**Respect, not Allegiance: Rethinking the Relationship of Christian to Country in Light of 1 Peter's Theology of Identity**

Paul A. Himes[1]

*They seek a homeland* [πατρίδα] . . . *and now they desire a superior homeland*.—Hebrews 11:14, 16 (c. mid-to-late 1st century)

*For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, not language, nor the customs which they observe . . . They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. . . . They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven.*—Epistle to Diognetus 5 (c. 2nd century AD; trans. Roberts-Donaldson)

*Faith in the underlying principles of Americanism and in God's destiny for the Republic makes a firm ground of hope. . . . We, therefore, on this anniversary of America present the Public School as the noblest expression of the principle of enlightenment which Columbus grasped by faith. We uplift the system of free and universal education as the master-force which, under God has been informing each of our generations with the peculiar truths of Americanism. . . . We, the youth of America, who to-day unite to march as one army under the sacred flag, understand our duty. We pledge ourselves that the flag shall not be stained, and that America shall mean equal opportunity and justice for every citizen, and brotherhood for the world*.—Francis Bellamy, "Companion Address to the First Pledge of Allegiance" (September 8th, 1892).

## INTRODUCTION

What responsibilities does a foreigner have towards his host country? This question plays a key role in Petrine theology while at the same time standing in opposition to much of current conservative evangelical theology. The influential preacher Chuck Baldwin, for example, declares,

> In America, believers could live at peace with both their society and their government. They no longer had to choose between obeying their God and obeying their king. In America, there was no king, but King Jesus. In America, men could truly render unto God that which was God's, as Caesar did not demand for himself that which was God's alone. (In fact, in America, we have no Caesar). Men no longer had to violate their conscience in order to stay out of jail. Believers were no longer required to worship at the altar of the State or the State Church. In America, men could live free.[2]

Baldwin's statement echoes, to various degrees, the sentiments of many fundamentalists. Quite a few of our services (especially around Memorial Day and July 4th) involve pledging allegiance to

[1] Professor of Bible and Ancient Languages at Baptist College of Ministry—Menomonee Falls, WI. Paper presented to the Bible Faculty Summit at Central Baptist Theological Seminary (Plymouth, MN), 8/5/2015.

[2] Chuck Baldwin, "My Thanksgiving Prayer," n.p. [cited 7/8/2015] Online: http://www.newswithviews.com/baldwin/baldwin550.htm

the flag and the singing of various patriotic hymns. This is often (though not always) done under the assumption that we live in what is or was a Christian nation. In other words, fundamentalism often evidences a *culture* of patriotism within religious contexts, supplemented with religious terminology.

It is the beyond the scope of this paper to focus on all of the issues surrounding the history of the United States, the role of Baptists in America's embracing of religious freedom, or what exactly is meant by the term "Christian nation." Rather, this paper will focus on the realm of biblical theology, specifically the theology of *social identity* that is developed within the first epistle of Peter. This paper will argue that 1 Peter develops a "stranger theology" (with both literal *and* spiritual significance) that on the one hand portrays Christians as foreigners to those around them, but on the other hand part of a "holy nation" under God, the church.[3] This "stranger theology" of 1 Peter, if relevant to the present day, would seem to preclude allegiance to anybody but Christ yet encourage respect to all men, submission to the rulers of the nation they are sojourning in (within theological reason), and the development of a "do-gooder" mentality towards outsiders that allows the Gospel to shine forth.

The first section of this paper will briefly examine the political background of Anatolia (especially the imperial cult), the second section will discuss the "stranger/holy nation" theology of 1 Peter, the third section will focus on theological significance of 2:11-17 in light of the Christian's social-spiritual identity, and the fourth section will tackle some difficult theological and practical questions on the relationship of the Christian to the State, especially the Pledge of Allegiance.

## THE RELEVANCE OF THE IMPERIAL CULT TO ANATOLIAN CHRISTIANITY

The Roman Empire stands as the backdrop for the drama of social identity in 1 Peter. This backdrop, far from being merely a *political* matter, exerted a religious force. The variegated Roman Imperial Cult, which included the exaltation of both a particular leader (past or present) and the state as an entity, by its very nature produced political, social, and religious pressure on Anatolian believers. A quick review of this entity is necessary before we can understand Peter's theology.

Duane Fishwick notes that Marcus Claudius Marcellus was most likely the first Roman who was awarded a form of deification, shortly after a victory over the Carthaginians at

---

[3] Inherent within this thesis are two presuppositions that will be assumed, not argued. The first is that whatever is theologically relevant to Peter's Anatolian audience must be to some degree relevant to Christians today. This does not mean that 1st century Rome is equivalent to a 21st century capitalistic, democratic republic. Nor does it suggest that the practical outworking of this theology will manifest the same way in modern China as it does in modern America. Nonetheless, this paper stands in stark opposition to C. Freeman Sleeper's declaration that "The message of I Peter . . . cannot be made directly relevant to a modern state which is either nominally Christian or in which nominal Christians represent a majority" (C. Freeman Sleeper, "Political Responsibility According 1 I Peter," *NovT* 10 (1968), 281. This paper will assert that it is precisely in a country of *nominal* Christians that Peter's theology takes on a significance that must not be neglected.

Secondly, I have been generally convinced by John H. Elliott's thesis that the terms πάροικος and παρεπίδημος are literal descriptions of the original recipients (see Elliott's *Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* [Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf&Stock, 2005]. For an interaction with, and partial defense of Elliott, see my *Foreknowledge and Social Identity in 1 Peter* [Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf&Stock, 2014], 63-71). In fact, the *literal* terms may strengthen the *theological* implications (Karen Jobes, *1 Peter* [BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005], 25, 39). However, the thesis of this paper may be just as convincing (if not more so) for those who hold that the terms are strictly metaphorical.

Syracuse. Later, however, in 191 BC Titus Quinctius Flamininus' actions on behalf of Greece "earned him the adulation of the Greeks" and resulted in a "permanent cult" in his honor. Some decades later, Pompey himself was called σωτήρ in Mytilene.[4]

Asia Minor seemed to be particularly ripe for the development of an imperial cult. Indeed, "Given that divine honours were a conventional way of showing the proper attitude to those who were looked upon as deliverers, the worship of powerful Romans might be seen as formally, at least, a continuation of the cult of the *euregetes*."[5] Consequently, as Stephen Mitchell has shown in his classic work *Anatolia*, many cities were quick to adopt the cult. Cappadocia, for example, seems to have developed one by A.D. 20, very shortly after becoming an official part of the empire: "It is clear that Cappaodcia also enjoyed organized emperor worship virtually from the moment that it came under direct rule." Even earlier, Pergamum and Thyateira both show evidence of this before the birth of Christ—the former had "local civic cults of Rome" while the latter had an actual temple.[6] Mitchell's conclusion is that "Emperor worship was from the first an institution of great importance to the provincial communities, and one that had quite literally, a central role to play in the development of the new cities."[7]

While some debate exists as to the relationship (and proportion) of political to religious sentiment connected with the imperial cult, nevertheless Mitchell is hardly overstating the matter when he declares, ". . . the information form the well-document cities of western Asia Minor shows that emperor worship was arguably the most significant way in which provincial subjects were made aware of and came to terms with imperial power within the framework of their communities."[8] S. R. F. Price goes even further when he states, "The imperial cult stabilized the religious order of the world. . . .The imperial cult, along with politics and diplomacy, constructed the reality of the Roman Empire."[9] At the very least, the ever-present specter of imperial worship, no matter how seriously it was taken, would help to foster intense loyalty towards Rome.[10]

Even further behind this backdrop of the imperial cult, however, lies the exaltation and ultimate deification of the Roman state itself. Fishwick notes that "Dea Roma played a central role in preparing the way for the system devised by Augustus: the worship of the personification of the Republic provided a bridge between the cult of the Hellenistic ruler and the Roman imperial cult."[11] Ironically, the origins of the goddess Rome seem to have sprung from the

---

[4] Duncan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West: Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire* (4 vols.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 1:46-47.

[5] Ibid., 46.

[6] Stephen Mitchell, *The Celts and the Impact of Roman Rule* (vol. 1 of *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor*; Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 100-102.

[7] Ibid., 100.

[8] Ibid., 113. Regarding a difference of opinion between the relationship of politics and religion within the imperial cult, the reader may wish to compare Donald Winslow, "Religion and the Early Empire," in *The Catacombs and the Colosseum: The Roman Empire as the Setting of Primitive Christianity* (eds. Stephen Benko and John J. O'Rourke; Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson, 1971), esp. 239-240 and 247, with S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), esp. 18-19.

[9] Price, *Rituals and Power*, 248.

[10] As Friedrich Schröger states, "Humanity expressed its loyalty towards the emperor and the government by means of the imperial cult" (*Gemeinde im 1. Petrusbrief: Untersuchungen zum Selbstverständnis einer christlichen Gemeinde an der Wende vom 1. zum 2.Jahrhundert* (Katholische Theologie 1; Passau: Passavia Universitätsverlag, 1981], 157—"Die Menschen bekundeten ihre Loyalität gegenüber dem Kaiser und der Regierung im Herrscherkult").

[11] Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, 50.

Greeks, not the Romans. Nevertheless, Rome certainly felt no qualms of utilizing her as a "vehicle of diplomacy."[12] Even as early as 195 BC Smyrna had erected a temple to Roma when asking Rome for help against Antiochus III (see Tacitus, *Annals* 4.56; Tacitus states that Smyrna was "the first to erect a temple to the City of Rome" [trans. J. Jackson]). The worship of Roma naturally followed Rome's eastward expansion.[13] Yet with the complete domination of Rome over the Greek world, however, ". . . it was inevitably the emperor who took the centre of the state and Roma became essentially superfluous."[14]

This writer must stress, then, the intermixing of religion and politics within Anatolia. Fishwick well notes that the imperial cults and those of θεὰ Ῥώμη were both "an integral part of traditional diplomacy, and it can be safely assumed that in most cases the impetus will have come from the pro-Roman democracy that was concerned with maintaining good relations with the new colossus in the west."[15] The consequence, in the words of Reinhard Feldmeier, is that, during the New Testament era, "The State itself was interpreted religiously; indeed, *it was a sacred institution*."[16] Against this Sacred State, however, 1 Peter makes a bold statement: it is a group of strangers and foreigners who are, in fact, the "Sacred Nation."

## A THEOLOGY OF IDENTITY IN 1 PETER

In a recent article, Klyne Snodgrass aptly declares, "The Bible gives us an identity, tells us who we are and how we fit into God's story and how that identity is to be lived out." Consequently, "Identity formation must be the focus of the church."[17] This writer whole-heartedly concurs with Snodgrass and, more importantly, believes that the Apostle Peter agrees as well, for a significant portion of 1 Peter is concerned with Christians' identity as "strangers," while another part deals with Christians' ecclesiastical identification with Christ as a "new nation."

### Stranger Theology in 1 Peter

The first major section of 1 Peter is bracketed by an interesting choice of words: παρεπίδημος (1:1) and παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους (2:11).[18] In the former, Peter makes this word part of the

[12] Ibid., 50.

[13] Ibid., 48-50.

[14] Ibid., 50-51.

[15] Ibid., 46; cf. Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 198.

[16] Reinhard Feldmeier, "Die Außenseiter als avant-garde Gesellschaftliche Ausgrenzung als Missionarische Chance nach dem 1. Petrusbrief," in *Persuasion and Dissuasion in Early Christianity, Ancient Judaism, and Hellenism* (eds. Pieter W. van der Hort, et al; Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 33; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 165.

[17] Klyne R. Snodgrass, "Introduction to a Hermeneutics of Identity," *BibSac* 168 (Juan-March 2011), 4. It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully explore the social-spiritual theme of identity as a theological construct. Sufficient to say that Snodgrass' series of articles on this is well worth reading. Snodgrass appropriately argues that a true "hermeneutics of identity is concerned with the identity of *Christians*" as opposed to "the identity of *Christianity*" (8; emphasis added). Elsewhere, he makes the poignant statement that "Christ is not an accessory to our identity, as if one were choosing an option for a car. He takes over identity so that everything else becomes an accessory, which is precisely what 'Jesus is Lord' means" (8). For a broader perspective on "social identity" theory, the reader may wish to consult Coleman A. Baker, "Social Identity Theory and Biblical Interpretation," *BTB* 42 (August 2012): 129-138.

[18] Scholars are in general agreement that 2:11 marks the transition to the second major portion of 1 Peter. See, for example, the following sources: John H. Elliott, *I Peter* (AB 37b; New Haven: Yale University Press,

opening address—the letter is addressed to "elect strangers of the Diaspora of Pontus," etc. In the latter, Peter significantly begins his ethical instruction regarding social interaction with these two words which, at the very least, reinforce each other.[19] In between those two verses, in 1:17, within the context of their relationship to God and their call to holiness, Peter declares that they are to live out their παροικία in fear and trembling. Thus, within a space of thirty-six verses, 1 Peter gives us 4 occurrences of specific "stranger" terminology that collectively occurs only five other times in the New Testament. These are not, of course, the only words that can point to a particular nuance of the concept of "stranger" or "foreigner" (e.g., ξένος, which is more common). Nonetheless, as we shall see, these words facilitate the theology of identity that Peter develops.[20]

The significance of παρεπίδημος in 1:1 is, to a certain degree, amplified by its scarcity. The only occurrences of the word in the 1st century, outside 1 Peter and Hebrews 11, are in Philo, *On the Confusion of Tongues*, 79, which quotes the LXX Genesis 23:4, and Plutarch, *On the Malice of Herodotus*, 41. Significantly, in both Philo's quotation and the only two LXX occurrences, the word occurs jointly with πάροικος, which probably supports the argument for some degree of synonymity (at least within the biblical texts).[21] The usage in Philo, the LXX, and Polybius, *Histories* 32.6.4 all indicate that the word refers to one who is a resident alien, a "stranger/foreigner."[22] Furthermore, this is a term with *negative* social connotations; nobody, to this writer's knowledge, ever boasted of being a παρεπίδημος. The fact that Peter uses the term as a designation for Christians does not mitigate its negative significance (in the same way that Paul calls himself a δοῦλος of Christ).

Significantly, this "stranger" word (together with διασπορά) sets the stage for a discussion of the trials and tribulations believers will face within society.[23] Verses 7-8, for example, mention the various struggles that believers are facing.[24] A significant portion of the rest of the book deals with the struggles these believers encounter in relation to those around them (e.g., 2:19-21; 3:9, 14-17; 4:1, 4, 12-19). Indeed, Peter stresses the point that they should be ready to

---

2000), 82; Leonhard Goppelt, *Der erste Petrusbrief* (KEK 12; 8th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 89; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 56; Ervin Ray Starwalt, "A Discourse Analysis of 1 Peter" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Arlington, 2005), 33.

[19] I have been convinced of the synonymity of these terms in the biblical literature by Moses Chin's article "A Heavenly Home for the Homeless: Aliens and Strangers in 1 Peter," *TynB* 42 (1991), 100, 110, though I am in substantial disagreement with much of the rest of Chin's critique against Elliott.

[20] For the reader interested in a broader NT theology of Christians as "strangers," pride of place goes to Reinhard Feldmeier, *Die Christen als Fremde: Die Metapher der Fremde in der antiken Welt, im Urchristentum und im 1. Petrusbrief* (WUNT 64; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1992).

[21] Chin, "Heavenly Home for the Homeless," 100, 110; part of Chin's argument hinges on the lack of distinction between the Hebrew terms that underlie the LXX.

[22] Yet see Feldmeier, *Die Christen als Fremde*, 11-12 for more discussion on how παρεπίδημος could be a person temporarily in an area, but also somebody about whom his or her background is known; Feldmier is certainly correct in stating that this terminology indicates that such a person is *not* staying in a place where her or she considers home, though I would dispute the second half of his definition where he suggests that such a person does not intend to become a permanent resident: ". . . *an den sie nicht beheimatet sind und auch nicht dauerhaft ansässig zu werden beabsichtigen*" (11; emphasis original). It is worth asking, for example, whether the Greeks in Polybius' account in *Histories* 32.6.4 desired to become permanent residents. Whether or not they had desired to become citizens, I believe this would be irrelevant to their status as παρεπίδημος in the eyes of the Romans who lived there.

[23] Douglas Harink, *1 & 2 Peter* (Brazos Theological Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos, 2009), 38.

[24] For a balanced perspective on the issue of local and imperial persecution for 1 Peter's recipients, see Travis B. Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter: Differentiating and Contextualizing Early Christian Suffering* (NovTSup 145; Leiden: Brill, 2012), esp. 179 and 235-236.

suffer as a result of their very identity, ὡς Χριστιανός.[25] In other words, persecution hinged on their *identity* in contrast to others. By beginning the epistle with "stranger" terminology, Peter stresses the concept that they are different from those around them.

After discussing both the suffering of believers and the salvation that is reserved for them, Peter begins a series of imperatives in 1:13-22 that stress the general practical side of their salvation. In 14, the current moral obligations of Christians are contrasted with their previous lifestyle, culminating in the command to "be holy" (15). This is then followed by the imperative to "live out" (ἀναστράφητε) the "time of sojourning" (παροικία) in fear. As Ben Witherington notes, the significance of χρόνος here cannot be overlooked, especially in light of the similar phrase in 3 Macc 7:19. Thus, "The word *chronos* here suggests that when Jesus returns, they will be resident aliens and sojourners no more, even in relationship to society."[26] Yet the stranger terminology persists; both in contrast to those around them and in contrast to their former selves, they are currently strangers (cf. 4:1-5).

First Peter begins its second major section with an intensifying of the "stranger" terminology. Here, in 2:11, believers are to act a certain way in light of the fact that they are παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους. This unique pairing would immediately draw the reader to the two LXX texts with near-identical phrasing (and, with Philo, the only Jewish-Greek texts where the latter appears; as noted, Philo is merely quoting the former): Genesis 23:4 and Psalm 38:13. In the former, Abraham, after Sarah's death, requests that the "sons of Ket" provide him with property for burial. He makes this request as that of an inferior to superior, declaring himself a πάροικος καί παρεπίδημος among them, yet significantly the sons of Ket reverse his status, declaring him to be a "king from God" among them instead of a foreigner.

In the second passage, David pleads with God to hear his cry, for πάροικος ἐγώ εἰμι παρὰ σοὶ καὶ παρεπίδημος καθὼς πάντες οἱ πατέρες μου. Quite possibly the terminology is used metaphorically here (unless this were written during a time of literal exile, e.g., 1 Sam 21:10); nevertheless, the potential metaphorical reading is still predicated on the understanding of a literal, social reality that existed in the past (καθὼς πάντες οἱ πατέρες μου).

Thus the "stranger" terminology occurs at key points within 1 Peter and remains essential to the development of its theology. Karen Jobes succinctly sums it up:

> It seems odd that the entire book of 1 Peter is both framed (1:1; cf. 5:13) and saturated with the terms of exile and foreignness (e.g. the extensive use of Ps. 33 LXX [34 Eng.], a psalm of deliverance from sojourning as a foreigner). Moreover, 1 Peter is the only NT book to use the motif of foreignness to explain the life of the Christian with respect to society.[27]

What, then, does it mean to be a stranger? Christian Wolff has suggested that a stranger is one who is either "born of another tribe," "possesses a different language or set of customs," or "worships a different god."[28] Christians in general would fit the into the last two descriptions

---

[25] David G. Horrell, "'Race,' 'Nation,' 'People,': Ethnic Identity-Construction in 1 Peter 2:9," *New Testament Studies* 58 (2012), 140, states, "1 Peter takes a particularly crucial first step towards the claiming of Χριστιανός as the insiders' common proper name, and , as we have seen, makes a fundamental contribution to the construction of Christian identity in ethnic terms by the brute fact of its application to the Church of ethnic or racial descriptors."

[26] Ben Witherington III, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1-2 Peter* (vol. 2 of *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*; Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2006), 104.

[27] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 32-33. Jobes proceeds to make her point as to why a literal understanding of the terminology makes sense within the context and theology of the letter.

[28] Christian Wolff, "Christ und Welt im 1. Petrusbrief," *TLZ* 100 (1975), 333. I believe Wolff's definition is generally accurate, though I would tend to emphasize the concept of "displacement" more. I also reject Steve

while quite possibly the Anatolian recipients of 1 Peter would fit into all three. The result would certainly include some form of ostracizing. As Carmen Ubieta notes, ". . . there was no hospitality towards resident foreigners (*paroikoi*) who formed a distinct social group in cities. . . . The foreigner was definitively incorporated into city life—with his rights and duties—*only when he obtained citizenship* for religious or political reasons." Thus, by excluding the foreigner, the city fostered unity.[29] When this is set against the backdrop of the Imperial Cult at the local level, one must consider that refusal to worship the emperor (or any of the traditional gods) would have served to intensify hostility. If the Anatolian Christians started out as strangers, conversion to Christianity in of itself also intensified their sense of displacement compared to those around them, consequently ushering in a variety of challenges and trials.[30] Joel Green states,

> For persons thus branded as "not at home," intimate with day-to-day cancerous slander and calamity, the temptations are several: to embrace the dispositions and practices conventional in the wider world (i.e., the threat of assimilation and defection) and to query one's status before God chief among them. (We do not easily correlate rejection within the human family with honorable status before God).[31]

Yet even as Peter develops "stranger" terminology, he intermingles it with hope. The first prepositional phrase of v. 2, for example, may be seen as modifying the entirety of descriptive terminology of verse 1.[32] All of it, including their status as strangers, exists within the foreknowledge of God. Consequently, with Christian Wolff we can declare that the Christian existence of this Diaspora is "no unfortunate accident, one which must be overcome as quickly as possible," but rather a part of God's plan from the very beginning and a key part of the very "essence" of Christian identity.[33]

Shortly thereafter, the introduction leads into the statement that they have an inheritance "being kept in the heavens" for their sake. This does not establish a dichotomy of "pilgrims on earth yet citizens of heaven"; the inheritance is being *kept* for them, after all, and the context seems to indicate that the inheritance will be *brought* to them (5b and 7b).[34] Regardless, the significance of this terminology is that "for strangers and resident aliens who would also be

---

Bechtler's view that the terminology of 1 Peter refers to non-citizenship (see Steven Richard Bechtler, *Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community, and Christology in 1 Peter* [SBLDS 162; Atlanta: Scholars, 1998], 73-74, and my interaction with him in *Foreknowledge and Social Identity*, 59-60).

[29] Carmen Bernabé Ubieta, "'Neither *Xenoi* nor *paroikoi*, *sympolitai* and *oikeioi tou theou*' (Eph 2:19). Pauline Christian Communities: Defining a New Territorality," in *Social Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina* (ed. John J. Pilch; Biblical Interpretation Series 53; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 269; emphasis added.

[30] Elliott, *Home for the Homeless*, 131.

[31] Joel B. Green, *1 Peter* (Two Horizons Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 17.

[32] I follow Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter* (TNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), 48-51 in arguing that κατὰ πρόγνωσιν modifies the entirety of the situation of the readers (consequently functioning as a word of encouragement). Though initially inclined in a different direction, I was drawn to Grudem's position partially due to the difficulty of proving that a prepositional phrase would modify something 9 words removed when other possible candidates exist (i.e., the standard position, that it modifies "elect"). The more I studied, however, the more I realized it would be simpler to see the word as modifying the entire spectrum of the reader's situation (i.e., multiple concepts), rather than being forced to choose between them, especially in light of the parallel usage in LXX Judith 11:19 (for a defense of Grudem, see *Foreknowledge and Social Identity*, 138-145).

[33] Wolff, "Christ und Welt im 1. Petrusbrief," 334.

[34] Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 45—"The inheritance kept (literally) 'in the heavens' is given to God's people when God himself comes in power to deliver and purify his people, to establish the new Jerusalem in the midst of the nations, and to make creation the home of his own righteousness (2 Peter. 3:11-13)."

ineligible to inherit land where they currently reside, this promise of an inheritance preserved in heaven thus had a double appeal."[35]

Furthermore, as Troy Martin brilliantly points out, in light of Old Testament theology (e.g., Exodus 22:21), their *very status as "foreigners"* means that Christians themselves are under the direct protection of God.[36] Even more importantly, as we shall see next, the believers' "stranger" identity is offset by their new participation in the "holy nation" of Jesus Christ.

## The New Identity of Believers in 1 Peter

In the first two chapters of his epistle, Peter has been forthright in his emphasis on the "stranger/foreigner" status of the recipients. Even if a literal sense is held to, this does not prohibit (in fact, it may actually intensify) the spiritual significance of the terminology. Indeed, at this point the "literal" and the "spiritual/metaphorical" sense seem to blend together.[37] If one is treated as an outcast for the sake of the Gospel, is not one then a "literal" stranger? Thus, to utilize Wolff's classification, those who began as strangers because they were "born of a different tribe" now, for the sake of the Gospel, remain as strangers because they "worship a different God."[38] The situation, then, is that Christians

> . . . were at odds with society around them and feeling the sharp pricks of "persecution" from local officials and community pressures . . . Then, their social status was thrown into question by their acceptance of a new religion, and at least some of the letter reflects the felt need of an alienated social group whose underpinnings have been swept away as a direct consequence of their conversion to Christianity (2.10; 4.4).[39]

Yet this very fact leads into the significant *positive* social identity language that Peter develops in chapter 2. Peter initializes his rhetorical strategy of social identity in 2:4, where his recipients are those who come to the "living stone." Thus Christology essentially leads to eschatology.[40] As W. Edward Glenny aptly points out, "The purpose of the section is to establish the identity or self-understanding of the recipients of the epistle as the people of God, and this identity, described in verses 9-10, is based upon their relationship with the stone in verses 6-8."[41]

Significantly, this living stone, like the πάροικοι believers, has on the one hand been rejected by humanity. Yet by this very association with the ultimate πάροικος, the πάροικοι Christians are guaranteed an infinitely more positive social-spiritual status. Together with the great Cornerstone, once Himself rejected but now exalted, believers are built up into a "spiritual

---

[35] Elliott, *I Peter*, 336.

[36] Troy Martin, *Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter* (SBLDS 131; Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 208.

[37] Elliott, *I Peter*, 481—"In actuality, it is neither necessary nor advisable to require an absolute distinction between literal and figurative usage with respect to these Petrine terms. It is conceivable that their usage here reflects an historical process in which the condition of *some* addressees as actual strangers and resident aliens provided the experiential basis for eventually characterizing the condition of *all* Christians in a secular society."; cf. Jobes, *1 Peter*, 169—"Once the letter was circulating away from its original historical destination, the figurative or spiritual sense naturally emerged as the predominant understanding."

[38] Wolff, "Christ und Welt im 1. Petrusbrief," 333; Wolff, however, views the terminology as strictly metaphorical. See Elliott, *Home for the Homeless*, 131-132, for a critique of Wolff.

[39] Andrew Chester and Ralph P. Martin, *The Theology of the Letters of James, Peter, and Jude* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 89.

[40] Ben Witherington III, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1-2 Peter*, 113, "Peter makes the transition to talking about the community of God by way of talking about its founder, Christ."

[41] W. Edward Glenny, "The Israelite Imagery of 1 Peter 2," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition* (eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992), 161.

house." Thus, despite their social insignificance in Christ they gain "a much grander and everlasting community."[42]

In the transition from 2:8 to 2:9, the believers who have accepted the Cornerstone are contrasted with those who rejected him. The latter are established for destruction. The former, however, are designated by a series of significant ethno-social terms. Regarding v. 9, David Horrell points out, "This is the only NT text in which all three 'people' words, γένος, ἔθνος, and λαός, occur together, and the occurrence of all three here suggests an almost deliberate attempt to pack the verse with ethnic identity labels."[43] Consequently,

> Peter here makes the radical claim that those who believe in Jesus Christ—whether Jew, Gentile, Greek, Roman, Cappadocian, Bithynian, or whatever—though from many races, constitute a new race of those who have been born again into the living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here is the foundational cure for the evils of racism in human society.[44]

Verse 10 then supplements v. 9 by using Hosea 2:23 to once again reference their πάροικος status in contrast to their new status. They were once "not a people" (i.e., strangers), but now they are the people of God. Furthermore, these verses are supplemented by references elsewhere in 1 Peter to believers; for example, the ἀδελφότης of 2:17 and 5:9 (which occurs nowhere else in the NT) becomes the "positive counterpart" to their status as strangers in 1:1 and 2:11.[45] Also, Peter's use of Χριστιανός is significant, for it is the first use of the term for *self-designation*.[46] Clearly, then, Peter uses terminology in a unique way to develop this concept of a new identity for believers. While the theology behind the concepts of "stranger" and "citizen of something greater" appear elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Hebrews 11), 1 Peter remains unique in significantly focusing on these concepts and making them the backbone of much of its theology.

This is not an attempt by Peter to create a "fictive" (or even strictly "metaphorical") identity. As Horrell points out, the very definition of "race" or "ethnicity" is notoriously difficult to pin down.[47] Consequently, Peter's language here may not be brushed off as mere poetic license, and we must take seriously Horrell's statement that "Early Christians, and the author of 1 Peter in particular, used ethnoracial language to describe and construct 'Christian' identity."[48] Thus, on the one hand, it is this description of their social status (both as a nation in 2:9-10 *and* as strangers in 2:11) that leads to a particular code of conduct in relation to others, especially outsiders. On the other hand, it may be the reality of this self-identity as a holy nation which

---

[42] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 149.

[43] Horrell, "Ethnic Identity-Construction in 1 Peter 2:9," 129.

[44] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 159.

[45] Horrell, "Ethnic Identity-Construction in 1 Peter 2:9," 140.

[46] Ibid., 143. Compare the usage in 1 Peter to the usage in Acts, where *others* are applying this term to Christians, not they themselves.

[47] Ibid., 136; I do believe Horrell somewhat overstates his case. For many social groups, a specific standard of ethnicity may be required to gain acceptance. In all fairness, however, one must ask: how many of us in the present audience have a specific view of what ethnicity we belong to? The majority of us would probably simply say "American" based on national association, not DNA. In other words, quite often *external* factors, not internal, are the norm for determining social identity. Nonetheless, Horrell's point that 1 Peter is not creating a "fictive" race stands. Peter and his audience are not "play-acting," as if a group of children suddenly got together one afternoon and pretended to be Hobbits. Rather, those who claim to be "Christians" consistently live differently, act differently, and associate differently than those around them, while giving allegiance to Jesus as their sovereign, not Caesar, which is antithetical to how a good member of the Roman empire would live. As far as Rome is concerned, Christians might just as well be (literal) Parthians!

[48] Ibid., 141.

eventually led to Roman persecution.[49] In other words, Roman alarm may have stemmed from the fact that Christian self-understanding resulted in a nationalistic entity which "spread a net over the whole Empire"; Christianity became a "state within a state."[50] Even though official imperial Roman persecution itself did not break out until later, negative attitudes towards Christians *as a class* existed from early on.[51] This may be evident in, e.g., the harsh discussion in Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44 which implies that Christians were a distinct group, identifiable by the masses, and speaks with dismay of their rapid spread.

Nonetheless, despite their unique social-spiritual identity as both "strangers" and a "holy nation," Christians were never intended to be withdrawn from the world; in the quest to find a middle path "between the danger of accommodation on the one hand, and the equally great danger of isolation and escapism on the other," 1 Peter provides a series of ethical exhortations on how the Christian should relate within the Roman and household social structure.[52] Yet it must be stressed that *such interaction stems from their social identity*; i.e., as will be demonstrated (especially in 2:13), even as Christians evidence a certain degree of conformity to "normal" society, they do so on *their* terms (or, rather, *Christ's* terms), not that of the world.

## FREE PEOPLE IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF 1 PETER 2:13-17

Ironically, despite the fact that Peter has just finished describing his recipients as a "holy nation," in 2:11 he again describes them as "strangers and foreigners." Yet given the content of his exhortation, this makes sense: Christians are to interact with all others as strangers *because* they belong to a different nation. Furthermore, they are to do so by abstaining (as strangers to the worldly country and citizens of Christ's country) from certain activities (τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν) which would characterize those around them (2:11; cf. 4:2-4). At the same time, the good works of Christians should cause unbelievers to glorify God.

Next, as strangers and foreigners, the Christians are commanded to be subject to ruling authorities, with the focus on the "king, as superior" (βασιλεῖ ὡς ὑπερέχοντι; i.e., the emperor). Yet the description of these ruling authorities is significant in light of the previously discussed backdrop of the imperial cult. These ruling authorities, especially the emperor, are described as ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσις. The better translation here would seem to be "human creature" rather than "human institution." To begin with, not a shred of lexical evidence exists that κτίσις ever refers to "institution."[53] To the contrary, the word generally means "creation" or "created being" (for the latter, e.g., Romans 1:25, 8:19-22; 2 Cor 5:17; Col 1:23; LXX Wisdom 16:24; Sirach 16:17; Josephus *Ant.* 1.52; etc.).[54] The adjective ἀνθρωπίνῃ naturally qualifies this as a "human created

[49] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 162. Jobes states, "The self-understanding of the early church as a holy nation is attested by the force brought against them by the Roman state."

[50] Feldmeier, *Der Christen as Fremde*, 124-125; cf. also 127.

[51] Ibid., 125-126.

[52] Ibid., 189.

[53] Travis B. Williams, "The Divinity and Humanity of Caesar in 1 Peter 2,13—Early Christian Resistance to the Emperor and His Cult," *ZNW* 105 (2014), 133-134; one could perhaps argue that it refers to "a human creation" (i.e., institution), yet this would be an unparalleled usage that would require to semantic leap to get from "creation" to "civic or government institution." See further discussion below.

[54] Plenty of examples exist both for the sense of "creation" in general and "created being" (whether human or animal). Interestingly, Josephus seems to also use the term to refer to the founding of a city (e.g., *War*. 6.408). In my own research, I could find no instance of the word being used to refer to an institution, whether civic or

being" or "human creature" (though even without the adjective this sense would still be possible, e.g., Mark 16:15). Further evidence stems from the fact that every other time in the NT that κτίσις is modified by the adjective πᾶς, the meaning is almost always "every human being" (Mark 16:15; Colossians 1:15, 23; the sole exception is Romans 8:22, "all creation").[55] One must also note, as Travis Williams points out, that the δι' αὐτοῦ in 2:14, combined with references to persons (βασιλεῦς, ἡγεμών) points to a personal reference, not an institutional reference. In addition, the textual variant ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις would further indicate that "human creature" was the natural way to take ἀνθρωπίνη κτίσις (otherwise the variant would be almost inexplicable).[56]

Travis Williams has, in my opinion, convincingly argued that this is a statement against the emperor's divinity. He declares,

> Since the term κτίσις is most commonly associated with the creative act or creative results of God, especially in biblical literature, the point must be in some way related to the emperor and his creatureliness. The adjectival modifier ἀνθρώπινος further comfirms this thesis, for it is commonly used to contrast the human with the divine (cf. 4Macc 1,16-17; 4,13; Josephus, Bell. 6,429; SIG3 526.721.798).[57]

Consequently, "1Pet 2,13 is making an ontological distinction between the emperor, who is merely a human creature and God, who is the divine creator (cf. 1Pet 4,19)."[58] In this way, even while showing respect to a governing authority, a πάροικος Christian denies any claim that would exalt the emperor (or, by extension, the state) to the level of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, with the designation of ἀνθρωπίνη κτίσις, Peter essentially demotes the emperor to the ontological value of all his subjects![59]

In light of Peter's critique of the ontological status of the emperor, the concept of "freedom" in 2:16 must not be downplayed.[60] Despite the fact that Peter's audience included those who, by virtue of their literal social status, were slaves (2:18—οἰκέται under a δεσπότης), he declares that they are "free." It is this freedom, founded on identity with Jesus Christ, which allows the Christian to interact respectfully (yet *not* reverently) with the empire:

> The Christian is "free" because he expects nothing from Caesar or from the governor, but all from the Lord—*not from "Lord Caesar," but from "Lord Christ."* The criteria and

---

otherwise; consequently I concur with Williams that the natural way to understand the word in this context would be "created being."

[55] The general use of that word with any adjectives may be examined by using the command line "=κτίσις <PRECEDED BY> <WITHIN 2 Words> [ADJECTIVE]" in *Accordance* 8.4 (OakTree Software, 2009).

[56] Williams, "The Divinity and Humanity of Caesar," 135.

[57] Ibid., 142.

[58] Ibid., 143.

[59] Williams argues that "the Petrine author is not calling for an indiscriminate form of submission (as some have assumed). The purpose of his statement is to demarcate two specific office holders toward whom obedience should be directed . . ." ("The Divinity and Humanity of Caesar, 134 fn9). Yet I am not so sure. The concept of submission, or at least humble service, to others (regardless of social status) would be in line with Christ's teaching in such passages as Matt 5:39-42, etc.

[60] A purely *biblical* understanding of the concept of freedom is precisely what leads me to be extremely uncomfortable with Barton's statement cited earlier. For a manifestly more *biblical* discussion of the concept of freedom in the NT, see Larry W. Hurtado, "Freed by Love and for Love: Freedom in the New Testament," pages 209-227 in *Quests for Freedom: Biblical-Historical-Contemporary* (ed. Michael Welkter; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen, 2015).

> requirement for what is here meant as "freedom" is that one is free from the anxieties of his own salvation, he stands completely in the favor of God, and he is free from worry in his interaction with humankind.[61]

In other words, the attitude of the Christian towards the government, especially the emperor, stands in radical contrast to those of the unbeliever. The Christian recognizes only Christ as deity, and, despite what society at large might believe, recognizes himself or herself as free in Christ, and dependent only on Christ, *not the state*, to supply all that is needed. In other words, the Christian's social and spiritual status has nothing to do with what the state says.[62] Consequently, submission to authority is a free act.[63] On the other hand, however, the Christian, set free from the world, nevertheless becomes free only by becoming a servant of God.[64] Thus submission to worldly authorities stems from one's relationship to God, *not* one's relationship to Rome or any other country. The perspective developed by Peter, then, is not "obey authorities because they are the leaders of your country" but rather "obey authorities because *God* is your leader, and you are to proclaim his praises as the ambassador of a holy nation."[65] Yet the wise ambassador, even while showing respect and obedience to the leader of his host country, does not limit it to such as if he were a fawning favor-seeker; the Christian naturally honors *all* people (2:17—πάντας τιμήσατε)—otherwise his work on behalf of his true King will be counterproductive.

This, then, leads us into the "do-gooder" mentality commanded in this passage (2:12, 15). Christians are not commanded to perform good works because they have an ethnic or national obligation to a particular government. The concept of "being an exemplary citizen" or "being an especially loyal citizen," as some emphasize, is not even remotely supported by the context.[66]

---

[61] Friedrich Schröger, *Gemeinde im 1. Petrusbrief: Untersuchungen zum Selbstverständnis einer christlichen Gemeinde an der Wende vom 1. zum 2. Jahrhundert* (Katholische Theologie 1; Passau: Passavia Univertätslag, 1981), 147-148 (emphasis added): —"Der Christ ist »frei« weil er nichts vom Kaiser und vom Statthalter erwartet, sondern alles vom κύριος—nicht vom κύριος καῖσαρ, sondern vom κύριος Χριστός. Kriterium und Voraussetzung für die hier gemeinte Freiheit ist, daß man frie ist von den Sorgen um das eigene Heil, grundsätzlich in der Huld Gottes steht und unbefangen ist im Umgang mit den Menschen."

[62] This writer is not attempting to create a radical contrast between 1 Peter and Romans 13. They do not contradict each other, but they do possess a different emphasis. Even in the Apostle Paul's discussion, however, our obedience to the state is first and foremost predicated on our relationship to God—it is *God* who has instituted these authorities, so obey them. In other words, even in Romans 13, our obedience to authority is not predicated upon a particular social identification with a national entity (as in "obey the authorities because you are members of the Roman Empire"). One could also suggest that 1 Peter's concern is more *missional* (e.g., 2:15) whereas Romans' concern is *theological* (13:1b).

[63] Ibid., 147.

[64] Jan Zaleski, "L'Obbedienza Al Potere Civile in 1 PT 2,13-17," *Collectanea Theologica* 55 (1985), 160.

[65] The *missional* significance of this passage, then, must not be overlooked. See Zaleski, "L' Obbedienza Al Potere Civile," 159.

[66] Contra Dale Leon Watson, "The Implications of Christology and Eschatology for a Christian Attitude Toward the State in I Peter" (PhD diss., The Hartford Seminary, 1969), 55—Watson argues that ἀγαθοποιός refers to "being an exemplary citizen" or "being an especially loyal citizen." Similarly Bo Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude* (AB 37a; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1964), 73, argues that 1 Peter was "especially anxious for his readers to manifest loyalty both to Rome and the local magistrates"; cf. also Frank Leo Finkbiner, "Church and State from Paul to 1 Peter" (PhD Diss., Southern California School of Theology, 1960), 181. As will be discussed later, I do not believe "loyalty" is the proper term to use. More importantly, ἀγαθοποιός, in its sole occurrence in the LXX (Sirach 42:14) most definitely does not refer to political responsibility or loyalty (a NT *hapax legomena*, it does not occur in Josephus or Philo). Its cognate, ἀγαθοποιέω, in both the LXX and NT simply refers to the act of doing good or showing kindness towards somebody (Num 10:32; Judges 17:13; Tobit 12:13; 2 Mac 1:2; Zeph 1:12; Luke 6:9, 33, 35; 1 Peter 2:20, 3:6, 3:17; 3 John 3:11). There is no hint of either "activities of a

Bruce Winter has convincingly argued that Jeremiah 29:7 is the backdrop for Peter's ethical exhortations for Christian πάροικοι—"to seek the welfare of the city and to pray for its peace."[67] Thus the background for the Christians' motivation for good works comes not from their identity as "good citizens," but rather from their identity as strangers in exile who are members of a different nation.[68] The "reasons given why the transient Christian should be concerned for the welfare of the hostile and ungrateful city" is grounded "in the concept of the calling of God's people"; indeed, "the fundamental purpose of the elect race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the formerly stateless group who were now the people of God, was to declare the virtues or characteristics of the One who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light (2:9-10)."[69]

Significantly, part of the Christian's actions as a "do-gooder" involves obeying authority (notice the transition between vv. 14 and 15—ὅτι οὕτως); failure to do so would be counterproductive (and the "foolish men" of 2:15 were no doubt looking for examples of lawlessness as an opportunity to malign Christianity). Yet doing good also involves a particular attitude towards *all* people (2:12—ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν; 2:17—πάντας τιμήσατε), and even the command to "honor Caesar" essentially "flows out of a larger effort to 'show due honor to all people' (v. 17a), which means that the emperor is afforded no more privileged loyalty than his position demands."[70] The passage, then, is not about "how to become a good citizen," but rather, "how to demonstrate the goodness of God towards all men."

One more consideration must be made. In the verses that follow, Peter provides even more specific exhortations to various social classes: slaves, wives, husbands. Yet all this is, once again, given on God's terms, not the empire's. "By calling attention to the inversion of values which characterized the Christian brotherhood, 1 Peter gave assurance to slaves, women, and others of low social rank that 'in Christ' all believers were equal recipients of the grace of God."[71]

## PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF 1 PETER'S THEOLOGY OF IDENTITY

Is, then, 1 Peter's theology regarding identity and one's relationship to the state normative for Christians today? This must be asked with the acknowledgement that 1st century life in the Roman empire is substantially different from life in the 21st century United States, or China, or Japan. Furthermore, one must acknowledge that even when direct commands are involved (e.g.,

---

citizen" or "loyalty" in any of these texts (especially since, as the NT indicates, acts of loyalty towards the state may very well be contrary to "doing good," e.g., Acts 5:29).

[67] Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens* (First-Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), 17; see especially 15-19.

[68] I believe Paul J. Achtemeier has a valid point when he states that the author assumes that "behavior appropriate for Christians will also be recognized as appropriate by nonbelievers, and thus will tend not only to blunt harassment and persecution but also to win over some of those who oppose them (e.g., 3:1-2)" (*1 Peter* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1996], 172-173). However, I strongly disagree with him when he suggests that 2:15 refers to "acts of political loyalty" (185). The difference between "good works" and "political loyalty" must not be overlooked. This writer is unaware of anybody who was drawn to the Christian faith because of fundamentalist support of the Bush administration's war in Iraq. Compare this with the potential for witness that stems from helping the poor or changing a flat tire for a stranger.

[69] Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City*, 19-20.

[70] Travis B. Williams, *Good Works in 1 Peter: Negotiating Social Conflict and Christian Identity in the Greco-Roman World* (WUNT 337; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 228. Some of Williams' argumentation in this area rests on verbal aspect theory (see 230-232), of which I am still unconvinced. Nevertheless, I believe Williams' overall point is valid.

[71] Elliott, *Home for the Homeless*, 149; cf. Williams, *Good Works in 1 Peter*, 144.

to greet each other with a "holy kiss"), accommodation may be made for cultural reasons (and any of my listeners who wishes to greet this writer with a "holy kiss" may be greeted in turn with a "holy uppercut"; allowances will be made, however, for any ethnic Russians or Italians in the audience).

Yet the question is not one of "direct cultural correspondence," but rather "theological norms for the Christian life." If the dispensation initiated with the Church at Pentecost remains normative, and if there has been no historical event to alter the theological self-understanding of such a dispensation, then we must presume that the theological underpinnings of life in the 21st century should be echoed as nearly as possible by life in the 21st century, regardless of one's nation of residence and regardless of any differences in the practical outworking of the theology.

Consequently, I believe the following comments by Jobes on 1 Peter 2:11 to be an accurate theological statement applicable to Christians today:

> Because all Christians are citizens of God's holy nation, they are to understand themselves as resident aliens and foreigners wherever they may be residing. . . . The force of the comparison derives from the observation that foreigners in the ancient world, whether in residence or just passing through, did not fully participate in the customs and practices of the host culture.[72]

Furthermore, I believe Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon ask an extremely important question: "What does it mean for the pastor to have as his or her job description, not the sustenance of a service club within a generally Christian culture, but the survival of a *colony* within an *alien society*?"[73]

This theological mindset may make a tangible difference. It may be, for example, that the church's view on marriage should concern itself less with how the government regulates it and more on presenting a uniquely "Christian" marriage—one that is free from any deviant sexuality or disloyalty.[74] A potential outworking of this would be a local church's declaration that it will no longer concern itself with civic ceremonies at all, but only with communal-religious ones.[75] Conveniently, space prohibits the thorough examination of the can of worms this paper has just attempted to open; nevertheless, one must consider that as *fundamentalists* we should potentially embrace the opportunity to do something differently than the world does it, including marriage.

There is, however, a different cultural matter that I wish to focus on—namely, the Pledge of Allegiance. Since the point this paper is making hinges on defining allegiance, I offer the following from Leisa A. Martin as a decent starting point: "*Allegiance*: a citizen being loyal or devoted to his or her nation. Allegiance involves a person being faithful and devoted to his or her government or nation."[76] Yet this, in turn, begs the question as to what it means to be "loyal" or

---

[72] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 169.

[73] Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (expanded ed.; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2014), 115.

[74] From a theological perspective, I would even question to what degree "marriage" is something that the government should be involved in. It is unlikely that the Roman government (or any local government) would have authorized or even been involved in any Christian marriages that were not between two citizens (the reader will note that Roman marriage laws seem to be mostly concerned with *citizens*, not slaves, resident aliens, etc; see Judith Evans Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce, and Widowhood* [London: Routledge, 2002], 83-84, 154).

[75] See, for example, "The Marriage Pledge" on the website of the journal *First Things*: http://www.firstthings.com/marriage-pledge [cited 7/31/2015]. While certainly too ecumenical for fundamentalists to sign, I believe it has much to commend it and should be seriously studied by fundamentalists.

[76] Leisa A. Martin, "Examining the Pledge of Allegiance," *The Social Studies* 99 (May-June 2008), 131. This entire article consists of an interesting discussion of the pedagogical issues surrounding the Pledge.

"faithful."[77] That the former is *mostly* synonymous with "loyalty" seems to be fairly defensible (especially since, as M. S. Miller notes, Francis Bellamy meant for the pledge of allegiance to be "a vow of loyalty")[78] Webster's defines "loyalty" as "a loyal feeling: a feeling of strong support for someone or something."[79] Yet the website Dictionary.com expands a bit, declaring that it can be "the state or quality of being loyal; faithfulness to commitments or obligations" as well as "faithful adherence." Under a discussion of synonyms, the same source declares that "Loyalty, allegiance, fidelity all imply a sense of duty or of devoted attachment to something or someone."[80]

If the Webster definition is followed, this may be no problem for the Christian. Nonetheless, by such a definition, I must confess that I have "strong feelings of support" for the makers of Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. Without them, the world would be a much worse place! Yet somehow I do not think this is what Francis Bellamy had in mind. When we think of our use of "loyalty" in everyday speech, we tend to imply the exaltation of one item in opposition to all others. If a man is "loyal" to his wife, this does not mean merely "a feeling of strong support." Rather, this means that he does not flirt with other women, no matter how godly, intelligent, or beautiful they are.[81]

Herein lies the problem: *the secular state, by the very nature of the doctrine of total depravity, stands in opposition to the Kingdom of God.* Indeed, even in 21st century America, which prostrates itself before the altar of the "American Dream," we see a mindset that, by its focus on the temporal and not the eternal, opposes the society that walks by faith. Augustine's dichotomy of the "two cities" is still as real now as it ever was (see esp. *The City of God*, 19.17).

I do not wish to downplay the positive role that the secular state is meant to play within society. It is, after all, ordained by God. Yet I only wish to highlight that the state, by virtue of the Fall, is corrupted. A believer may, indeed, make a positive *spiritual* difference through politics (e.g., Daniel). Yet a failure to remember which "city" he or she belongs to may bring ruin to the cause of Christ.[82]

Here, then, is my concern (and, I believe, the concern of 1 Peter): a pledge of allegiance to any state is, essentially, the exaltation of that state above all others, the removal of competitors (otherwise it is meaningless). The Christian has, however, prior obligations and duties to a different Nation, and we are only in the United States (or anywhere else) as resident aliens. We

---

[77] As an interesting aside, William Whiston's translation of Josephus (Loeb) in five different places renders πίστις as "allegiance" in English: *Life* 34, 43, 46, 61, 104.

[78] M. S. Miller, *Twenty-three Words: The Life Story of the Author of the Pledge of Allegiance as Told in His Own Words* (Portsmouth, Va.: Printcraft, 1976), 121. Cited in Martin, "Examining the Pledge of Allegiance," 129.

[79] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/loyalty accessed 7/30/2015

[80] http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/loyalty?s=t accessed 7/30/2015

[81] This raises interesting semantic questions. To a certain degree, I could call myself "loyal" to the Texas Rangers in baseball, which means that, no matter what other team they come in conflict with, my desire will be for the victory of the Rangers (with apologies to the Twins fans present). Nevertheless, I would be immensely uncomfortable with "pledging allegiance" even to my beloved Texas Rangers, for then this would imply I could *never* switch to rooting for the Twins over the Rangers (if, for example, I married somebody who was an extreme Twins fan). Consequently, for my personal idiolect, "allegiance" is an intensified form of "loyalty"; I do not know, however, whether or not such a fine distinction would hold true among my audience.

[82] For a discussion of the terrible consequences of yielding to the state that which only belongs to Christ, see John M. L. Young's *The Two Empires in Japan* (London: Marshall, Morgan, & Scott; 1959). Note also the helpful discussion by Gregory A. Boyd, *The Myth of the Christian Nation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005), 46-49.

pay taxes, obey the laws, perform good deeds within a social context, and respect the supreme leader because that is how good foreigners act in their host country—they "seek the welfare of the city."[83] Yet allegiance implies that when a country's values come in conflict with another country's values, I unequivocally follow the country that owns my allegiance. One must question whether this can truly be the case for Christians in their relationship with the United States of America, for if the Kingdom of Heaven has our allegiance, can any other nation claim the same?[84] The Kingdom of Heaven, after all, is no mere metaphorical construct. Its King is flesh and blood, its members are flesh and blood, it is physically manifested in the literal ἐλλησία, and citizenship in this kingdom is obtained via the *physical* and *literal* blood of Christ. In other words, I contend that we are *literal* members of a *literal* nation, not metaphorical (the failure of the Roman Catholic Church was in suggesting that Rome, not individual local churches, was the primary physical manifestation of this literal nation).

The Christian, then, must be leery of any activity that would place himself in *total* identification with a corrupt social construct. Richard T. Baker, when bemoaning the failure of Japanese Christianity during Word War 2, aptly states,

> When a religion accommodates itself to the social milieu in which it moves, it becomes chameleon-like and indistinguishable from the environment which surrounds it. This was the way in which Christianity in wartime Japan sacrificed its message and lost its uniqueness and evangelizing power. The sharpest criticisms I heard of Christianity in Japan did not come from foreigners but from sensitive Japanese themselves who said that wartime Christianity failed in Japan because it offered the people nothing more than they could get from the government's propaganda.[85]

Sadly, this writer has been in a number of church services which differed little from what could have been said or sung by an unbelieving politician on the campaign trail. When this happens, Christian identity has, for at least a brief moment, become indistinguishable from American identity.[86]

One final point: the very nature of the origins of the Pledge of Allegiance by a socialist illustrates, I believe, how careful we need to be. The original "Companion Address" (published in *The Youth's Companion*), prepared for the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of the New World, has been reproduced in its entirety at the end of this paper, but a

---

[83] I am fully aware that most, if not all of us, are legally and technically citizens of the United States of America. I would suggest that this is irrelevant to the biblical authors, for our primary citizenship is of a different country (e.g., Phil 3:20, directed at *Roman citizens*).

[84] To be fair, I believe most fundamentalists actually practice this; their recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance possibly hinges on a different meaning of "allegiance." Yet my point here is that we as Christians need to be careful what testimony we are giving by our patriotic rhetoric. Does the unbeliever truly understand that Christians are members of a different country if they watch us sing patriotic songs in church and pledging to the flag of the United States?

[85] Richard T. Baker, *Darkness of the Sun: The Story of Christianity in the Japanese Empire* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1947), 69. In a similar vein, one must stress that the emotional involvement that can accompany political ideology (including songs and activities) can be dangerous if not treated with discretion. Baker, when critiquing Toyohiko Kagawa's pro-Japan stance during WW2, states, "Involved in Kagawa's emotional makeup is a deep and irrational response to his own people and nation. . . .Emotions are always socially conditioned. One feels deeply along with the prevailing moods of the society as a whole. Kagawa was swept up into the prevailing nationalism of the war years in Japan and the utterances he made were tempered to that mood" (146).

[86] I will here echo my doctoral advisor's concerns: "There is perhaps no clearer example of the church's misguided appropriation of the world than the god of nationalism" (David Alan Black, *Christian Archy* [Critical Christian Issues 1; Gonzales, Fl.: Energion, 2009], 1).

few statements will be noted.[87] In this address, ultimately celebrating the public school system as "the noblest expression of the principle of enlightenment which Columbus grasped by faith," Francis Bellamy speaks of Columbus' achievement as heralding a "new social order, the celebration of liberty and enlightenment organized into a civilization." His desire was to "exalt the free school that embodies the American principle of universal enlightenment and equality: the most characteristic product of the four centuries of American life." "True Americanism," for Bellamy, is "the leadership of manhood; equal rights for every soul; universal enlightenment as the source of progress." Most importantly, Bellamy states, "Faith in the underlying principles of Americanism and in God's destiny for the Republic makes a firm ground of hope," a declaration that in this writer's opinion stands in infinite opposition to Scripture—the foundation of the Christian's hope has nothing to do with "the underlying principles of Americanism" and everything to do with the crucified and resurrected *Jewish* Messiah. The United States, like all nations, is as a "drop in the bucket" and "as nothing" before God (Isa 40:15, 17; significantly, 1 Peter 1:24-25, perhaps recognizing the social-political significance of this passage, quotes Isaiah 40:7-8).

## CONCLUSION

Should the Christian recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag? This is not, of course, a clear matter of "thus saith the Lord," and consequently must be left to individual consciences.[88] Furthermore, one may persuasively argue that there are "differing degrees of allegiance."[89] Yet the theological trajectory of 1 Peter, namely that on the one hand we are strangers and foreigners in relation to those around us, but on the other hand that we are members of a holy nation with Jesus Christ as King, would seem to indicate a negative answer if "allegiance" is defined a certain way. Christians must take seriously their "stranger" status no matter what country they live in. Any blurring of the "two cities" runs the risk of seriously compromising the church's own

[87] The text is taken from http://undergod.procon.org/view.additional-resource.php?resourceID=78 [cited 7/30/2015], n.p. On For a physical copy, the reader may consult pages 662-663 of Edward Mark Deems (ed.), *Holy-Days and Holidays: A Treasury of Historical Material in Full and Brief, Suggestive Thoughts, and Poetry, Relating to Holy Days and Holidays* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1902).

[88] Mark A. Snoeberger, in his "D. A. Carson's *Christ and Culture Revisited:* A Reflection and a Response," *DBSJ* 13 (2008), 106-107, offers a helpful system of classification of cultural practices: 1. "Believers should courageously resist cultural practices that are intrinsically evil"; 2. "Believers should eschew cultural practices that are intrinsically good and even biblically sanctioned if they stem from *and actively promote* unbiblical and/or non-theistic (i.e., 'worldly') values"; 3. "Believers should exercise humble reserve in their response to cultural practices that are intrinsically good and even biblically sanctioned *if they* might *be perceived as* promoting unbiblical and non-theistic (i.e., 'worldly') values"; and 4. "Believers may, however, adopt cultural practices that stem directly from common-grace values . . . ." (emphasis added). For myself, to the extent that a pledge of allegiance means "ultimate loyalty to a secular state against all other rival systems, including Christ's Kingdom," it falls into the first category. To the extent that it means "a show of respect," it may potentially fall into the second or third category. This is, of course, a personal matter of conscience for Christians and many of my good friends will disagree with this paper's position. The main focus of this paper is to simply stress that the theology of 1 Peter should have a bearing on how we interact with the state, including the words we say or sing.

[89] Thus D. A. Carson, for example, can say, "The Christian's allegiance to the state, then, is always and necessarily contingent, conditional, partial" (Various authors, "The SBJT Forum: Christian Responsibility in the Public Square," *SBJT* 11 [Winter 2007], 101). He may be right, yet I would question to what degree it makes sense to speak of "conditional" allegiance.

mission. This, perhaps, is why it was to the Philippians, quite possibly an entire congregation of Roman citizens, that Paul had to emphasize that their citizenship resided in heaven (Phil 3:20).[90]

How, then, should the Christian live as a stranger in a strange land? This is accomplished *vis à vis* respect and honor towards all around us, obedience towards this land's leaders (when they do not oppose the laws of our Homeland), and the performance of good deeds to draw attention to the glory of God. Political change may be prayed for and even acted towards, but the Christian must remember that "the call to follow the crucified Messiah was, in the long run, much more effective in changing the unjust political, economic, and familial structures than direct exhortations to revolutionize them would ever have been."[91] Indeed, "The overriding political task of the church is to be the community of the cross."[92] If Christians can remember this, then truly the supremacy of Christ will be attested to in the midst of any nation.

*Appendix 1—Francis Bellamy's "Companion Speech" Introducing the Pledge of Allegiance (Columbus Day, 1892)*

Text from http://undergod.procon.org/view.additional-resource.php?resourceID=78

"The spectacle America presents this day is without precedent in history. From ocean to ocean, in city, village, and country-side, the children of the States are marshaled and marching under the banner of the nation: and with them the people are gathering around the schoolhouse. Men are recognizing to-day the most impressive anniversary since Rome celebrated her thousandth year—the 400th anniversary of the stepping of a hemisphere into the world's life; four completed centuries of a new social order; the celebration of liberty and enlightenment organized into a civilization.

And while, during these hours, the Federal government of these United States strikes the keynote of this great American day that gives honor to the common American institution which unites us all, —we assemble here that we, too, may exalt the free school that embodies the American principle of universal enlightenment and equality: the most characteristic product of the four centuries of American life.

Four hundred years ago this morning the Pinta's gun broke the silence, and announced the discovery of this hemisphere.

It was a virgin world. Human life hitherto upon it had been without significance. In the Old World for thousands of years civilized men had been trying experiments in social order. They had been found wanting. But here was an untouched soil that lay ready for a new experiment in civilization. All things were ready. New forces had come to light, full of overturning power in the Old World. In the New World they were to work together with a mighty harmony.

---

[90] For a discussion of the status of Philippi as an official Italian city (resulting in citizenship for its residents), see Gary M. Burge, Lynn H. Cohick, and Gene L. Green, *The New Testament in Antiquity: A Survey of the New Testament within Its Cultural Contexts* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2009), 351-352. The nature of Philippi and Paul's epistle to the Christians there provides, in my opinion, a significant response to those who would argue that our status as American citizens creates a different dynamic than that of 1 Peter's audience.

[91] Miroslav Volf, "Soft Difference: Theological Reflections on the Relation between Church and Culture in 1 Peter," *Ex Audito* 10 (1994): 23.

[92] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 47.

It was for Columbus, propelled by this fresh life, to reveal the land where these new forces were to be given space for development, and where the awaited trial of the new civilization was to be made.

To-day we reach our most memorable milestone. We look backward and we look forward.

Backward, we see the first mustering of modern ideas; their long conflict with Old World theories, which were also transported hither. We see stalwart men and brave women, one moment on the shore, then disappearing in dim forests. We hear the axe. We see the flame of burning cabins and hear the cry of the savage. We see the never-ceasing wagon trains always toiling westward. We behold log cabins becoming villages, then cities. We watch the growth of institutions out of little beginnings —schools becoming an educational system; meeting-houses lending into organic Christianity; town-meetings growing to political movements; county discussions developing federal governments.

We see hardy men with intense convictions, grappling, struggling, often amid battle smoke, and some idea characteristic of the New World always triumphing. We see settlements knitting together into a tuition with singleness of purpose. We note the birth of the modern system of industry and commerce, and its striking forth into undreamed-of wealth, making the millions members one of another as sentiment could never bind. And under it all, and through it all, we fasten on certain principles ever operating and regnant — the leadership of manhood; equal rights for every soul; universal enlightenment as the source of progress. These last are the principles that have shaped America; these principles are the true Americanism.

We look forward. We are conscious we are in a period of transition. Ideas in education, in political economy, in social science are undergoing revisions. There is a large uncertainty about the outcome. But faith in the underlying principles of Americanism and in God's destiny for the Republic makes a firm ground of hope. The coming century promises to be more than ever the age of the people; an age that shall develop a greater care for the rights of the weak, and make a more solid provision for the development of each individual by the education that meets his need.

As no prophet among our fathers on the 300th anniversary of America could have pictured what the new century would do, so no man can this day reach out and grasp the hundred years upon which the nation is now entering. On thy victorious results of the completed centuries, the principles of Americanism will build our fifth century. Its material progress is beyond our inception, but we may be sure that in the social relations of men with men, the most triumphant gains are to be expected. America's fourth century has been glorious; America's fifth century must be made happy.

One institution more than any other has wrought out the achievements of the past, and is to-day the most trusted for the future. Our fathers in their wisdom knew that the foundations of liberty, fraternity, and equality must be universal education. The free school, therefore, was conceived the corner-stone of the Republic. Washington and Jefferson recognized that the education of citizens is not the prerogative of church or of other private interest; that while religious training belongs to the church, and while technical and higher culture may be given by private

institutions—the training of citizens in the common knowledge and the common duties of citizenship belongs irrevocably to the State.

We, therefore, on this anniversary of America present the Public School as the noblest expression of the principle of enlightenment which Columbus grasped by faith. We uplift the system of free and universal education as the master-force which, under God has been informing each of our generations with the peculiar truths of Americanism. America, therefore, gathers her sons around the schoolhouse to-day as the institution closest to the people, most characteristic of the people, and fullest of hope for the people.

To-day America's fifth century begins. The world's twentieth century will soon be here. To the 13,000,000 now in the American schools the command of the coming years belongs. We, the youth of America, who to-day unite to march as one army under the sacred flag, understand our duty. We pledge ourselves that the flag shall not be stained; and that America shall mean equal opportunity and justice for every citizen, and brotherhood for the world."