

Persecution and the “Adversary” of 1 Peter 5:8

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INTRODUCTION

Of the 105 verses that make up the epistle of 1 Peter, none are quoted more by the early Church Fathers than 1 Peter 5:8: “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” As a seemingly straightforward encouragement in the face of spiritual warfare, it is not difficult to see why many Christians throughout the history of the church have pointed to this exhortation and the surrounding context in the face of temptation or perceived demonic oppression. As this passage stands at the conclusion of the epistle, however, the reader would expect an exhortation in line with the primary aims of the author. In a letter primarily concerned with encouragement and exhortation to believers in the midst of suffering and persecution, a warning against the chief demonic entity and his desire to “devour” Christians might seem out of place. Indeed, this verse marks the first, and only, mention of the Devil in the entire epistle.

This closing warning is, I suggest, not out of character with the rest of the epistle, but instead offers an insight into the author’s worldview and depiction of the plight of his readers. I will argue that the suffering and persecution envisioned in the letter should be viewed through the Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic tradition of cosmic conflict, wherein earthly events and conflicts are seen as a reflection of heavenly ones. In particular, Peter

pictures the current conflict and persecution of the readers as a necessary and inevitable product and reflection of the cosmic struggle against Satan and the demonic realm. Peter thus not only exhorts his readers to view themselves as the people of God, born into an eschatological hope (1:3–5), but also to view their present conflict with hostile human individuals and institutions as an important part of the ongoing and eschatological conflict with Satan (5:8–10). In so doing, Peter provides meaning for their present suffering and explains the reason they are experiencing such hostility by picturing their persistence in holiness as a means of spiritual warfare. Further, these eschatologically charged exhortations provide a basis for hope and perseverance in his readers' present suffering, since Christ has already ensured ultimate victory (3:22).

To demonstrate this claim, I will begin by briefly summarizing ancient conceptions of cosmic conflict and the demonic realm from biblical literature, especially the NT. Next, I will discuss the nature of the persecution envisioned in 1 Peter. Despite many modern scholars maintaining that the persecution depicted in the letter was primarily verbal and social, I will suggest that legal and even violent suffering remained a distinct threat to the Christians in Asia Minor. Lastly, I will bring these two lines of argument to bear on the closing exhortation of 1 Peter 5:8ff, as these verses sum up the contents of the letter as a whole, encouraging as well as exhorting the readers to perseverance in the midst of their "fiery trial" (4:12).

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN PORTRAYALS OF COSMIC CONFLICT

There are only three instances in the OT where Satan is used as a proper name, and his influence in each case is limited and not a major point of emphasis. However, this relative absence of the figure of Satan does not necessitate the absence of the tradition of cosmic conflict. Though the name of Satan is sparsely used, the presence of the Devil is felt as early as Genesis 3 (cf. Rev 12:9; 20:2), seeking to undermine the plans of Yahweh and oppose his people. In general, however, lacking a solidified figure of Satan under which all evil might be subsumed, the OT authors instead frequently depicted Yahweh at war with the gods of surrounding nations, and saw their conflict with these nations in terms of Yahweh's conflict with (and triumph over) these beings (e.g., Num 33:4b; 2 Sam 5:7; 7:23; 2 Chron 25:15).

Jewish writings in the Second Temple period, particularly those apocalyptic in nature, greatly expanded upon the role and nature of Satan. These Jewish authors conceived of a host of demonic spirits in opposition to Yahweh and his people, with a single evil cosmic force at their head. The names for this cosmic opponent of God—Sammael, Azazel, Mastema, Beliar, Semihazah, Satan, etc.—varied among authors, and even within the same texts. Yet, this adversary was consistently portrayed as the enemy of God and his people, with a demonic force and even human beings under his control. Whereas the OT tended to depict Yahweh in conflict with a multitude of gods of other nations, literature in the Second Temple period reflects the notion of Satan as the unified cosmic figure of evil. Space prohibits a substantive survey of OT and Second Temple texts related to cosmic conflict and the demonic realm. In the following section, then, I will focus my remarks on a brief selection of NT texts that reflect the early Christian understanding of the role of Satan and the demonic realm in conflict with Yahweh and his people.

Satan as the “Ruler of This World”

One of the most common ways the NT speaks of Satan is as the “ruler of this world.” The Fourth Gospel uses this specific label three times, all in reference to Satan (12:31; 14:30; 16:11; cf. “the god of this world,” 2 Cor 4:4). In the Fourth Gospel, the “world” is typically used symbolically of “fallen humanity in opposition to God.” Satan, then, as the ruler of the world, represents the ultimate cosmic opponent to Yahweh. Implied in this label, further, is the considerable influence that Satan exerts over the earth. As the ruler of the world, in some sense he holds sway over its inhabitants and their actions. This is seen in the Fourth Gospel by the identification of Jesus’ greatest opponents, the religious leaders and Judas, as the offspring of Satan and as under his influence (see below).

The influence of Satan upon the earth as its ruler may also be observed in the temptation narrative in Matthew and Luke, when Satan takes Jesus to a high mountain to show him “all the kingdoms of the world and their glory” (Matt 4:8; par. Luke 4:5). Satan offers to give Jesus these kingdoms in exchange for his worship. Implicit in this offer is that the kingdoms are actually his to give. There is no indication in the text that Satan’s offer is illegitimate, as Jesus’ response centers around his refusal to bow down to anyone but the Lord rather than any insistence that those kingdoms were not

actually under Satan's control anyway. This is not to say that the NT authors limit God's sovereignty in any kind of dualistic sense, but only that Satan is permitted influence of some kind over these earthly kingdoms. France's summary captures the idea well, "[Satan] is understood to have real power in the present age, though always under the perspective of the ultimate victory of God. And as such he can offer power and glory, but not ultimate fulfillment, still less in accordance with the will of God." In the same way that Daniel 10 pictures the nations of the earth represented by supernatural "princes" (e.g. the "prince of Persia" and the "prince of Greece"; Dan 10:20), so here the NT acknowledges that the kingdoms of the earth are ruled by the prince of the demons—Satan himself. Satan's aims are not just the corruption of individuals, therefore, but of entire societal structures and governments.

Other NT authors reflect this same understanding of the influence of Satan upon the earth as its ruler. Paul refers to Satan using the term "the prince of the power of the air" (2:2). For Paul and his readers, the "air" referred not so much to the atmosphere, but to the "dwelling place of evil spirits." The ruler of this realm, then, is the ruler of the evil spirits, i.e., Satan. Significantly, Paul says that prior to Christ, the Ephesians walked under the power of this "prince." For Paul, then, it is not merely the explicit enemies of God portrayed under the influence of Satan, but every person on earth apart from the grace of God in Christ. As the author of 1 John explicitly states, "[T]he whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19; see also 3:8–10).

Satan in Conflict with the Kingdom of God

Satan is also shown consistently to be the primary instigator of conflict against the ministry of Jesus and the Church. While this opposition usually involves the agency of human beings or institutions, within the biblical worldview, the ultimate source of this opposition was the Devil himself. This connection is frequently seen in the depiction of the enemies of Jesus and the church with demonic imagery. As the betrayer of Jesus, Judas is spoken of in demonic terms more than any other individual or group. Following the multiplication of the fishes and loaves in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus says to the disciples, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." The author immediately clarifies his meaning, "He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him" (John

6:70–71). Other passages speak of Satan influencing Judas to betray Jesus, or “entering into him” (see Luke 22:3–6; John 13:2, 26–27). Further, in the Fourth Gospel’s account of the farewell discourse prior to the arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane, Jesus tells the disciples, “the ruler of this world is coming” (John 14:30). Here the author clearly refers to Judas Iscariot and the arresting force with him, but identifies him as the “ruler of this world.” As noted above, this designation commonly describes the influence of Satan on earth. Similar statements about the coming of Judas to arrest Jesus merely speak of him as the “betrayer” (see Matt 26:46; Mark 14:42), yet here the author of the Fourth Gospel again makes explicit the work of Satan through Judas.

In addition to Judas, the Jewish religious leaders in general are also portrayed as agents of Satan and the demonic realm. In John 8, the Pharisees confront Jesus over the authority concerning the claims he was making about himself. Jesus responds by claiming his authority from the Lord himself, his Father. Further, Jesus tells them that, due to their desire to put him to death, their father is not Abraham nor God himself, but Satan. He says, “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him” (John 8:44). In their opposition to Jesus, therefore, and specifically in their desire to kill him, they are aligned not with the Lord, but with his cosmic enemy. Beyond the earthly ministry of Jesus, the opponents of the apostles and the spread of the gospel in Acts are similarly equated with the cosmic forces of evil. Barnabas and Paul, while ministering in Cyprus, encountered a man named Bar-Jesus (also called Elymas, Acts 13:8), who is described as a Jewish false prophet and a magician. This magician served under the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, and sought to undermine the teaching of Paul and Barnabas, “seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith” (v. 8). Paul rebukes the false prophet, calling him a “son of the devil” and an “enemy of all righteousness” (v. 10), ultimately cursing him with blindness. Insofar as Bar-Jesus opposed the message of the gospel and acted as an “enemy of righteousness,” then, he showed himself to be a tool of Satan. While not directly opposing Jesus himself, his opposition to the apostles and the spread of the gospel is still regarded as demonic in nature.

Even those seemingly aligned with Jesus may be described as doing the works of Satan. Following the first prediction of his betrayal and death in the Gospel of Mathew, Peter pulls Jesus aside to rebuke him, protesting that

these things will surely not come to pass. Jesus responds strongly, saying, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Matt 16:23; par. Mark 8:33). In Matthew’s account, Jesus had just declared Peter to be the rock upon which his church was to be built (vv. 16–19) and yet, in Peter’s suggestion that Jesus would not die at the hands of his enemies and be raised, he carried out not the will of the Lord, but of Satan. France describes Peter’s suggestion as “acting as a spokesman of God’s ultimate enemy.” Again, therefore, the biblical authors identify any opposition to the ministry of Jesus, including his sacrificial death, to be the work of Satan.

Jesus in Conflict with Satan

If opposition to the ministry of Jesus is seen to be the work of Satan, for the writers of the NT, the ministry of Jesus, culminating in his death and resurrection, is a part of Yahweh’s conflict with and triumph over Satan and the demonic realm. After the initial success of Jesus’ exorcistic ministry, the Synoptic writers describe a controversy that arose over the source of Jesus’ authority over demons. In particular, Jesus’ ability to cast out demons is attributed to Satanic power, as Jesus is accused of being possessed by Beelzebul, called “the prince of demons” (Mark 3:22; Matt 12:24; Luke 11:15). In their record of Jesus’ defense to this accusation, the gospel writers cast Jesus’ ministry in terms of conflict with Satan. Jesus responds first by pointing out the absurdity of suggesting that Satan’s power would work against itself, for if Satan were at work through Jesus in driving out demons, he would effectively be working towards the end of his own kingdom. Matthew and Luke make explicit what Mark merely implies—it is the “Spirit of God” (Matt 12:28) and the “finger of God” (Luke 11:20) that gives Jesus authority over demons.

Jesus continues his defense by picturing his ministry in a different way—namely, the binding of the “strong man” and plundering his goods (Mark 3:27; Matt 12:29; Luke 11:21–22). The context makes clear that the “strong man” is Satan himself, and the “goods” he seeks to protect are the innocent sufferers oppressed by demons. Therefore, in casting out demons and healing the sick, Jesus is not merely giving proof of his divinity or messianic status, nor is he merely showing compassion on the weak and downtrodden. Instead, Jesus’ ministry of exorcisms is an attack on Satan and the demonic realm, that he may rescue those in his grasp and thus “plunder his house” (Mark

3:27; Matt 12:29). Lane writes, “The expulsion of demons is nothing less than a forceful attack on the lordship of Satan.” Similarly, France suggests, “[T]he imagery of ‘binding the strong man’ relates not to Jesus’ exorcistic methods, but rather to the eschatological salvation which he now brings, as God’s kingship renders Satan ultimately powerless to oppose God’s will or to harm his people.”

The binding of the strong man, therefore, describes both Jesus’ conflict with the demonic realm as well as his mastery over it. His statements here help the reader to understand what is taking place in the numerous exorcism accounts littered throughout the Synoptics. When Jesus is met by a demon-possessed individual, the demon frequently speaks from a place of submission and fear (Mark 1:23; 3:11; 5:7), and Jesus expels the demon with but a word (Mark 1:25; 7:25; 9:25). Specifically, Jesus’ description of exorcism as the binding of the strong man, then, paints his entire healing and exorcistic ministry as an earthly reflection of the cosmic conflict between Yahweh and Satan, and his effectiveness as an indication of the certainty of his victory.

Reflecting on the consequences of Jesus’ death and resurrection, Paul makes clear that Jesus’ death and resurrection have secured victory over Satan and the demonic realm. In 1 Corinthians, he speaks of Christ’s resurrection in terms of his dominion over spiritual enemies. In the last day, Paul writes, Christ will deliver “the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power” (1 Cor 15:24). Paul explains further in the next verse that Christ “must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (v. 25). Thus the rulers, authorities, and powers of v. 24 are equated with Christ’s enemies in v. 25, suggesting they are intended to serve as references to cosmic powers hostile to God and his people. Paul elsewhere makes reference to these cosmic entities in Ephesians, where he says that in the resurrection, God placed Christ “in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion” (Eph 1:20–21). Paul also speaks of these powers being placed “under his feet” (v. 22), alluding to Psalm 110:1.

The Church in Conflict with Satan

Paul also makes clear that the church plays an active role in this conflict between Christ and Satan. In the closing exhortation in Ephesians, Paul encourages the believers to “stand against the schemes of the devil” (Eph 6:11). Believers are elsewhere exhorted to resist the devil (Jas 4:7; 1 Pet

5:8–9), but here Paul elaborates more than other biblical authors. He explicitly describes the struggle of the believers in terms of cosmic conflict when he indicates that the true battle faced by believers is against “the rulers,” “the authorities,” and “the cosmic powers (*kosmokratōr*) over this present darkness” (v. 12). I have already noted how both “rulers” and “authorities” can refer to cosmic beings in other NT texts. Here Paul introduces the figure of the *kosmokratōr*, used only here in the NT. From the further description that these beings are “spiritual forces of evil” (v. 12), it is clear these terms are all intended to refer to malevolent spiritual beings.

Paul then describes how the believers are to engage in this cosmic conflict—namely, by putting on the armor of God. Though Paul draws here on heavily militaristic language, the believers are to “arm” themselves with such things as truth, righteousness, and faith (vv. 14–17). As Asumang notes, “[T]he list of weapons in Ephesians 6 includes Christian virtues that are inaugurated by Christ’s redemptive work.” Their struggle, therefore, is not so much about their own might and strength, but rather on the strength of their God and their dependence upon him. In his might they would be able to stand firm, even against such a foe.

Finally, in the closing exhortation of Romans, Paul promises his readers, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Rom 16:20). Paul likely here is alluding to the promise of Genesis 3:15, where the Lord declares that the “seed of the woman” will crush the head of the serpent. Significantly, Paul says that Satan will be crushed underneath the believers’ feet, rather than Christ’s. The Lord is still the one who defeats Satan, but does so in some connection to the believers (cf. 1 John 2:13–14). Furthermore, the immediate context of Paul’s exhortation is in reference to false teachers who cause division in the church (v. 17). The defeat of these false teachers, then, is tied to the defeat of Satan, as they are agents of the devil, insofar as they seek to oppose and undermine the Church.

In summary, though the NT writers portray Satan as the “ruler of this world,” they picture his influence waning under the growing kingdom of God inaugurated by Christ. Both in his healing/exorcism ministry and ultimately in his death and resurrection, the ministry of Jesus is seen as an expression of cosmic conflict against Satan and the demonic realm. Further, the NT authors draw close connections between the conflict that exists in the heavenly realms between God and Satan and the conflict that believers

experience on earth. Followers of Jesus participate in conflict and victory over Satan and the demonic realm, though the ultimate power and victory belong to the Lord. The earthly conflict the believers experience is not a conflict between nations (as in the OT), but instead a conflict between those who belong to the kingdom of God and all those who would oppose it. Therefore, any individual, group, institution, or nation that stands against God’s people acts as an agent of Satan. Yet, while believers experience suffering at the hands of Satan through these agents, they have ultimate hope in the gospel and the certain victory of Christ in the eschaton. Therefore the believers are exhorted and empowered to resist the schemes of the devil and stand firm in their faith, confident of ultimate eschatological victory. Now our attention must turn to the particular conflict and suffering depicted in 1 Peter.

THE NATURE OF PERSECUTION IN 1 PETER

Prior to the 1970’s, the predominant position on the persecution described in 1 Peter was that it reflected an official, empire-wide, state-sponsored proscription against Christianity. Since Peter mentions that his readers were suffering “as Christians” (4:16), and that “the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world” (5:9), scholars theorized that Peter was describing a situation reflected during the reign of Nero (54–68), Domitian (81–96), or Trajan (98–117). Since the mid-20th century, however, a different view of the persecutions of 1 Peter began to emerge. Selwyn argued, instead, that the sufferings experienced by the recipients of the letter were not the result of an official proscription enforced across the empire, but were “spasmodic and particular rather than organized on a universal scale, a matter of incidents rather than of policy.” Others have pointed out that even the persecutions under Nero, Domitian, and Trajan were not universal in scope, reflecting some official stance on Christianity, and therefore these three historical eras are of no use in dating the epistle or informing the situation it describes. The first true worldwide persecution of Christians did not begin until the reign of Decius (ca. AD 250). Elliott argues, “Prior to this time, anti-Christian actions against individuals or groups were sporadic, generally mob-incited, locally restricted, and unsystematic in nature.”

As a result, these scholars argue, the persecution the readers of 1 Peter

faced were not likely to be violent or criminal in nature, but rather “persistent slander and verbal abuse from nonbelieving outsiders aimed at demeaning, shaming, and discrediting the Christians in the court of public opinion” (e.g., 2:12, 15; 3:9, 16; 4:4, 14). Even verbal persecution, however, could carry significant consequences, especially as it relates to ancient conceptions of honor and shame, which Bechtler notes were considered to be “of the utmost importance” in Greco-Roman society. The accumulation of honor was important insofar as it played a role in establishing social rank and status. To gain honor was to gain social status, whereas to suffer shame was to lose social status. Social ostracism and slander could therefore legitimately be called “suffering.”

Further, for Christians involved in trade in Asia Minor, a loss of social status would have significant economic impact on already low profit margins. Williams writes,

For the majority of urban inhabitants in Asia Minor, income was generated through some form of commercial undertaking. In most cases, these local trades or businesses did not generate large financial surpluses. Therefore, even the slightest economic hindrance could have produced a devastating impact on a person’s (or family’s) financial stability. Numerous ways could be listed in which one could be ruined through this form of economic oppression: censoring or boycotting of business and trade relations, breaking of patron-client relationship, canceling the tenancy of a person’s place of business operation, or withdrawing financial assistance.

Furthermore, the centrality of the imperial cult in Roman society, particularly in Asia Minor, made participation in the marketplace a moral dilemma for Christians. Beale remarks, “[T]he imperial cult permeated virtually every aspect of city and often even village life in Asia Minor, so that individuals could aspire to economic prosperity and greater social standing only by participating to some degree in the Roman cult.” For Christians who could only set apart Christ as Lord (1 Pet 3:15), compromise in this area was untenable. As Williams concludes, the subsequent marginalization from the marketplace for these Christians could have devastating economic impacts, such that “even a slight alteration to one’s income could mean the difference between life and death.”

Christianity as “Effectively Illegal”

The persecution envisioned in the letter likely extends beyond the social and economic realm, however. As Holloway writes, “Commentators who describe the suffering of the readers of 1 Peter as social ostracism with little or no reference to the ever-present threat of active persecution fail to do justice to the predicament facing these early Christians.” There is good reason to conclude that the Christians in Asia Minor also lived under constant threat of legal action for their faith, even without any official law in place prohibiting Christian practice. Williams draws attention to an often-ignored tradition of scholarship that advocates for a “‘median’ view of persecution.” This view made note of the impact of the Neronian pogroms following the fire in Rome of AD 64 on the imperial provinces. The violent treatment of Christians in Rome set a precedent for local governors and magistrates, which could erupt into abrupt outbreaks of violence against a suddenly vulnerable Christian community. While persecution was still sporadic and unsystematic, it could still result in legal punishment at the hands of Roman officials at any time when charges were brought by a private accuser. Therefore, though no official laws were in force making Christian practice a criminal offense and Christians were not hunted down by any police force, Christianity was “effectively illegal,” and could be punished by death across the empire from the time immediately following Nero’s persecution in Rome. Goppelt writes of the effect of Nero, “If an imperial measure affected Christians as Christians in this way in the capital city, the name certainly carried the same burden for all public officials of the Empire.” Holloway, writing from a social-psychological perspective, argues that the popular prejudice against Christians posed a “lethal threat.”

Some scholars argue that the threat of legal persecution is unlikely, given that Peter portrays Rome in an overall positive light, urging submission to the government and honor to the emperor (2:13–17). This line of reasoning does not necessarily follow, however. While Peter does clearly urge submission to the emperor and local governors, this exhortation is in the beginning of his “household code,” where he also urges submission to other parties that could bring about physical abuse and other forms of suffering. In the verses immediately following Peter’s command to honor the emperor, he urges slaves to treat their masters with respect even if they are beaten unjustly for it (2:20). The example of submission in the face of unrighteous suffering is

Jesus himself (2:21–23), who faced reviling and death at the hands of the Jewish and Roman authorities. Peter’s instruction to submit and honor the emperor, then, does not preclude the possibility of some kind of official suffering from the state. Even Polycarp, moments before his execution at the hands of a Roman proconsul, reaffirmed the duty of Christians to pay respect to human rulers and authorities (*Mart. Pol.* 10.2).

Legal Persecution in 1 Peter

There is also evidence within 1 Peter that legal proceedings were at least a genuine perceived threat, even if they were not regarded as the most likely form of persecution. Peter’s first mention of suffering in the letter makes clear that the believers were experiencing “various” trials (1:6), suggesting that the trials experienced by the readers should not be confined to (or restricted from) any one category without good reason. Later, Peter urges the believers to abstain from the desires of the flesh in the face of the claim of the Gentiles that the Christians are *kakopoioi* (2:12). Most English translations render *kakopoios* here as “evildoer,” “wrongdoer,” or some minor variation thereof. As Holloway notes, however, this translation places too much weight on etymology and not on contextual exegesis. Just two verses later Peter uses *kakopoios* again to describe the function of governing authorities as those who punish *kakopoioi* (2:14). Here Peter clearly means not just those who commit moral evil, but those who violate laws. For Christians to be accused of being *kakopoioi*, then, they were being accused of being criminals. The two meanings are not, of course, mutually exclusive, but Peter’s other uses of the word help show that the criminal connotation should not be ignored.

In 4:12ff, Peter transitions from his household code to the beginning of his closing exhortation to persevere in the midst of suffering. Peter tells his readers not to be surprised at the “fiery trial” they are experiencing, but to rejoice insofar as they share in Christ’s pattern of righteous suffering. Peter adds that the basis of their suffering, however, must not be due to evil deeds or criminal associations, but only “for the name of Christ” (4:14–15). He then declares that the one who suffers “as a Christian” (4:16)—functionally equivalent to “for the name of Christ”—ought not to be ashamed but to give glory to God. The label of “Christian,” then, is held in parallel with labels such as “murderer” and “thief.” One’s suffering for these actions would doubtless be of official legal prosecution. There is no apparent reason why the punishment

for the charge of Christian would be any different. Some accusations against Christians could involve insinuations of evil deeds (Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 9.5–6; *Mart. Lyons* 1.52; Tertullian, *Apol.* 9; Origen, *Cels.* 6.27), but in 4:16 the label of “Christian” is treated as independent of the charges of “murderer,” “thief,” or even the broader designations *kakopoios* (see above) and “meddler” (ESV). Indeed some hostile descriptions of Christians from ancient sources make no mention of any particular accusations of immorality, but rather a disdain for the religion as a whole (Suetonius, *Vit.* 6.16; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.8).

The third passage to be considered that points to the possibility of legal proceedings against Christians is the encouragement found in 3:13–17. Here Peter begins with the general statement that the believers need not fear mistreatment and persecution if they remain committed to good works (3:13), but then immediately acknowledges that it is possible to suffer because of righteousness (v. 14). Here again Peter envisions not accusations of general moral corruption, but the behavior that should normally mark Christians. Peter counsels his readers in such a situation to maintain their allegiance to Christ, and be prepared to give a “defense” (*apologia*) to anyone at any time (v. 15). Some scholars maintain that the situation pictured in 3:13–17 relates only to informal, everyday questions and opposition and not to any kind of judicial proceedings. Indeed, the presence of terms like “always” and “anyone” suggest that we should not narrow the focus to any one kind of situation. This exhortation, however, would make sense in a legal and judicial setting as much as in an informal setting, if not moreso. As Williams notes, the encouragement not to fear in v. 14 makes more sense if some threat were attached to the questioning. Everyday questions about the faith of the believers would be no cause for fear unless the tone were at least somewhat threatening or some consequences could result, even if just social in nature. Further, the use of the term *apologia* points to the possibility of legal proceedings. The term can be used to describe a general reply (1 Cor 9:3; 2 Cor 7:11; Phil 1:7), but is also used in explicitly judicial settings (Acts 22:1; 25:16; 2 Tim 4:16). The notion that the believers are asked to give an “account” (*logos*) could be seen in an informal context, but the language also calls to mind the notion that those who slander these Christians will also have to give a *logos* to the Lord, who comes “to judge the living and the dead” (4:5). With nothing to definitively suggest whether legal proceedings are in view or not, then, it is best not to restrict the conflict in these verses

either entirely within the judicial sphere or entirely outside of it.

Persecution and Christian Exclusivity

If popular prejudice against Christians could result in the distinct possibility of legal trials and persecution from the local government, what then was the source of this prejudice? As noted above, some ancient sources make misinformed claims of immoral behavior by Christians, but often simply being named a Christian was enough to incur harassment and persecution. Christians were seen as a destabilizing influence upon society, in large part due to their refusal to participate in the Emperor Cult and the worship of local, civic gods. The exclusivity of the Christians led to their branding as “atheists,” abandoning the traditions of their forebears (see 1 Pet 1:18). Judaism in the Roman Empire was open to the same charge, but it was generally treated more favorably due to its ancient roots. Once Christianity began to be distinguished from Judaism as its own movement, these charges of atheism were compounded by the fact that Christians did not have a similar ancient heritage to which to point. Accordingly, Suetonius describes Christians as “a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition” (Suetonius, *Vit.* 6.16; Rolfe, LCL).

The danger this new and exclusive religion posed related to the spurning of the gods, which would in turn invite divine chastisement on the entire community. Ste. Croix writes, “The monotheistic exclusiveness of the Christians was believed to alienate the goodwill of the gods, to endanger what the Romans called the *pax delorum* (the right harmonious relationship between gods and men), and to be responsible for disasters which overtook the community.” Writing at a later time, Tertullian describes the blame cast on Christians, “[T]hey take the Christians to be the cause of every disaster to the State, of every misfortune of the people. If the Tiber reaches the walls, if the Nile does not rise to the fields, if the sky doesn’t move or the earth does, if there is famine, if there is plague, the cry is at once: ‘The Christians to the lion!’” (Tertullian, *Apol.* 40.2; Glover, LCL). The Christians, then, in their spurning of the worship of the gods and withdrawal from participation in the cultic rites, “were seen to be willfully and deliberately wishing misfortune upon local communities and the Empire” and “inviting divine disaster.” This, in part, was why Tacitus could refer to Christianity as a “deadly superstition” and Christians as having a “hatred of the human race” (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44).

The Christians in Asia Minor, then, faced opposition from a local level to their very existence, but this opposition was in many ways a function of the Roman Empire as a whole, even if no official laws were in place prohibiting Christian practices. As noted in the previous section, for the biblical authors in the first-century, groups such as the Jewish religious leaders and individuals such as Judas, Bar-Jesus, and even Simon Peter, insofar as they opposed the gospel and the coming kingdom of God, were said to be representatives of Satan, the chief cosmic power opposed to the Lord. By extension, therefore, any institution, from a local magistrate to the Roman emperor himself, made itself an instrument of the Devil insofar as they opposed and persecuted the church. The early Christians could therefore perceive of their suffering with local, imperial and even cosmic dimensions. Their struggle was not just about the Church and the State, but rather about the heavenly war between Yahweh and the forces of Satan.

1 PETER 5:8FF AND PARTICIPATION IN COSMIC CONFLICT

Now, finally, we may return to the closing exhortation of 1 Peter and the warning against the “adversary.” This closing reference to the Devil is not disconnected from the rest of the paraenesis throughout the letter, as though Peter now turns to warn his readers of the dangers of spiritual warfare in addition to the suffering and persecution they are experiencing. Rather, this passage represents the climax of Peter’s exhortation in the midst of persecution as he pictures the suffering of these Christians through the apocalyptic lens of Yahweh’s conflict with Satan and the demonic realm. Several indications within this closing exhortation make clear that the suffering at the hands of the “roaring lion” is closely tied with the suffering described throughout the epistle by the Christians’ human opponents.

Peter’s exhortation begins with the double imperative “Be sober! Be watchful!” (5:8). The two terms (*nēphō* and *grēgoreō*) are virtually synonymous and usually occur in eschatological contexts, where believers are instructed to be on guard for the Day of the Lord (e.g., Matt 24:42, 42; 25:13; see esp. 1 Thess 5:6, where the words occur together). The command to be watchful also occurs in the context of human opposition. After Matthew uses the verb *grēgoreō* three times in chs. 24–25, it occurs three additional times in the Garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus instructs his disciples to keep watch

(*grēgoreō*). Here the danger is not some cosmic judgment, but Judas and the arresting force who arrive in v. 47, “while he was still speaking” (see also Mark 13:34, 35, 37; cf. 14:34, 37, 38). Paul urges the Ephesian elders to be alert (*grēgoreō*), where the stated danger is the “fierce wolves” who will seek to lead the people into false teaching (Acts 20:29–31). Further, Revelation 16 describes the sixth bowl judgment, where the Euphrates dries up and three “unclean spirits” arise from the dragon, beast, and false prophet to incite the kings of the earth to do battle with the Lord at Armageddon (16:12–16). In a parenthetical comment in the midst of this description, the author inserts the words of Jesus, “Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake (*grēgoreō*) ...” (v. 15). These commands, then, are an encouragement to stand firm in the midst of false teaching and opposition in light of the imminence of the eschatological Day of the Lord. Most relevant for 1 Peter 5:8, Peter uses *nēphō* in his opening exhortation (1:13), where the near context speaks of the “various trials” the readers are suffering (1:6), thereby forming an *inclusio* between the two texts.

Following the exhortation to watchfulness, Peter begins his description of the Devil with the word “adversary” (*antidikos*). The term is rare in the NT, occurring only three times outside of the present reference (Matt 5:25; Luke 12:58; 18:3). In each of those occurrences, it denotes an opponent in the lawcourt (see also Prov 18:17 LXX). In some instances, however, it simply referred to an opponent in a general sense. In 1 Peter 5, the term is likely used in this secondary, general sense, though the legal connotations should not be totally dismissed (see above on the possibility of legal trials in 1 Peter). The lawcourt imagery could also be applied to Satan directly—as in Revelation 12:9–10 where he is named the “accuser” (*katēgōr*). Given the descriptions of God as judge throughout the epistle (1:17; 4:5, 17), as well as the numerous references made to Christians being reviled for their behavior or accused of doing evil (2:12, 23; 3:9, 16–17; 4:15–16), the use of “adversary” would be an apt descriptor for the local opponents and accusers of the Christians in Asia Minor, as well as the Devil himself.

Even Peter’s choice of *diabolos* as a name for this adversary—rather than the more Semitic *satanas*—may be significant. The latter term refers to an actual spiritual entity in every instance except one—namely, Jesus’ rebuke of Peter in Mark 8:33. “Devil” still primarily serves as a reference to the cosmic figure of Satan, but at times has a more general reference. The Pastoral

Epistles use *diabolos* to refer not only to Satan himself, but also to a slanderous person in general (see 1 Tim 3:11; 2 Tim 3:3; Tit 2:3). In Revelation 2:10, Jesus warns the church at Smyrna that “the devil” is about to throw some of them in prison, clearly referring to some local political entity, if not Rome as a whole by extension. A “devil,” then, could be both the cosmic enemy of Yahweh as well as human enemies of his people, bringing slander and accusations against them. Asumang notes, “What is striking in 1 Peter’s use is that these two functions of the devil—accusations and slander—are previously used throughout the epistle to describe some of the unjust sufferings that the believers were facing (e.g., 2:12, 15; 3:16; 4:14–16). In other words, ... Peter unveils the devil as the slanderer and accuser-in-chief spearheading the persecution of the believers.” The point ought not to be pressed too far from such little evidence, but Asumang’s observation may well provide another piece of evidence that links the activity of Satan with the persecution the Christians suffer from their peers and local governments.

Peter goes on to describe the Devil as “prowling about” as a “roaring lion.” This imagery is nowhere else tied to descriptions of Satan, but most commentators have suggested its background lies in the LXX. Boris Paschke, however, has argued that the phrase carries a more literal referent—namely, the *ad bestias* executions inflicted upon Christians. Though many wild beasts were utilized in these executions, lions in particular held a place of prominence. The threat of being “devoured,” then, was a very literal one. Paschke concludes by suggesting that the Devil “then would be seen as responsible for what was going on in the arena at the *ad bestias* executions of Christians.” Horrell has sought to expound on Paschke’s thesis, arguing that the comparison of the Devil with a roaring lion is an example of *ekphrasis*—a vivid description used for rhetorical effect. They write, “The image of the roaring lion is particularly important, then, as a way of vividly depicting the threats that face the readers.”

Paschke’s suggestion is possible, but ultimately is unnecessary. Given Peter’s frequent use of the OT throughout the epistle, it is much more likely that he does so here, especially since there are several OT texts that may shed light on the connotation intended here. This imagery is not used with reference to Satan, but nearly always carries with it threatening and hostile overtones. One of the parallels most commonly noted is Psalm 22:13 LXX, where David speaks of his enemies as a “ravening and roaring

lion.” Here the referent is clearly human enemies seeking David’s life. Other texts similarly utilize lion imagery for hostile human opponents, as well. The Psalms and Amos both utilize such language to describe general opposing forces (Pss 7:2; 17:12; 35:17; Amos 3:4). Jeremiah uses the lion metaphor several times to refer to enemy nations bringing judgment upon Israel (Jer 2:15; 50:17; 51:34ff). In the NT, Paul speaks of the harm done him by Alexander the coppersmith, and then characterizes the Lord’s protection by saying, “I was delivered from the lion’s mouth” (2 Tim 4:17). Therefore, while this lion imagery could be applied directly to Satan in a spiritual sense, it also naturally fits as a reference to human opponents, whether corporate or individual.

Closely related to the description of Satan as a lion is the mention that his desire is to devour someone. This “devouring” likely does not refer to physical destruction, but rather to apostasy and thus to spiritual death. However, Elliott has noted that this terminology was also used figuratively of human enemies who are said to “devour” God’s people (Pss 35:25; 124:3; Hos 8:8; Isa 49:19; Jer 51:34, 44; Lam 2:16). This usage connects the activity of Satan, one of whose primary goals is to produce apostasy (Matt 24:24; Luke 22:31; 2 Cor 11:12–14; 2 Tim 2:24–26), with the aims of the local magistrates who might seek to punish the believers. The Christian readers faced the hostile persecution of their localized human enemies, who sought to see them deny their faith, commit apostasy and thus be “devoured.” Indeed, Ste Croix maintains that “the essential aim” of Roman torture in these settings “was to make apostates, not martyrs.”

In 1 Peter 5:9, Peter shifts to tell his readers to “resist” this roaring lion. The word used for resist (*anthistēmi*) is frequently used to describe opponents of the gospel fighting to suppress its message (Luke 21:15; Acts 13:10; 2 Tim 3:8; 4:5). As Schreiner argues, “Resistance, then, is not passive but represents active engagement against a foe.” This resistance, however, is not accomplished through physical opposition, as Peter next makes clear. They are to resist by remaining “firm in their faith.” In the face of the threat of being “devoured” in the midst of suffering, imprisonment, or even torture and execution, the believers are exhorted to stand firm and be faithful, thus resisting the devil and his chosen instruments of persecution.

The final element connecting the activity of Satan with the suffering experienced through the churches’ human oppressors is the final clause of v. 9,

which functions as a ground for the believers’ resistance. The readers are to resist the Devil because they know that “the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.” When Peter speaks of “suffering” throughout the letter, the reference is clearly to the persecution carried out by human enemies and institutions (see also 2:19, 20; 3:14, 17; 4:1, 13, 15, 19). As such, Peter clearly equates the spiritual opposition of the Devil with the human opposition of the enemies of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Green suggests that this wide-angle view offers a more accurate view of the believers’ circumstances. If an individual—or even an isolated community—suffers, it is a tragedy, or perhaps even just rewards for some wrongdoing. “If the whole family of believers throughout the world is undergoing suffering, however, a less individualistic and more systemic, cosmological explanation is required.”

If Christians from all corners of the empire are experiencing persecution, they should recognize that they are up against a foe greater than any local magistrate, or even Caesar himself. They are a part of the eschatological battle between good and evil—one in which they are certain to see victory. If the struggles facing the believers in Asia Minor are a matter of a minority religious sect at odds with the might of the Roman Empire, the plight of the Christians is desperate and their outlook is bleak. If however, their sufferings are primarily a spiritual issue rather than a social, economic, or legal one, then their sufferings are temporary, and their vindication is assured. As Peter fittingly ends his closing exhortation, “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (5:10–11).

Christians today may expect to experience much of the same kinds of sufferings the readers of 1 Peter did—whether social, economic, or even violent or criminal in some parts of the world. Like these early Christians, 1 Peter invites us to view our conflict not as a product of a society changing its values, but as a product of the cosmic battle between the Lord and the spiritual forces of darkness. However dire the predicament Christians may face in this world, Christ remains at the right hand of God, with every spiritual foe subject to him (3:22). With such a reminder, believers today are empowered to stand firm in the midst of their suffering, as those who “entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good” (4:19).

- 1 Urbanus Holzmeister, *Commentarius in Epistulas SS. Petri et Iudae Apostolorum. Epistula Prima S. Petri* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1937), 404–405.
- 2 All English translations of Scripture, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the ESV.
- 3 Day goes so far as to suggest that Satan as a proper noun is entirely absent from the OT. Instead, she argues, the noun is used in a more general sense, applied to anyone who behaved in an adversarial role; Peggy Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: Satan in the Hebrew Bible* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); Cilliers Breytenbach and Peggy L. Day, “Satan” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 726–732. For a brief rebuttal to Day’s thesis, see Antti Laato, “The Devil in the Old Testament,” in *Evil and the Devil* (Library of New Testament Studies, vol. 481; ed. Erkki Koskeniemi and Ida Fröhlich; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 3–4.
- 4 Jason A. Mackey, *The Light Overcomes the Darkness: Cosmic Conflict in the Fourth Gospel* (Ph.D. Dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 74. For a more detailed examination of the usage of *kosmos* in the Fourth Gospel, see *ibid.*, 105–120.
- 5 R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 135. Cf. Bock, who says the devil’s offer is best seen as “a mixture of truth and error” and an “oversell” at best. Darrell L. Bock *Luke* (2 vols. BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 1:376.
- 6 Collins calls these beings “patron angels,” while Di Lella offers the name, “tutelary spirits” or “guardian angels.” John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 374; Alexander A. Di Lella and Louis F. Hartman, *The Book of Daniel* (The Anchor Bible; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978), 282. See also Deut 32:8, where Moses reminds the people that the nations were divided “according to the number of the sons of God.” These “sons of God” here are best regarded as angels (cf. Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), suggesting that cosmic beings are associated with the nations of the earth, in some sense.
- 7 Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of Its Historical Setting* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 60, citing PGM I.97–194; IV.2699; TBenj 3:4. See also Frank Thielman, *Ephesians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 125, citing Diogenes Laertius (*Vit. phil.* 8.32) and Plutarch (*Mor.* 274b).
- 8 For more on the gospel writers’ use of Satan to describe human opposition to Jesus, see Elaine Pagels, “The Social History of Satan, Part II: Satan in the New Testament Gospels,” *Journal Of The American Academy Of Religion* 62, no. 1 (1994): 17–58.
- 9 See also 1 John 3:11–12, where Cain’s murder of Abel is also portrayed as the work of Satan.
- 10 Schnabel suggests the magician’s interests were self-serving, as “accepting faith in Jesus as Israel’s Messiah will bring the proconsul’s willingness, perhaps eagerness, to receive guidance through magical incantations and rituals to an end.” Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 558.
- 11 The language used in calling Elymas a “son of the devil” is probably also intended as an ironic twist on his other name, “Bar-Jesus.” So also F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 298; C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols. ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 1:617.
- 12 R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: a Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 338.
- 13 In describing Jesus’ ministry, death and resurrection as a part of cosmic conflict against Satan, I am not seeking to deny or undermine the biblical portrayal of the cross as penal substitution, but instead merely show the cosmic dimensions to the events in the Gospels.
- 14 France relates the charge to that of sorcery, where sorcerers were thought to gain their power through a “familiar spirit”; France, *Matthew*, 478. So also William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 142, who notes the charge of sorcery against Jesus is found both in the Talmud and the early Patristic era.
- 15 On the identification of the strong man’s possessions with the demon possessed, see, e.g., W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical And Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (3 vols., ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–1997), 2:342; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 458; Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 184; France, *Mark*, 173.
- 16 Lane, *Mark*, 143.
- 17 France, *Mark*, 173–174.
- 18 Contrast with the numerous and complex aids and adjurations described in extrabiblical exorcism accounts. See Graham Twelftree, “Devil, Demon, Satan,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (ed. Joel B. Green and Scot

- McKnight; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 167–168; PGM IV.1227-1264; IV. 3007-3086; V.116-120; VIII.6-13.
- ¹⁹ So also David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 710; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 835, n. 185.
- ²⁰ For an in-depth look at the LXX context of these terms and their usage as cosmic forces, see Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 277–280.
- ²¹ Notably, the referent in Psalm 110 is to the human opponents of Israel—“he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations” (v. 5–6). Paul and the other NT writers quoting this psalm therefore reinterpret the enemies of Christ not merely as human, but cosmic beings.
- ²² In T. Sol. 8.2–4, seven demons present themselves before Solomon, describing themselves as *kosmokratores tou skotou*. As Thielman notes, “The Testament of Solomon may have been influenced by Ephesians, but even so, it probably reflects the kinds of associations Paul intended his reference to *kosmokratores* to carry.” Thielman, *Ephesians*, 421. Arnold notes the magical connotations of the word and suggests that the referent is perhaps to the deities previously worshipped by the Ephesians—i.e. Artemis, Helios, and Serapis, among others—whom they now feared. Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 67.
- ²³ Annang Asumang, “Resist him’ (1 Pet 5:9): Holiness and Non-Retaliatory Responses to Unjust Suffering as ‘Holy War’ in 1 Peter.” *Conspectus*, Vol. 11 (2011): 23.
- ²⁴ So also Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 804; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 932–933. Cf. Brown, who suggests that the reference is to Ps 110:1, as a reference to the “subjugation of Satan,” rather than a fulfillment of Gen 3:15. See Derek R. Brown, “The God of Peace Will Shortly Crush Satan Under Your Feet’: Paul’s Eschatological Reminder in Romans 16:20a,” *Neotestamentica* 44, no. 1 (2010): 1–14.
- ²⁵ So also Schreiner, *Romans*, 804; Brown, “The God of Peace,” 4–5. Contra James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (2 vols.; WBC; Waco: Word Books, 1988), 1:905. Cf. Moo, *Romans*, 932, who calls for a “mediating” position, whereby the referent is both to general opponents, yet with some relevance for the false teachers of v. 17.
- ²⁶ For a detailed survey of scholarship, see Travis Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter: Differentiating and Contextualizing Early Christian Suffering*, NovTSup 145 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 4–15.
- ²⁷ John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 98; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (NAC; Nashville: B&H, 2003), 24; Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: a Commentary on First Peter* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 30–32; Travis B. Williams, “Suffering from a Critical Oversight: The Persecutions of 1 Peter within Modern Scholarship,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 10 (2), 278.
- ²⁸ Edward G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1947), 55.
- ²⁹ Elliott, *1 Peter*, 98.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.
- ³¹ S. R. Bechtler, *Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community, and Christology in 1 Peter* (SBLDS 162. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 109.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 95–96.
- ³³ Williams, *Persecution*, 134.
- ³⁴ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 240.
- ³⁵ Williams, *Persecution*, 325.
- ³⁶ Paul A. Holloway, *Coping with Prejudice: 1 Peter in Social-Psychological Perspective* (WUNT 244; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 68.
- ³⁷ Williams, “Oversight,” 278.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 284; see also David A. Horrell, *1 Peter* (New Testament Guides; New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 57.
- ³⁹ Leonhart Goppelt, *A Commentary on First Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 43.
- ⁴⁰ Holloway, *Prejudice*, 65.
- ⁴¹ See Elliott, *1 Peter*, 100; Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 176; Kelly D. Liebig, *The Eschatology of 1 Peter: Considering the Influence of Zechariah 9-14* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 163–164; Bechtler, *Following*, 50.
- ⁴² See, e.g., Polyb., *Hist.* 15.25.1. Williams, *Persecution*, 304, notes on the use of the terms *ekdikēsîn* and *epainon* in 2:14, “[W]hen ‘punishment’ and ‘praise’ are used with respect to a governor, the most natural context in which these words would have been understood by a provincial inhabitant would have been a legal-judicial setting.”
- ⁴³ Holloway, *Prejudice*, 67. Contra Elliott, *1 Peter*, 794. The usage of the term in 4:15 may have moral rather than criminal connotations, but even in that passage it is comprehensible to understand the term as a general label for a criminal. The nearer referent in 2:14 is preferable for understanding the ambiguous usage in

- 2:12.
- 44 The “fiery” nature of this trial should not be interpreted as a key to the severity of the persecution and suffering experienced by the readers, as the imagery of fire here is best seen as analogous to the “fire” of testing in 1:7. There, as here, the focus is on the purifying effect of the fire rather than the intensity of the trial. So also Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 124; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 771–772; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 9; Selwyn, *Peter*, 54; D. E. Johnson, “Fire in God’s House: Imagery from Malachi 3 in Peter’s Theology of Suffering (1 Peter 4:12–19),” *JETS* 29 (1986): 285–294.
- 45 So also David G. Horrell, “The Label Χριστιανός: 1 Peter 4:16 and the Formation of Christian Identity,” *JBL* 126, no. 2 (2007): 371.
- 46 Most charges centered around accusations of incest, cannibalism, orgies and sedition. See Paul Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 67.
- 47 For more on the connotations of this notoriously difficult to translate word, see Jeannine K. Brown, “Just a Busybody? A Look at the Greco-Roman Topos of Meddling for Defining ἀλοσυριεπισκοπος in 1 Peter 4:15,” *JBL* 125 (2006): 549–568; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 788.
- 48 Elliott, *1 Peter*, 628; Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 30.
- 49 Williams, *Persecution*, 315. The use of *autōn* in 3:14 should be understood as an objective genitive, thus, “Have no fear of them.” So also *Ibid*, 312, n. 42; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 624–625; J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC; Waco: Word Books, 1988), 186–187. Contra NRSV, CSB, who translate it subjectively, “Do not fear what they fear.”
- 50 Williams, while arguing for a judicial context to these verses, prudently says that *apologia* is not determinative on its own for what kind of meaning may be intended; Williams, *Persecution*, 314.
- 51 So also G. E. M de Ste. Croix, “Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?,” in *Studies in Early Christianity* (ed. Everett Ferguson; Studies in Early Christianity, vol. 7; New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 34; Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 30; Williams, *Persecution*, 43; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 34–35.
- 52 Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 55.
- 53 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 24; Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 55.
- 54 Ste. Croix, “Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?,” 34.
- 55 Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 55, 68.
- 56 Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 241; see also the usage in 4:7, where it is coupled with *sōphroneō* in a similar expression.
- 57 See Schrenk, “ἀντιδικός,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–c1976), 1:374–75; Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 190.
- 58 Asumang, “Resist him,” 26.
- 59 Boris A. Paschke, “The Roman *Ad Bestias* Execution as a Possible Historical Background for 1 Peter 5:8” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28, no. 4 (2006): 489–500. Paschke argues that *ad bestias* executions were in practice during the 1st century and posed a real concern for Peter’s readers, regardless whether the epistle is the product of the apostle Peter or a later pseudepigraphical writer. See also David G. Horrell, Bradley Arnold, and Travis B. Williams, “Visuality, Vivid Description, and the Message of 1 Peter: The Significance of the Roaring Lion (1 Peter 5:8)” *JBL* 132, no. 3 (2013): 697–716.
- 60 Paschke, “Roman *Ad Bestias* Execution,” 494.
- 61 *Ibid*, 498.
- 62 Horrell, Arnold and Williams, “Visuality,” 698.
- 63 *Ibid*, 715.
- 64 Best draws attention to the Targums of Isa. 35:9; Jer. 4:7; 5:6; Ezek. 19:6, which make clear that opposing nations are in view, as they translate “lion” as “king.” Ernest Best, *1 Peter* (New Century Bible; London: Oliphants, 1971), 174.
- 65 Green, *1 Peter*, 174; Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 242; Davids, *1 Peter*, 191; Duane F. Watson, *First and Second Peter* (Paideia; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 121. Contra Paschke, “Roman *Ad Bestias* Execution,” 498.
- 66 Elliott, *1 Peter*, 859.
- 67 Ste. Croix, “Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?,” 30.
- 68 Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 242; see also Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), 204.
- 69 Dubis rightly notes that the phrase should be interpreted with an implied *ontes*, functioning as a participle of manner, modifying *antistēte*. Mark Dubis, *1 Peter: a Handbook on the Greek Text* (Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 169.
- 70 Green, *1 Peter*, 174–75.