women in this area, not to abuse their power to beget. Such injunctions are especially likely in the eras before reliable birth control. Self-control in men would also have signaled virtue to the surrounding culture (Conway, *Behold*, 24, 54; cf. Philo, *Mos.* 1.28). Furthermore, if the plural in the second half of 3:7 refers to all the women of the Christian man's household, they should also be categorized as co-heirs and therefore treated with honor (Green, *1 Peter*, 99–100). The clause would then provide a counterpart to the (sexual) autonomy given to household women in 3:1.

What effect does this "polite resistance" have? While "doing good" in accordance with God but in opposition to the wishes of unbelieving masters, husbands, wives, and the local community (3:10–4:2) will bring resistance now and glory later, those whose lives are particularly vulnerable are allowed to moderate their vulnerability with submission (e.g., Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 208). The possibility of rebelling completely by leaving one's human lord is not mentioned, perhaps because such a move would be likely to ultimately lead to more severe abuse (Williams, *Good Works*, 204). Instead, the combination of obedience and disobedience could have the effect of reducing the harshness of human lords. Those with power often tell themselves stories in which marginalized people are happy to serve (Scott, *Domination*, 4, 18, 58). By revealing the power relationships and the implicit violence (potential [2:14; 3:17] or real [2:19]) they contain, the disobedience of the slaves and wives makes clear what their human lords may prefer to have concealed. Categorization threat could lead subordinates to want to distance themselves from Christianity in some social situations.

However, 1 Peter also reassures slaves and wives that they have the agency to decide for themselves where their obedience belongs to God and where to masters and husbands ("live as free people"). If they have properly categorized themselves as Christians, they will act according to group norms (Hogg and Abrams, *Social Identifications*, 172–73) and maintain holiness even in the face of reprisals from the outgroup. Marginalized Christians are changing the boundaries of their human masters' ability to control them but are not threatening to expose the injustice of the whole system. They continue to respect others (wives, husbands, slave owners, rulers) in a way that leaves those others the opportunity to join the ingroup if they become convicted by their own poor behavior (Elliott, *Conflict*, 73). Christ, who also refused to comply with the system and yet submitted to its cruelty, has become the exemplar. Furthermore, by both stereotyping the outgroup and seeking to improve the status of the ingroup, Christians strengthen ingroup commitment (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje, "Self," 176–77).

The honor a husband should show his wife is then matched by the ethos of the greater community, one of "unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind" (3:8). Certainly, if the weak ought not to repay their human lords' injustices with evil, much more ought such a spirit of retaliation be absent from the Christian community. Ultimately, this attitude is tied (as with husbands and wives, 3:7) to the eschatological return of Christ with an inheritance of blessings for the faithful (3:9). Within the bookends of ingroup love, this section gives general instructions involving a measure of submission to the outgroup. Verse 3:9 is a hinge, promoting non-retaliation certainly for insiders, but moving the discussion back to the outgroup.

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Identity Performance: Letting Outgroup Members In (3:10–22)

Now Peter moves on to more detailed ethics for doing good according to God. His addressees are "the righteous" (3:12), those who are connected to the Lord by means of their prayers (3:7, 12). More than that, they are "eager to do what is good" (3:13). The outgroup, on the other hand, is stereotyped as "those who do evil" (3:12) and "those who abuse [them] for [their] good conduct" (3:16). It is, in fact, good conduct according to Christian ethos (2:15, 17, 18; 3:2, 16, 17; 4:2, 19; cf. 2:14; 3:4; 2:19; 3:16, 21; Elliott, *Conflict*, 73) that results in Christian suffering "for doing what is right" (3:14, 17) without fear (3:14), with Christ as the exemplar (3:17).

Elliott also notes the clear separation into two groups that 3:13–4:19 draws (*Conflict*, 34). Suffering for doing evil is contrasted with suffering for doing good (3:14–17, as in 2:18–20). In these passages, Christians are told not to be "intimidated," and we hear that they are being "beaten," "maligned," and abused for their "good conduct in Christ."

Yet the strength of the divisions rhetorically presented in these passages should not obscure the intersectionality of the experiences of slaves of unbelieving masters, wives of unbelieving husbands, and people of various social statuses living under pagan rulers. While Elliott (*Conflict*, 35) suggests that obedience implies total disentanglement with gentiles (*Conflict*, 34), this is likely not possible for most and is not required according to 4:11. Elliott also rejects the possibility that 1 Peter calls for total separation, yet he equates the outgroup with the devil (*Conflict*, 41). Perhaps this is because he envisions gentiles as "hostile local neighbors" (*Conflict*, 56; cf. 65, 68, 78), rather than members of one's own household, such as slave masters, husbands, and wives. In fact, the separate ethos enjoined on fellow believers is necessarily emphasized specifically because of the intersecting identities detailed in 2:13–3:9 (Goppelt, *Commentary*, 19).

But this ethos when suffering is extended in two ways, first, with specific ethical injunctions. Christians are again connected to the Hebrew Bible (LXX Ps 33). The ethical exhortation to speak no evil or deceit (3:10), to "do good" and "pursue" peace (3:11) are connected, as for the husbands (3:7), to the effectiveness of their prayers. Not only do Christians honor Christ in their hearts, but they are also to honor him verbally when asked (3:15). It is, in fact, their hope in eternal realities that might prompt others to question them, and when this happens they are to reply "with gentleness and reverence" (3:16). The porous boundary of the group is again left open. As previously when the judgment was left to God (2:23), somewhat similarly, judgment falls on the unrighteous in the form of "shame" (3:16). But this judgment is not the emphasis of the passage. In 3:12, for example, the next phrase from LXX Ps 33 (*LES*), "to destroy utterly the memory of them from the earth," is left out.

The second way the ethos of the community during the times of suffering is extended is by reframing that suffering in the light of heavenly realities (Williams, *Good Works*, 251–54). Christ is less an exemplar in this passage and more of a leader, because his suffering effected salvation. Noah, his wife, his sons, and their wives (Gen 7:7) become the exemplars here—just as God brought them safely through the waters, God has brought the Christians to salvation through baptism. Baptism, in this case, is not the means of salvation but, corresponding to the water through which the eight people attained salvation (Goppelt, *Commentary*, 265), is the danger one must safely pass through to reach salvation, the salvation that Christ procured (*pace* Achtemeier,

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1 Peter, 246; Green, *1 Peter*, 137–38). Especially for slaves and wives of unbelievers, to choose to be baptized might have been a dangerous choice. Noah provided salvation for his family by following the will of God (see 4:2); Christ provided salvation by suffering according to the will of God, and baptism saves because, while dangerous, the baptized have also obeyed the will of God, cleansing their conscience (3:21).

Thus, Peter tells this community that they are to see themselves as obedient, and asks them to continue to be obedient, and to explain their obedience to those who ask, returning blessings for abuse.

An Eschatological Future (4:1–11)

Verses 4:1–2 highlight Christ as exemplar again and reframe the suffering of Christians because of disobedience to their human lords (possibly by choosing baptism) in a way that highlights their obedience to Jesus Christ. They are to disobey "human desires," their own or that of others, which are now called "sin" and instead are to obey "the will of God." Similarly, they are no longer to obey the pleasures of "the Gentiles" (4:3), and this disobedience of cultural norms is causing them to be "reviled for the name of Christ" (4:14).

Peter then moves on to delineate the stereotypical ethics of the outgroup for this eschatological community. The gentiles are described in typical fashion (4:3–4), but the reframing of obedience and disobedience continues in this description since the behavior of the gentiles, culminating in "idolatry" is now characterized as "lawless" thus once again renaming as disobedient the things those with power in the society call obedient. In v. 5, the delivery of the gentiles before the judgment of God, hinted at before (see above), is made explicit. Yet hope is still extended; even those judged may live (4:6; Horrell, *Becoming*, 83–84).

First Peter then goes back to describing ingroup ethics. In v. 7 the connection between God's version of good behavior and the effectiveness of prayer is made for the fourth time. Obedience to God has its rewards. Of what, specifically, does obedience to God consist? Those living in light of the glory and future glorification of God (4:11) should be loving (4:8), hospitable (4:9), serving one another by using the gifts that God has given along with divine strength (vv. 10–11). These group ethics contrast with 4:3 and provide the detailed descriptors for the two groups named in 4:2, those who live "by human desires" and those who live "by the will of God" (Schutter, *Hermeneutic*, 72).

The group to which Peter calls his listeners is fundamentally different from the other roles Christians might play because their salient Christianity prioritizes holiness, which may or may not, at various moments, line up with obedience to a human master but which will ultimately bring honor from the very people who disparage them at the present moment (2:12; 3:16; 4:11). Loyalty to God means not only loyalty to the people of God but also the giving of honor to God through words and behavior (1:3; 2:5, 9, 12; 4:11, 16; 5:11 cited by Elliott, *Conflict*, 78), with an eternal exemplar, Jesus Christ, that again connects the group identity to the eschaton. The eschatological vision presented in 4:3–11 may be drawn particularly strongly because it would have been more usual for people to categorize themselves as a member of an unbelieving household, a servant of a pagan ruler, or an inhabitant of a particular location.

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Summary (4:12–19)

Now that some of the positive ethics of the community have been set forth, Peter returns once more to the necessity of keeping this ethos even when suffering. Listeners are again enfolded into the community by the names that Peter gives them: "beloved" (v. 12), "the household of God" (v. 17), "the righteous" (v. 18), and "those suffering" but because of their obedience to "God's will" (v. 19). Additionally, Peter draws close to them as an author by again counting himself as one of them (v. 17). The incorporation of an apostle into the community increases its status, another instance of social creativity.

Unlike the surprise of the gentiles at the lack of participation of Christians with them (4:4), those of the community will "not be surprised" (v. 12) by their suffering, in the light of the eschaton. Their ethos is to be one of joy because they are able to imitate Christ, their exemplar. Verse 14 again refers to those who are reviled as obedient and calls them blessed, with the honor of the presence of the Spirit of God. But again, disobedience to human authorities in obedience to God cannot be stretched to include things that are disobedient to both human authorities *and* God (4:15). Disobedience to both *is* a disgrace. Disobeying human authorities while obeying God, earning the monikers "disobedient" *and* "Christian" (4:16), is a reason to give God glory. Like disobedient, the term "Christian" was likely derogatory in the mouths of gentiles, yet it became a self-designation for the ingroup and therefore a term of honor.

Other terms throughout the letter highlight the salience of Christian identity by discursively creating the ingroup as a household. Although they are "aliens" living in "exile," in other words, far from home (1:17; 2:11), they are nevertheless "built into a spiritual house" (2:5). Although the slaves are house slaves (2:18) and the husbands are to continue sharing a home with their wives (3:7), these household connections are superseded by their more salient role as household "stewards of the manifold grace of God" (4:10). They are, ultimately then, "the household of God" (4:17; Wan, "Repairing," 294–301). Thus, although previously their primary identity may have been as members of their own families (whether as slaves, wives, or husbands), Peter calls them to primarily identify as members of God's household. God, not any one human being, is the head of their household. This call is related to loyalty as well; one is expected to be loyal to the ingroup (Elliott, *Conflict*, 59). And whether the primary ingroup is one's actual household or one's Christian household has a strong effect on behavior.

Despite the places where the ethics of "the gentiles" and the ethics of Christians overlap, Peter draws a clear line between the two groups in the face of God's judgment. Those who now claim the Christians are disobedient will then be categorized as disobedient to "the gospel of God" (4:17). This outgroup is further stereotyped as "the ungodly and the sinners" (4:18), whereas the Christians are "the righteous" (Prov 11:31). In this context of judgment, the Christians turn themselves over to God (unlike in 2:23), but it is specifically to God's faithfulness that they entrust themselves.

Ingroup Ethics of Mutual Submission (5:1–11)

The end of the letter elucidates the order to be found within the community. Gifts have previously been mentioned; they are to be used to serve, and in the power of God (4:10–11). However, this

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section addresses "elders" (5:1, 5) and "you who are younger" (5:5) without discussing the way these roles might intersect with gifts. If an elder is determined by gifts, but especially if elders and younger ones refer to age or length of time since baptism regardless of gifts, the freedom to use particularly the gift of speaking mentioned in ch. 4 is dependent on the very mutual service, humility, and submission described in this section (5:2–6). Peter names himself as an elder (5:1) and then charges elders to be "examples to the flock" (v. 3) thus presenting himself and the local elders as exemplars for the community, at least insofar as they embody the group ethics: humility without greed or pride (5:2, 3, 5). These elders in particular are connected to Jesus's future return, but for these elders only a reward is assumed (5:4) although eschatological judgment has been mentioned previously in this letter (1:17; 2:12, 23; 4:5–6, 17). This reward, "the crown of glory," promises honor for the elders in the place of any honor they may forego by becoming shepherds rather than lords (5:2, 3). This metaphor of shepherding has been mentioned before (2:25) and provides a prototype for the community: Christ in his suffering and glory is the primary exemplar (e.g., 2:21; 3:18–22); the elders, including Peter, are to model themselves on him; and other believers, as we will see, are also following the same exemplar (5:9). Additionally, the flock metaphor once again calls for stronger self-categorization into the ingroup, since sheep who wander run a greater danger of being eaten (Eve, "1 Peter," 1269). The whole community is then incorporated into Israel's narrative (LXX Prov 3:34), and named "the humble" (5:5) as opposed to the outgroup, "the proud" (5:5).

All are to be humble, too, toward God (v. 6) whom they trust to care for them (v. 7). All of this humility might have the effect of making the Christians powerless to resist their oppressors, but there is one to whom they must not be submit, the devil (v. 8). In preparation for him they must be disciplined and "alert" (v. 8); against him they must "resist" (v. 9). Note that the goal of resistance, in this case, is to be "steadfast in . . . faith" (v. 9). This indicates that the goal of the devil is not, primarily, to tempt believers to one of the behaviors of the outgroup mentioned previously (e.g., 3:1; 4:1), but rather, as in 1:7, to persuade believers to join the outgroup in their lack of faith. Again here, then, we see the nuanced path these Christians must walk, one of humility before God in the midst of the suffering which comes as a result of resistance against those with power over them.

The honor of the community is again appealed to, though not in so many words, by making salient the broader, superordinate group before whom they would want to appear "steadfast" (v. 9), at least comparatively so in their sufferings. But the ultimate vindication of the community will occur at the eschaton, at the hands of God (vv. 10–11).

Familial Farewells (5:12–14)

The closing, while typical and standardized, incorporates a few last elements of identity formation. The addressees are named one final time: "You who are in Christ" (v. 14). They are given an ethos in the face of their suffering, the ethos repeated throughout the letter, "stand firm" (v. 12), which implies an ethic of continued obedience to God and possible concomitant disobedience to human authorities as well as an injunction to practice familial love (5:14; Elliott, *Conflict*, 36). This ethos is further emphasized by declaring it to be "the true grace of God" (v. 12), which, along

with having been "chosen" (5:13), demonstrates the honor God assigns to them (Elliott, *Conflict*, 77–78). Finally, they are reminded once more of the others within the broader community: Peter himself, Silvanus, the church in Rome, along with Mark (vv. 12–13). And the familial language used in these three verses makes Christian identity salient, most particularly for people who seem to be suffering as a result of their embeddedness in unbelieving households (2:18–3:6).

Conclusions

In forming the social identity of Christian communities across Asia Minor, 1 Peter offers its auditors a new narrative rooted in the story of Israel and reaching forward to a future of honor. New labels are proposed for people who have been called disobedient: "exiles," "obedient children," and "chosen and precious." Christians living in non-Christian households, pagan cities, and under the Roman Empire are given authority to negotiate their intersectional identities in ways that keep Christianity as their superordinate identity and yet may lessen their abuse and leave the way open for outgroup members to join the ingroup. This will demand the ethics of nonviolent resistance and an ethos of mutual love. Although in their discursive environment, they are denigrated as "Christians," 1 Peter reclaims the term as an ingroup label, and generally engages in the social creativity necessary to raise the status of the believing community.

The role of suffering in the communities of 1 Peter is particularly interesting. The experience of suffering seems so pervasive that one might call it an identity marker. However, the multiple locations of the various communities (1:1) and the multiple reasons for suffering (3:13–17) suggest a more nuanced conclusion. If suffering, particularly patient suffering in the hope of ultimate vindication (4:13), were by itself a marker of Christian identity, then it is likely that competition would arise especially between groups in different geographical locations and perhaps also within the smaller communities (Tajfel and Turner, "Integrative Theory," 181). Intergroup comparison is minimized in this letter first by heightening outgroup contrasts (1:18–19; 2:1) and secondly through the ingroup markers of holiness, witness to God, and mutual love and humility (1:15–16; 3:15; 5:5). Suffering itself is nuanced so that merely having suffered for any reason is not a sufficient ingroup marker (4:15–16), only non-retaliatory suffering in obedience to God. Finally, the letter increases social cohesion by emphasizing the common future (1:3–5) that all Christians will share (2:6).

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