Suffering and doing good

An exegetical approach to the ethical challenge of suffering in 1 Peter

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Introduction

An ongoing struggle with suffering takes place around the world. Every age has its own contribution in shaping the meanings of suffering, resulting in many theories and perspectives. Yet, the inclination to produce theories about suffering seems to seek to keep the problem away, at least temporarily. While in the ancient world the philosophical patterns such as *apateia* or *ataraxia* dominated the perception of pain or distress, nowadays, especially in Western societies with the development of the modern medical technology, we have experienced a medicalization or more strongly put a dehumanization of suffering. The sufferers of the 21st century fight against pain and discomfort with money and aspirin. However, the cries of the sufferers are not less; their shouting still reaches the sky and they still extend far enough to "touch a fringe of his garment" (Lk 8:44). Indeed, with respect to our age it is true as well that the sufferer, like the poor, is "always with us" (Mk 14:7). This certainly would be enough reason to initiate a work concerned with suffering and sufferers.

However, my interest in the topic of suffering has been stimulated essentially by the experiences from the pastoral visits and pastoral encounters in a Transylvanian congregation where I work as a pastor. The interchange with the believers and their hardship lead me to conclude that many homes along the streets there are houses of suffering, many life-stories are stories of suffering. Often the suffering encountered at the heart of the believers' home is something what makes them to "*live as if they will never die and die as if they had never lived*". Nevertheless, accompanying the believers in their search for meaning and comfort I realized that they continue to believe in God despite suffering, impoverishment and oppression. But what I often experience is a struggle with ethical shortcuts in the midst of suffering. Hence, they all ask: in which manner or how should I respond to those who attack me (verbally or physically), as a child, woman or as the head of the family, or gossip about me, slander me, and so on? What should I do? And often the response of the sufferers reflects ethical egoism, limitation, and source for new tensions and conflicts.

The struggling with a good or proper behavior and the moral deficit recognized among the suffering-stories lead me to connect with 1 Peter as a reliable guide to reconsider and receive fresh input concerning the ethical dimension of hardship. Because 1 Peter as a letter for suffering believers provides special interest to the well-doing during the critical times, I

attempt in this work to engage in a dialogue with the message offered to and received by the suffering Christians scattered through Asia Minor in the middle of the first century.

Thus in the research I will address the question of suffering not in the context of theodicy, but in the ethical context with specific attention to the interaction between *suffering and doing good* as it appears in the following texts from 1 Peter: 2:19–21, 3:17, 4:16 and 4:19. In order to comprehend properly the particular perspective adopted in the selected suffering-texts an exegetical analysis of each of them will be provided.

This thesis contains four chapters. In the first one, the research takes as its starting point the understanding of the background with respect to authorship, date, location and addressees of 1 Peter. The second chapter will be concerned with examining the most likely occasion of Christians' suffering in Asia Minor, as also the reason for the letter. In the third chapter an exegetical approach of the respected suffering-texts will be undertaken. And finally, in the fourth chapter I will attempt to think through the issues which have emerged in the previous parts, providing a reflection on how the ethics of 1 Peter function, and next to that an inquiry into the challenge of suffering will be presented.

Lastly it should be expressed that research on suffering always raises certain expectations. It is important, therefore, to note the limitations of this work. It is not my intention to offer comfort or solution to those who are in sorrow and hardship. Yet, this thesis is an invitation to all believing sufferers to persist in suffering as Christians: in the unexpected interaction between the suffering and doing good.

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On the front page, I have chosen the seal of John Calvin as styled by Calvin College (Grand Rapids, USA), because it represents the sense of 1 Peter 4:19 very well: the hands for good deeds, the heart representing faith, the offering gesture as the life of worship, in this case with respect to Christian suffering.

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Unless otherwise indicated, I use the ESV version in the biblical quotations.

1. Reconsidering the introductory issues of 1 Peter

According to the internal account, the letter was written by the apostle Peter, from Babylon to those "who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1:1). This isagogic remark of 1 Peter seems to be a source of a restless and unpredictable wrestling. A wrestling with chronology, geography, theology, and memory concerning early first century's Christianity. Wrestling is used here to describe not only the power demonstration in scholarly informations pressed against each other, but also to sense the dynamism which surrounds 1 Peter as a literary composition.

My encounter with Petrine research leads me to conclude that 1 Peter is "sweating and burning" in the crossfire of the introductory theories. Thus, it is not just the readers of 1 Peter who are tested by a "fiery ordeal" (4:12), but the epistle of 1 Peter as well. When it comes to 1 Peter, one should not expect to obtain answers easily, one has to "to sweat" until these answers concerning authorship, date, location and addressees unfold as a result of in-depth research.

This chapter's aim is to investigate the isagogical agenda of 1 Peter, promoting a reconsidered classical statement: *1 Peter is written by the apostle Simon Peter, in the early 50s, from Babylon, to a mixed Jewish-Gentile Christian community in Asia Minor*. This analysis will be developed by taking the following steps: discussion on authorship (Simon Peter as the historical, implied and/or literary author), location (Babylon vs Rome), date (the early 50s), and addressees (Jewish-Gentile converts, God-fearers and the implied readers).

1.1. Simon Peter as the historical, implied and/or literary author

The opening of 1 Peter indicates that this letter was written by Simon Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. *But who is Peter and where does he come from?* Noting the major emphases of his life-story, the next lines will offer a synthetic picture of Peter as he appears in the Gospels, Acts, in two of Paul's letters (Galatians and 1 Corinthians) and in two canonical epistles named after him.

Peter is known in NT by four distinct names: Simon (Luke 5:3; Simeon – Acts 15:14; 2 Pet 1:1), Peter/Petros (Matt 10:2; 16:18), Cephas (John 1:42; 1 Cor 3:22; 9:5; Gal 2:9.11), and Bar Yona (Matt 16:17).[1] The plurality of his name reflects the multicultural context of the

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[1] For a detailed discussion on the Petrine nomenclature see Margaret H. Williams, "From Shimon to Petros," in Bond & Hurtado, *Peter,* 30–45 and Bockmuehl, *The Remembered Peter,* 133–157.

Greco-Roman world (Greek – Petros) of the first century AD in which he was born as a child of a Jewish family (Jewish – Simon/Simeon), who later encountered Jesus (Aramaic – Cephas). The Gospels sustain his Galilean origin, more precisely he was a native of Bethsaida (a passing reference of John 1:44). However, during Jesus' ministry, Peter resides exclusively in Capernaum.[2] Peter was a fisherman, called to follow Jesus (Mark 1:16; Matt 4:18; Luke 5:3), being part of the small inner circle of disciples (the raising of Jairus's daughter – Mark 5:37//Luke 8:51, transfiguration – Mark 9:2–10//Matt 17:1–8//Luke 9:28–36, the eschatological discourse – Mark 13:3, the agony in the garden – Mark 14:33–36//Matt 26:37–39//Luke 22:41–44). During Jesus's ministry, Peter was the *spokesman* of the twelve, but after the ascension he immediately appears as the *leading* apostle. In conformity with Luke 24:34 and 1 Cor 15:5, Peter is the first witness of Jesus' resurrection. He is noted as an apostle of both the Jews and the Gentiles (Acts 15:7; Gal 2:9).[3]

The last what we know from Luke is that Peter was an "uneducated and ordinary man" (this is true also for John, the Fourth Gospel's author), but nonetheless an efficient preacher and healer (Acts 4:13), Peter had to leave Jerusalem because of the oppression of Herod Agrippa I. He went to "another place", from where after 7–8 years and after the death of Herod Agrippa I, he returns to Jerusalem to participate on the first Christian council (ca. AD 48–49). It may be may assumed that he had already resided there when Paul and Barnabas started their journey to Jerusalem (Acts 15:2.4). Peter, as *primus inter pares*, takes the initiative and interrupts the chaotic debate over the Jewish and Gentile Christians. The whole meeting and the witnesses of Paul and Barnabas is framed by the theological initiative of Peter (15:6–11) and by the practical initiative of James (15:13–21). The final canonical appearance of Peter is found in Paul's letter to the Galatians. He is in Antioch, 2–3 years after from the Jerusalem council, and seemingly he is trapped in hypocrisy and is opposed by Paul.

Peter's name is mentioned twice more in the NT: in the first verse of each of the two letters attributed to him. His powerful reappearance on the stage of NT seems to be the opposite of his disappearance. Still, it is hard to connect the last informations *about* him and the informations *from* him, from the texts attributed to him in a meaningful way.

But what are the fresh informations deriving *from* him? His first letter provides us a fair amount of data about his current state: he is Peter, an apostle who witnessed the suffering of

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[2] Note Markus Bockmuehl's research concerning the switch from Bethsaida to Capernaum. Bockmuehl concludes that Peter moved to Capernaum well before meeting Jesus, moving from a life in a minority context to a life in a majority context. For further explanation, see Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, 165–176.
[3] For further reflection on Peter's missionary agenda see Rob van Houwelingen, "Jerusalem, the Mother Church," esp. p. 25.

Jesus Christ; he writes a beautiful encouraging letter to "God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia"; he is in connection with Silvanus and Mark (in other contexts Paul's coworkers, thus indirectly with Paul); and he connects the Christians from Asia Minor with the Babylonian Church by sending the greetings of the latter. Nevertheless, the reliability of these informations is widely debated, which will be addressed in the following lines.

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The quest for a *genuine authorship* is strongly connected with the question of how Petrine is 1 Peter. We might distinguish a low and a high Petrine profile.

The low Petrine profile of 1 Peter is a result of the raise of modern criticism and its suspicion regarding both the canonical and extra-canonical (and subsequent memory) accounts. This skeptical line of reasoning is mostly associated with the hypothesis of pseudonymity, which is a cover name for every presupposed non-Petrine situation and action. The two most important and widespread forms of pseudonymity are recognizable in the theory of a literary or implied author.[4] Specifically, 1 Peter would be a pseudonymous letter, written by a follower or admirer of Peter,[5] the apostle becoming a literary figure ("Peter"[6]) and an implied author.

Even though at a first glance these two categories seem to mean the same, they are in fact pointing to opposite directions: literary authorship is a concept which focuses on an instance *detached* from the historical Peter (decontextualization and dehistoricization), while the concept of the implied author, points to an instance is *attached* to Simon Peter (perspectivity). The former one is better known since the raise of historical-criticism, but the latter has gained new attention recently along with the perspectives of narrative and rhetorical criticism.[7] Thus, besides literary authorship, the concept of narrative criticism represents another alternative historical authorship. The *implied author* is present in the text through his ideology and perspective, without being responsible for the historical and physical act of writing. Accordingly, we are listening to Peter's *ipsissima vox*, not his *ipsissima verba*.[8] However, in the context of pseudonymity, these two concepts show that there is an undeniable connection with the historical Peter.

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[4] Mason & Martin, *Reading 1–2 Peter and Jude*, 15–16; Davids, *A Theology*, 100 – 102; Campbell, *Honor, Shame and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 26; Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, 128.
[5] Elliott, *Home for Homeless*, 84–85.
[6] Michaels, *1 Peter*, lv; Campbell, *Honor, Shame and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 26.
[7] Powell, "Narrative Criticism," in Green, Joel B., *Hearing*, 241–242.
[8] Davids, *A Theology*, 121.

The *high Petrine profile* instead is mostly represented by the classical view and trust, according to which Simon Peter is the *only historical author* of the letter. This traditional confidence is based on the direct internal evidence (1:1; 5:1) and on strong early century' attestations.

There are several reasons in Petrine research which increase the level of hesitation when it comes to accepting Peter as the *actual author*. I will name below three critical points, (1) the good Greek language of the epistle and Peter's literacy at stake, (2) Asia Minor and the personal contact, and (3) the presupposed high Paulinism of 1 Peter. Each of these points is followed by a brief reconsideration and explanation.

1.1.1. The good Greek language of the epistle and Peter's literacy at stake

1 Peter is written in an elevated Greek style, which is unusual for a Galilean fisherman and incoherent with the Gospels' and the Acts' narratives where Peter is considered to be an ἀγράμματος (Acts 4:13).

In my view, the rhetorical-stylistic analysis can be an exclusive and artificial category in determining authorship. Nevertheless, this might also be a problem for those studies which intend to defend, within the same framework, the high Petrine profile. I refer here at theprecise work of Karen Jobes, whose quantitative analysis of the syntax of 1 Peter seeks to provide an objective category and a fresh definition of the "good Greek" cliché.[9] The high rate of the S-number (the Semitic interference in Greek) proves efficiently that the actual author of 1 Peter reflects a Semitic mind (a Petrine mind) and first-language. Even if it is a promising argument, still the S-number does not help much in answering the difficulties implied by the careful and sophisticated rhetorical composition of the letter, which might be in contradiction with the Petrine mind.

However, it may be asked here whether it is proper to determine somebody's literacy level based on his first literary work. Is worth to mention also the contribution of Sean A. Adams' work on Peter's literacy which is not trapped in defining any kind of level, but more Adams seeks to "trace the literary development and characterization of Peter as literate in both canonical and parabiblical literature".[10] He argues further that the ἀγράμματος was associated with lack of theological training or lack of scribal training in the law. Thus, it is not a term which marks intellectuality in general. According to those subsequent examples which

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[9] Jobes, "The Syntax of 1 Peter: Just How Good Is the Greek?".
[10] Adams, "The Tradition of Peter's Literacy," in Bond & Hurtado, *Peter*, 130-45 (130).

are brought into discussion by Adams (*Recognitions* and *Homilies of Pseudo-Clement*), Peter is strongly attested as competent to handle and to interpret texts. Adams' focus on Peter's *linguistic competency* had shifted to arguing more for a *literary competency* even if it is not supported by an explicit historical claim that Peter was part of a systematic/institutional education.

Jobes and Adams represent two different reactions on the problem of good Greek and Peter's literacy. Both are valuable in defending the high Petrine profile by relativization of the good Greek and by presenting Peter as a "text-broker". Yet, in my view, these approaches reflect more a receptive Petrine mind and not a productive one. The physical act of writing and the rhetorical phenomenon of 1 Peter undoubted involve formal education at some extent.

The problem of Petrine incoherency is further explained with the favored concept of amanuensis. I consider this as a mediator theory between canonicity and pseudonymity. In the first era of modern criticism the existence of an amanuensis/secretary was identified and connected to Silvanus. However, recent studies on 5:12 prove that the Silvanus-hypothesis is misleading.[11] The formula Διὰ Σιλουανοῦ… ἔγραψα is used in ancient Greek texts in order to introduce the letter carrier, and not to identify any kind of literary collaboration (in this case an amanuensis).

Thus, we know for sure that the primary role of Silvanus concerning 1 Peter was to deliver the letter to the addressees. This of course does not exclude the possibility that Silvanus assisted Peter with his knowledge of the Greek language and his skills in composing and writing a letter.

Next to Silvanus, Peter mentions another companion by name, Mark (5:13). According to the patristic literature, Mark is remembered in the early centuries as Peter's interpreter (as translator).[12] In accordance with this, Joongyon Moon argues that historically it is very probable that Mark is the contributive amanuensis of 1 Peter.[13] However, the Mark-hypothesis is challenged by the synchronic analysis which claims that Mark's Gospel is written in a primitive Greek, with many Aramaisms and reflecting a low rhetorical composition which must have been improved by Matthew and Luke.[14] This observation makes less probable the idea that Mark was the only one responsible for the composition of 1 Peter.

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[11] Richards, "Silvanus was not Peter's secretary".

[12] Eusebius, who recorded the testimonies of Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, write: „And the presbyter used to say this, "Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not indeed, in order, of the things said or done by the Lord" (*H.E.* 3.39.15). Carson & Moo, *An Introduction*, 172.

[13] Moon, *Mark as Contributive Amanuensis of 1 Peter?*, 50-53.

[14] Davids, *A Theology*, 107.

To conclude, it seems probable that Peter was *helped* in the process of writing, such as Paul or anybody else from the NT writers, but there is no reason to think that Peter was *helpless*. It seems that to estimate the extent and the nature of the *help*, leads us into a lot of speculation. Yet, the fact that Peter does not mention any co-author can be a sign of a help with a reduced extent or that the received help in case of 1 Peter has a secondary significance.

1.1.2. Asia Minor and the personal contact

It is hard to believe that Peter wrote 1 Peter, because there is no historical information about the personal link with those who are addressed.

It is widely acknowledged among scholars that the Christian communities of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia are not founded by Peter. These five regions cover a part of Asia Minor from where we have no information of early mission.[15] It has to be noted here that Peter himself assumes as soon as he has a chance the lack of personal contact: "they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven" (1:12).

Peter might be inspired and motivated by the efficiency and well-receives of the so-called Diaspora-letters, customary in the Old Testament (Jer 29:4–23), Jewish literature (2 Bar 78–87) and New Testament as well (Acts 15:23–29; James and Hebrew).[16] It seems that the Diaspora letters, as open letters and in a way opposed to individual-private letters of Paul, were a feature favored by the apostles from Jerusalem.

Furthermore, Asia Minor represents a difficulty because of the overlapping territories of Paul's mission. Nevertheless, this critical proposal is currently contested because the north-center part of Asia Minor was never or just partly visited by Paul.

1.1.3. The presupposed high Paulinism of 1 Peter

When it comes about authorship, it not only the historical data is challenged but also the theological agenda of 1 Peter. Peter is allegedly not the author because there is too much *theological coincidence* with the Pauline line, namely with Romans and Ephesians.[17] The literary dependency on Paul's letter implies the probability of a pseudonymous author, somebody from the Pauline school (sic!).

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[15] Dunn, *Beginning,* 1064–1065.
[16] Feldmeier, *The First Letter of Peter*, 31.
[17] Davids, *A Theology*, 110–112.

The question is, of course, why the theological affinities between Peter and Paul should be considered objections to a high Petrine profile? Moreover, such an objection could hardly deal with the distinctness reflected in the teachings of the two traditions concerning Israel and baptism.[18] The dissonance is further emphasized by the fact, that, Paul regarded Peter as the first eye-witness of the resurrection, while in 1 Peter the author speaks about himself constantly as an eye-witness of Jesus' suffering. Coming back to the theory mentioned above (the high Paulinism of 1 Peter), it can be assumed that both apostles might be familiar with and use common early, pre-canonical (primitive?) Christian traditions. Furthermore, it is also probable that Peter was the first to teach Paul at the very beginning (see 1Cor 11 and 15 – "holding to the teachings, just as I *passed* them on to you" and "for what I *received I passed* on to you"). The presence of Silvanus and Mark as co-workers of Paul is also considered as a reason for the Pauline favor.

Taking the arguments into consideration, my conclusion is that 1 Peter is written by the apostle Simon Peter, who most probably enjoyed reasonable support from both Silvanus and Mark.[19]

1.2. *Location – Babylon vs Rome*

The isagogical remark provides another surprising record: the Diaspora, mentioned at the beginning of the letter forms a geographical and theological inclusion with the location of the author marked as Babylon.

Because we do not have any historical clue or local tradition concerning Peter's residence in Babylon,[20] it is hard to identify this with the actual city Babylon. There are two well-known and well-preferred interpretations of 5:13: Babylon could have been a cryptogram for Rome[21], or a symbol for the dispersion. Even if they are not mutual exclusive, both interpretations seem to dominate the isagogical discussions of 1 Peter. Even more, there seems to be an irresistible Rome-effect, which creates space among scholars for a lot of

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[18] Feldmeier, *The First Letter of Peter*, 35.
[19] Carson & Moo: *An Introduction,* 646–647.
[20] Van Houwelingen, "The Authenticity of 2 Peter".
[21] In Jewish and Christian apocalyptic writings, such as the book of Revelation, Babylon is often interpreted as a code word for Rome. In these apocalyptic writings Rome, through the image of Babylon, is presented as a great threat and evil. However, it is less probable that 1 Peter would incorporate the image of Babylon in this way. First, because his work it is not an apocalyptic document, it is a letter; and secondly, because 1 Peter does not reflect a negative attitude towards Roman authorities (2:13–14).

creativity when it comes about identifying Babylon with Rome.[22] Nevertheless, I think that rejecting the geographical Babylon as the actual place of origin due to the lack of historical evidence, should be applied to other views as well, which consider Rome as the ultimate location. There is no historical evidence that Peter stayed (at all?) in Rome earlier than 62–63.[23]

While adherents of the Rome-interpretation do provide a lot of helpful references to Jewish and early Christian literature, symbolism and intertextuality, however, I think that identifying Babylon here with Rome would be inconclusive with the beginning and closing part of the letter. These parts contain otherwise factual and not symbolic informations. Furthermore, Peter precludes this interpretation when he comes to the greetings section: "She [the church] who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark".

At any rate, it has to be taken into consideration that the order of the five provinces points more likely to an anti-Rome interpretation: Pontus is the first station and Bithynia the last, which seems logical for someone traveling from the East (Mesopotamian Babylon) to Asia Minor. If Silvanus was traveling from the West (Rome) to Asia Minor, we would expect the exact opposite: he would start with Bithynia and end with Pontus.

1.3. Date – the early 50s

Accepting an anti-Rome location is strongly intertwined with a pre-Rome dating. It is probable that Peter arrived to Rome after AD 62, because Paul did not mention him either in his letter to Romans (57), nor in those letters which were written from Rome (61–62: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians). Furthermore, Peter was present at the Jerusalem council (48/49) after which he visited Antioch as well (51 – open conflict with Paul[24]). Thereafter, Peter wrote his first letter before or after the Antioch incident. I propose a post-Antioch date, after the second missionary journey of Paul, when both companions of Paul, Silvanus and Mark, disappear from the Acts' narratives,[25] and probably joined Peter on his road back to Babylon.

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[22] Babylon as cryptogram for Rome is accepted, but differently explained by Selwyn, *St. Peter*, 303–304; Carson & Moo, *An Introduction*, 646; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 14;

[23] Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, 102–103.

[24] Thiede, *Simon Peter*, 165.

[25] The last information about Silvanus is recorded in Acts 18, where he is in Timothy's companion when, due to Jewish hostility, they most probably left Corinth (around AD 50, according to the Gallio inscription). Mark was Paul's companion in his first missionary journey, but because of a disloyalty, Paul refused to work together with him, so Mark's place is taken by Silvanus in the second missionary journey (Acts 15:36–41). Mark and Silvanus are reunited after the disturbing and controversial events, and find their safe place in Peter's companion.

1.4. Addressees – Jewish-Gentile Christians, God-fearers and the implied readers

In the opening verses, the recipients of the letter are described in "distinctively Jewish terms"[26]: "elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς Πόντου, Γαλατίας, Καππαδοκίας, Ἀσίας καὶ Βιθυνίας, (1:1). The Jewish character of the letter is supported further by the many Old Testament quotes and allusions, as well as the Levitical conception of the Church. There is historical evidence that in these regions a considerable Jewish population existed. Jews living outside Palestine assimilated pagan values and became involved in the process of acculturation into the Hellenistic world. Furthermore, there are historical evidences that in these regions existed a considerable Jewish population. The Jewish factor is stressed also by the fact that Simon Peter, the historical author, has Jewish provenience. Yet, how far should we consider the addressees of Peter homogenous Jewish Christian community?

According to J.H. Elliott, the geographical remark involves an "enormous diversity of the land, peoples, and cultures"[27] and this multi-leveled diversity challenges the proper assessment and homogeneity of the original recipients.[28]

However, Peter addresses his readers by not just making use of a particularly Jewish language, but we also find ambiguous hints, which imply a pagan background: "the passions of your former ignorance" (1:14), "you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers" (1:18), "once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (2:10; 2:25; 3:6; 4:3–4).

The presence of syncretism might be eventually a useful argument to understand in a Jewish framework the presupposed pagan background, but such claims as "the futile ways inherited from your forefathers" (1:18) and the pagans surprise-attitude (4:3–4) are irresistible pro-Gentile allusions.

Being consistent with the ambiguity of the addressees expressed by Peter, we must assume that 1 Peter as a circular letter reflects an inclusive attitude, including both Jewish and Gentile Christians as original recipients.[29] Agreeing with Selwyn, it can be observed that

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[26] Dunn, *Beginning*, 1158.
[27] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 20.
[28] Selwyn gives a brief historical overview about the divergence among scholars concerning the audience of 1 Peter. Cf. Selwyn, *St. Peter*, 42.
[29] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 24.

"there is something in the Epistle for each and for all, whatever their spiritual past had been".[30] There is also a possibility to think that the community addressed by Peter also included a "transitional group", notably the Godfearers (φοβούμενος τὸν θεὸν) who were sympathizers with the Jewish faith but who did not fully identify himself with Judaism because of the stigma of circumcision (Acts 10:2.22.35; 13:6.26, or σεβόμενοι τὸν θεόν, "worshipers of God" – Acts 13:43.50; 16:14; 17:4.17; 18:7).[31] As Micheals observes, "this terminology appears first in connection with Peter's convert Cornelius (Acts 10:2)" when the "validity of their [Godfearers'] experience" is expressed in these words: "truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34–35). [32]

The conflicting data and the dilemma concerning the recipients of 1 Peter is efficiently integrated into the new theological and ethical perspectives which focus neither on a Jewish, nor on a Gentile group, but on the new Christian identity (3:8–9).

Beside the inconsistency in the addressing, there is another problem which divides the scholars. Did Peter use παρεπιδήμοις (foreigners, 1:1) and πάροικος (resident aliens, 2:11) literally or metaphorically? Is it the readers' political or theological status which is documented in these suggestive words? Modern scholars tend to regard it metaphorically mainly because the Hebrew vocabulary in 1 Peter seems to be part of the metaphoric language. However, the metaphoric understanding of these terms involves to some extent the hermeneutical concept of *implied readers*.[33] Even if the assumption of implied readers is tenable when it comes to a Catholic Epistle,[34] there is still the danger that the actual (historical?) intention of Peter is marginalized and our expectations from 1 Peter are centralized, can easily became tolerable.

Even if παρεπιδήμοις and πάροικος describe primarily God's ancient people, Israel, in its various historical situations, it is too risky to work with the hypothesis of a figurative language in the opening part of the letter. I join here Jobes' opinion, who introduces the alternative concept of Roman colonization, arguing that this new theory leaves space for Peter to use the "sociohistorical situation of his readers to explain their sociospiritual situation".[35]

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[30] Selwyn, *St. Peter*, 44.
[31] Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 515–517.
[32] Michaels, *1 Peter*, lii.
[33] Powell, "Narrative Criticism," in Green, Joel B., *Hearing*, 242–243; Mason & Martin, 14.
[34] I am thinking here especially about the fact that the concept of implied reader provides plurality of meaning concerning the text. Accordingly, the specific message and occasion of the text is often played down.
[35] The theory of Roman colonization provides an alternative attempt to explain the origins of Christianity in Asia Minor, criticizing the gradual growth of Christian communities and increasing the probability of an earlier dating (during Claudius reign, 41–54, in the early 50s). For further discussion, see Jobes, *1 Peter*, 36–39.

The logical outcome of Jobes' observation and a careful rhetorical-literary analysis support the theory that these questions so heavily debated within source criticism (opening and closing), is interlocked with the main section of the letter.[36]

Thus, the discussion about recipients provides evidence that 1 Peter is a single literary unit, addressed to an audience which reflects a *dual mixture*: first, Jewish and Gentiles converts, and second, indigenous and sojourner converts.

Reckoning with this complex profile of the recipients is extremely important when dealing with the most significant socio-historical topic addressed in the next chapter, namely the problem of suffering.

1.5.   Conclusion

As a final word, it is worth mentioning that in the first chapter of the thesis I looked for a **good enough understanding** of the isagogical background of 1 Peter. I have avoided looking for any kind of uniformity and conformity, welcoming every theory and perspective which contributes to the ambition of a good understanding.

In the light of the survey it can be concluded that behind the canonical text is not a static reality, which can be comprehended with professionalism and with proper methods *perfectly*. The dynamic and complex reality of 1 Peter enables a sufficient, and not a perfect understanding. Furthermore, I think that the first mover found behind the letter is God Himself. He creates the (historical) occasion, He is the one who is looking for workers (letter writer, carrier etc; Jeremiah 1:6–8; Luke 10:2), believing that their "sufficiency is from God" (2Cor 3:5).

Therefore, according to the good enough understanding my conclusion is that *1 Peter is written by the apostle Simon Peter, in early 50s, from Babylon, to a mixed Jewish-Gentile Christian community in Asia Minor*.

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[36] Feldmeier, *The First Letter of Peter*, 29; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 285.

2. Historical-sociological understanding of suffering in 1 Peter

More and more scholars devote their interest and attention to a socio-scientific investigation of 1 Peter.[37] The pioneering work of J. H. Elliott, *Home for homeless*, provides an improving method which inspires theologians to further similar engagement in taking seriously the social milieu in which the text is rooted and to reconnect the "body and soul".[38] The socio-scientific approach does not replace the exercise of historical criticism, but according to Campbell's assessment, "provides insight into the Sitz im Leben of the New Testament documents and traditions that they embody".[39] Thus, the innovative approach represents a part of the diachronic analysis, even though the social-scientific criticism is accepted by synchronic studies with more sympathy than was the case with historical criticism. This sympathy has a very surprising consequence: an alliance of classical-rhetorical criticism and social-scientific criticism in New Testament studies.[40] I want to add, that the text, or more precisely the Message, benefits the most from this alliance.

It may be noted here as well, that the historical and sociological research on suffering must remain cautious, provisional and subordinate to the exegetical work to which I have committed myself. This chapter's aim is to bring into discussion the external data and to search for the most probable historical and sociological occasion of suffering.

I believe that this step, which anticipates the work of exegesis, is crucial because the meaning of the text can be improved by enabling a dialectical interconnection between the socio-historical and exegetical conclusion.

The matter of this chapter will be worked out in three parts: the first part will be concerned in particular with the historical occasion of suffering, focusing on the occasion of persecution by addressing the riddles around it. In the second part the elements of the social dimension will be explored, offering the important contributions of social-scientific inquiry. And finally, in the third unit I will introduce the occurrence of Roman colonization under the emperor Claudius as a conclusion to the socio-historical setting of the Christians' suffering.

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[37] Horrell, "Ethnicity, Empire, and Early Christian Identity," in Mason & Martin: *Reading 1-2 Peter and Jude*, 135–136.
[38] Horrell, "Ethnicity, Empire, and Early Christian Identity," in Mason & Martin: *Reading 1-2 Peter and Jude,* 136; Barton, "Historical Criticism and Social-Scientific Perspectives in New Testament Study," in Green, Joel B., *Hearing,* 34–64.
[39] Campbell, *Honor, Shame and Rhetoric in 1 Peter,* 11.
[40] Campbell, *Honor, Shame and Rhetoric in 1 Peter,* 28.

2.1. *The historical occasion of suffering*

2.1.1. Persecution – riddles around the "fiery ordeal" (πύρωσις, 4:12)

The most obvious reason for the early Christians' suffering is strongly connected with the tragic cases of persecution. The history of first century Christianity is deeply marked and shaped by those three Roman emperors under whose reign were organized and initiated governmental persecutions of Christians: Nero (54–68), Domitian (81–96) and Trajan (98–116). The consistent theme of suffering in 1 Peter immediately invites us to examine the probability of persecution as historical occasion of the first Petrine epistle. But were the readers of 1 Peter threatened by one of these official persecutions? Are Peter's concerns of "those who harm you" (3:13), "do not be frightened" (3:14), "fiery ordeal" (4:12), "the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world" (5:9) implicit references to the historical situation of persecution?

Many scholars believe that they are indeed strong allusions. Even more the "fiery ordeal" in some cases is understood as a direct reference (a technical term?) to the great fire of Rome during Nero's reign (64).[41] However, recent scholars find it difficult to sustain the persecution as the decisive historical background for 1 Peter. They have five reasons for their point of view.[42]

1.   There is no historical evidence that any of those three official persecutions reached into Asia Minor. Nero's bloody actions were limited to Rome and its vicinity, and the attack on the followers of Jesus focused more on the execution of the Jewish leaders of the group. The persecution of Christians in Asia Minor appears relatively late, as it is recorded in the level exchange (109–111) between Pliny the Younger (governor of Bithynia-Pontus) and Trajan (98–116). Pliny had executed Christians who refused to make a sacrifice to the emperor, but even in that context there is no "official policy on Christians" which could be activated. The "suffering… experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world" being identified as part of the suffering from persecution of Christians in the whole world is not consistent with the historical information from first century accounts.

2.   The "fiery ordeal" as not a technical or metaphorical term for the horrific persecutions against Christians in Rome is plausibly sustained by Jobes who explains "fiery ordeal" as a "thought along the lines of Seneca's proverb *Ignis aurum probat, miseria fortes*

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[41] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 8; See a longer discussion in Davids, *A Theology*, 112–118.
[42] Feldmeier, *The First Letter of Peter, 2–13*; Elliott, *Home for Homeless*, 97–103.

viros (Fire tests gold, misfortune, the strength of man)".[43] In this way, Jobes joins Best's and Davids' opinion that "the "fiery ordeal" is probably not a reference to physical persecution, such as Nero's burning of Christians, but to trials faced by Christians that "test the mettle of their faith".[44] This interpretation is also sustained synchronically by the beginning of the letter: "these have come so that your faith – *of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire* – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1:7 NIV).

3.   1 Peter argues explicitly for a pro-governmental attitude, when it says that the emperor sends governors "to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right" (2:14). The positive attitude toward Roman officials would be hard to maintain in such a historical backdrop.

4.   Achtemeier distinguishes three types of persecution: general official persecution, local official persecution, and local unofficial persecution.[45] It is very probable that if some cases of persecutions existed in Asia Minor in the 50's they were local unofficial actions against Jesus' followers. Therefore, I agree with Selwyn's conclusion on the historical background of 1 Peter: "The trials besetting the readers of 1 Peter were spasmodic and particular rather than organized on a universal scale, a matter of incidents rather than of policy, at once ubiquitous and incalculable."[46] This historical situation would be consistent with the isagogical conclusion of the first chapter that 1 Peter was written by the apostle Simon Peter, from Babylon, in the early-middle 50s.

5.   In this letter, Peter never refers to his own suffering, which may mean that he did not feel threatened by the danger of arrest or by the anger of Nero.

2.2.   *The social occasion of suffering*

The rise of the social-scientific analysis of 1 Peter makes improbable the theory of persecution. But if persecution is not the primary occasion, then what can be the source of suffering in 1 Peter?

The social analyses are in most cases concerned with the *origin of the conflict* recorded among the Christian community and pagan outsiders (2:12; 2:18–20; 3:9; 3:14–17; 4:4; 4:12–

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[43] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 9.
[44] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 9.
[45] Achtemeier, *1 Peter,* 28–36.
[46] Selwyn, *St. Peter*, 55.

16; 5:8–9).[47] The social conflict, which apparently generates the suffering of recipients, turns out to have more aspects than we would think at first sight, looking to the immediate horizon of 1 Peter. I consider that the different social scientific approaches are not competing with, but complementing each other. This complementarity stimulates a more natural and human cross-picture of the occasion of suffering.

In the following I will address step by step the most relevant aspects of this social cross-picture, notably the (1) social matrix, (2) social profile, (3) honor and shame, (4) Christianity as (anti)social club, and lastly, as conclusion the (5) multidirectional partiality.

2.2.1. A social matrix – heterogeneity at every level

The picture that emerges out of the regions to which 1 Peter is addressed is one of a vast geographical area with small cities few and far between, of a diversified population of indigenous peoples, Greek settlers, and Roman colonists. The residents practiced many religions ("strangest congeries" of divinities and cults such as Ma, Cappadocian moon-goddess, Cybele and Artemis, monotheism associated with Attis, the "Highest", Jewish[48]), spoke several languages, and were never fully assimilated into the Greco-Roman culture (except in Pontus).[49] This heterogeneous condition of the inhabitants is a result of successive migrations of Phrygian, Celtic, Persian, Greek and Jewish groups. Elliott suggests further that the recipients belong mostly to rural locations, they are a mixture of both Jews and Gentiles and they reflect generally a "vulnerable socioeconomic" position (Peter addresses separately the slaves, 2:18–25).[50] To Selwyn's conclusion may be added that the economic condition in Asia Minor was in general one of prosperity, even though there was a considerable deficit concerning the distribution of the wealth.[51] Thus, the vulnerability proposed by Elliott is understood by Selwyn as vulnerability because of the *mixed economic position* of the audience (see the allusion to well-situated women – "braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes", 3:3 NIV).[52]

Without going into details, the social matrix of Asia Minor bears up well enough source and reason for the conflict and suffering which are addressed by Peter.

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[47] Campbell, *Honor, Shame and Rhetoric in 1 Peter,* 27; Elliott, *Home for Homeless*, 13.21.
[48] Selwyn, *St. Peter*, 50.
[49] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 22.
[50] Elliott, *Home for Homeless*, 59–73.
[51] Selwyn, *St. Peter*, 49.
[52] For a larger discussion on the economic conditions present in Asia Minor see Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 104–128. Williams challenges the simplified view of Elliott that „all rural inhabitants were economically depressed and poverty-stricken", concluding that "most of the readers of 1 Peter probably fell somewhere between abject poverty and limitless wealth".

2.2.2. A social profile: πάροικος (1:17; 2:11) and παρεπίδημος (1:1; 2:11) and the sectarian identity

Most scholars who are familiar with 1 Peter have the desire to solve the riddles around the identity and origins of those resident aliens and foreigners who get Peter's attention.

Elliott attempts to decode a lexical and socio-cultural understanding of πάροικος (1:17; 2:11) and παρεπίδημος (1:1; 2:11), in order to comprehend the presupposed ideology of "home for homeless", promoted in 1 Peter by a Petrine circle that originated from Rome. Therefore, Elliott argues that πάροικος and οἶκος (πνευματικὸς, household of God, 2:5) are not just linguistic, but also sociological and theological correlates.[53] This portrayal of the original addressees functions socially, because those who are members of the household of God are encouraged to maintain and exercise their distinctive and prestigious character in their social enterprise.[54] He sustains also the idea that those who are addressed in 1 Peter were already marginalized before their conversion to Christianity, implying that Christianity was more received by the lower social class.

Elliott rejects the metaphoric interpretation of these pivotal Petrine terms, claiming that they indicate the political-legal and social condition as *resident aliens and foreigners* in Asia Minor.[55] The recipients would experience cultural displacement and disadvantage because they belonged to a so-called conversionist-exclusivist sect of Christianity. Their suffering had no connection with the official Roman policy or criminalization of Christianity. It is worth listening here to the insights of Elliott, who sums up the most important matters which could lead to the suffering-crisis: "it was a time when the expansion of the Christian movement in Asia Minor and its growing visibility as a distinct socio-religious entity was being encountered and challenged with suspicion, fear and animosity… 1 Peter is a response to the typical set of problems created by the tension between sectarian particularism and societal pressures for conformity".[56] According to his interpretation, Elliott understands the Petrine message as a social call to preserve the theological distinctiveness (in Elliott's vocabulary the sectarian identity) of the household of God, by keeping distance from the surrounding environment.

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[53] Elliott, *Home for Homeless*, 23.
[54] Elliott, *Home for Homeless*, 229.
[55] Elliott, *Home for Homeless*, 35.
[56] Elliott, *Home for Homeless*, 225.

Elliott's conclusion seems to reach critical matters in his language and content which crossed the borders of the Petrine material.[57] However, his research is validated by more scholars as a pioneering methodological guide, because "prior to Elliott's study the local setting of the epistle was a non-issue".[58]

2.2.3. Honor and shame – suffering from the defamation of the community

We must address another point of view which has come recently to the forefront in the social scientific exegesis of 1 Peter, namely the centrality of honor code in the Mediterranean culture. Since John G. Peristiany debutal interest on the social and anthropologic phenomenon within the Mediterranean region (*Honour and Shame, The Values of the Mediterranean society*, 1965), there is a progressive inclination among biblical scholars to reassess the social milieu of the NT documents in accordance with his conclusion that "honour is the apex of the social pyramid of temporal social values and it conditions their hierarchical order. Cutting across all other social classifications it divides social beings into two fundamental categories, those endowed with honour and those deprived of it".[59] This idea is taken up by Campbell and applied on the social strategy of 1 Peter. By the end of his work, Campbell is convinced and satisfied by the accomplished results:

> I examined the semantic field of honor/shame in 1 Peter and I found it to be well represented. An extraordinary number of terms associated with public esteem and public disgrace in the text strongly suggests that Peter's concern is predominantly with honor, the primary cultural value of the ancient Mediterranean world. [60]

Thereafter, the social occasion of suffering is related to the honor-shame context. The suffering of the Christians appears because of the defamation of the community. According to Campbell's theory, the Christians addressed by Peter were dishonored because of the "unsatisfactory response to public ridicule and its challenge to honor" (see 2:12.19–20; 3:16; 4:4.13–14.16).[61]

However, there are some critical points on this issue.

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[57] For instance, as a contra-reaction to the close idea of sectarianism, Balch concludes exactly the opposite that Peter in his first epistle encouraged an appropriation to the society in order to avoid alienation from it. For further observation see Jobes, *1 Peter*, 3–4.

[58] Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 16. Other scholars in this line of thought: Campbell and Carson & Moo.

[59] Peristiany, *Honour and Shame,* 10.

[60] Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and Rhetoric in 1 Peter*, 236.

[61] Campbell, *Honor, Shame and Rhetoric in 1 Peter,* 27.

The honor-shame model, as driving force of social dynamics, seems to simplify and reduce the complexity of 1 Peter. Campbell's press on the honor code, implies subtly that the Christians constantly struggled for social acceptance, and that they suffered the most when their struggle failed.

Next to that, the honor-shame phenomenon could embrace different perspectives or tones, varying from region to region, and also within the social clubs policy. We can assume as well that every community has its own principles; it can itself honor or dishonor. For example, it is very probable that the honor-shame code of a rural environment had different aspects from an urban one.

It is notable as well, that such social scientific scholars as Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, had re-evaluated the unifying elements of Mediterranean region and came to the conclusion:

> that the honour and shame by no means have any proven exclusively Mediterranean origin or originality, as similar notions of honour and shame can be found in different societies across the world.[62]

Furthermore, Campbell's contribution to the social agenda of 1 Peter is closely tied to Elliott's in the sense that both scholars suggests a theoretical idea (Campbell) or ideology (Elliott) as a strategy implied in the process of writing. Thus, both scholars provide a conceptualization of 1 Peter (home for homeless or honor for dishonored), which might deteriorate the particular meaning of several sections.

And finally, we may ask whether Peter really embraced such a polemic secular value to promote a Christian attitude and behavior or to alleviate Roman suspicion from those outside.

2.2.4. The Church as (anti)social club[63]

I find it necessary to collect in a few lines those thoughts which help to explain why Christianity could appear as source of dishonor, disgrace in the society and why Christians could suffer because of it.

The gatherings of early Christians were often confused with the religious associations of worshipers of various foreign deities in their midst. Associations, according to Ferguson's conclusion, were mostly formed as a "natural organization for foreigners and

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[62] Horden & Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea,* 489–522.
[63] Davids, *A Theology*, 119;

foreign worship entering a city." [64] This information is very important concerning 1 Peter, and I will come back to it later on (see Roman colonization below).

Often the adherents of the new group, as a Jewish splinter group, were viewed as haters of humanity, atheists, who threatened the stability (homeostasis) of the society and the greatness of Greco-Roman culture. [65] They did not belong to the officially tolerated *religio licita*, but appeared to be a *collegia*, a social club. Moreover, Christianity was viewed not just as a social group, but because of many critical issues, which brought danger to the social order, as anti-social club. The misunderstood anti-social activities are identified by Campbell as follows:

> (1) the independence of Christian slaves and wives in choosing their own religion apart from the pater potestas and (2) the reputed character of Christianity as superstitio. Some regarded the sect as promoting (3) sexual immorality, (4) cannibalism, (5) magic, (6) sedition, (7) atheism, (8) contempt for death coupled with a show in martyrdom. The church's (9) withdrawal of economic support of pagan interests (cf. Acts 19:18–41) was resisted as was its alleged (10) hatred of the human race.[66]

The believers obviously are alarmed by this anti-social and anti-human projection of the outsiders, they cannot run away from the world, they have to act and react in a way or another. In times of suffering reactions are harder to control and function differently from the "normal times". Nonetheless, the Petrine message seems to validate the times of suffering as a "normal time" for entrusting our souls to the faithful Creator and for doing good (4:19).

2.2.5. Conclusion on the social occasion of suffering – a multidirectional partiality

The issues mentioned above signal the primary social and cultural forces at work in letter. The polyvalence of social approaches proves that there exists more than just one decisive concern.

In the light of the depicted issues, it seems that Peter in his letter promotes a multi-directional partiality, which culminates in 2:17: "Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor." The multidirectional partiality of Peter implies, on the one hand, the ethical dimension of relationships (Christians – everyone/no matter of social identity or belonging, Christians – Christians, Christians – God, Christians – governor), expressed in the

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[64] Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 131–136 (esp. 136).
[65] Davids, *A theology*, 118–120.
[66] Campbell, *Honor, Shame and Rhetoric in 1 Peter,* 29.

great call "to continue to do good" (4:19 NIV). On the other hand, this great attitude proposes the idea that Peter is engaged with the whole context of suffering (World – Roman Empire – Asia Minor – eternal glory), a context which itself contains as problematic drivers as point of contingency.

The suffering of Christians originated not from a static, but a dynamic environment. This perspective is efficiently acknowledged by the new theory of Roman colonization, which we may consider a mediator theory between the social and historical occasion of suffering.

In what follows, I will discuss an alternative theory on historical situation of 1 Peter.

2.3. *Roman colonization – mediator theory between the social and historical occasion of suffering*

2.3.1. Roman colonization and its content

As I have already indicated, we turn now to express the insights and the content of the Roman colonization theory and its value as a mediator theory. This theory was initiated by Karen Jobes, attempting to refocus scholarly attention when she is looking for alternative historical answers to explain the origins of Christianity in Asia Minor. She maintains, excluding the theory of a gradual growth of church in these regions that "Christianity came relatively quickly to these regions through Roman colonization of Asia Minor".[67]

The policy of urbanization through colonization was indeed "an active principle" of the Roman emperors in the first century. This active project was applied also to Asia Minor, during the reign of Claudius (41–54). Claudius established Roman cities in all five of the regions named in the opening of the 1 Peter.

Jobes argues that when it came to populate the newly established colonies, there is one important thing to remark: one of the possible target groups were the "*foreigners*" (Latin: *peregrine*, Greek: *parepidemoi*), those who were perceived as troublemakers, or disruptive of the *pax Romana*. The term "foreigner" (*peregrinus*) in this context does not indicate any social content. It is a legal term for someone who was free but not a Roman citizen.[68]

However, the "foreign" identity became even more pressed, because the colonists were viewed as foreigners at their destination as well, and often they were target of violence and persecution by the native population. The Petrine expressions of foreigners can be directly linked to this historical and social understanding of Christians and Christianity.

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[67] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 13.
[68] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 37.

Next to the colonization activities of Claudius, noteworthy as well are his efforts concerning the expulsion of the Jews, which probably included also Jewish Christians, from Rome (see the case of Aquila and Priscilla, Acts 18:2). Whether they were deported as colonists (voluntarily or by force), or whether they reached the remote regions as expelled (converted) Jews, the audience of 1 Peter seems to be in such a socio-political situation that they require an urgent apostolic reaction. In the new and trying situation, the scattered and alien residents indeed needed to receive basic instructions and encouragement, a document exactly like 1 Peter.

Even if there is no direct evidence that the "foreigners" who are addressed by Peter in 1:1 were deported from Rome to Asia Minor, yet, the brief historical considerations above provide a plausible motivation for the letter. The intensity of the term "foreigners" throughout the letter may have to some extent a real event inspiration, most probably the Roman colonization.

As Jobes observes, the language of 1 Peter reflects as well that it is addressed to unstructured groups, among whom there are elders who need to be encouraged to "be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve" (5:1–3). The image of sheep can easily point to Christians scattered by the policy of colonization across a desolate and pagan Asia Minor. How should they live in such a place? How should they treat each other? How will their faith survive? These seem to be not "catholic" or general questions, but more particular questions of an acute *Sitz im Leben*, different from the official persecutions.

The resident aliens need to establish in the (pagan) new land and new society a way in which their commitment to God can be expressed, but this will probably be seen as foreign worship entering a city or village. 1 Peter, then, could be a useful guide in the (post)colonial reorganization of Christians originated from Rome. A significant part of this reorganization is building a new spiritual house: "you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (2:5 NIV), which can also be an allusion to a new start and beginning. In this sense 1 Peter became some kind *deed of foundation* for this new spiritual house built in Asia Minor. This perspective is supported also by the way how Peter stretches out the *motif of consistency,* culminating in 4:19 NIV: "continue to do good" (see also 1:22 NIV). In every new beginning, here also, it is crucial to show consistency, because "every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or *household divided against* itself will not stand" (Mat 12:25).

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To sum up, the Christians who receive Peter's letter must overcome their suffering because of the historical situation. They have to bring out the best from the *Sitz im Leben* and to follow the Petrine *modus vivendi*: building a spiritual house and building spiritual and social connections by honoring everyone, loving the brotherhood, fearing God and honoring the emperor (2:17).

Nevertheless, *Roman colonization* as an explanation for the origins of Christianity in Asia Minor is not an isolated theory. The context of the Roman Empire is also appreciated by David G. Horrell, as a sociopolitical context of 1 Peter which deserves more attention and investigation. Instead of Roman colonization (Jobes), he constantly speaks about a *postcolonial perspective* applied on 1 Peter. Horrell calls for awareness when he claims:

> the relations between colonizer and colonized are complex and ambivalent, with resistance and complicity often inextricably intertwined. The "space" of interaction creates a place for new, hybrid identities in which both colonizer and colonized become something other than they were before. Also, the disturbance of colonization can dislocate people, both physically and/or culturally, such that the language of diaspora and exile finds a prominent place in postcolonial reflection…
>
> Postcolonialism thus invites us to read 1 Peter as a literary product of a colonial/imperial context, with our ears attuned to the ways in which this letter constructs the identity of the people to whom it is addressed and offers one particular way of negotiating existence in the empire, between conformity and resistance.[69]

In my opinion, Karen Jobes' confidence that "the theory of colonization provides an explanation for many previously puzzling issues, and there are no other competing theories that offer similar specificity"[70] and Horrell's appreciation of postcolonialist studies is an invitation to participate in a *heuristic and dialectic reading* of 1 Peter and its background.

After presenting the alternative theory offered by Karen Jobes and by postcolonial studies, I now turn to express its relevance as mediator theory.

2.3.2. Roman colonization theory and its mediator power

I consider as point of departure that positioning the origins of Christians in Asia Minor means positioning the origins of Christians' suffering in Asia Minor. This exercise of diagnosing the nature of suffering is further developed around three main ideas, namely the

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[69] Horrell, "Ethnicity, Empire, and Early Christian Identity," in Mason & Martin: *Reading 1-2 Peter and Jude,* 143.
[70] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 41.

(1) socio-historical occasion of suffering, (2) glocalization of suffering and (3) figurative meaning.

2.3.2.1. Socio-historical occasion of suffering

In my view, Roman colonization proves to be a *mediator theory, as a theory which has the potential to explain both the historical and social reasons of suffering in 1 Peter.* Further, this mediator model excludes the one-side, unilateral interpretations, and builds bridges between the various social strategies which could be active in 1 Peter.

Thereafter, this model respects and empowers the polyvalence of the new socio-political situation which emerges from the political ambition of moving a group of people out of their home into a new "home". As Jobes concludes, "this resulted in complex social relationships accompanied by serious tensions that played out differently between citizens and noncitizens, free and slave, rich and poor in each city."[71]

Thus, in the light of Roman colonization might be encountered suffering on two levels in 1 Peter: suffering because of political decision, because of "negotiating existence in the empire, between conformity and resistance" (historical occasion of suffering). The next level of suffering is connected with the *consequence* of such a political ambition: the colonization creates social tensions in the colonized land (social occasion of suffering).

As it follows, it can be considered that the social tension between the colonized and native population included all those elements which were identified by the social scientific exercises (see above Elliott, Campbell). In this discourse no theory has authority over another, because each of them represents a part of the "truth" (truth as reality).

So then, what is the "truth"? At this point we must turn back to what Ferguson said about "foreigners/foreign worship entering a city", echoing a similar situation through which the audience of 1 Peter is going.

It seems that in 1 Peter the deported "troublemakers" continued to be "troublemakers" in the new land as well. Among the many groups of foreigners which arrive to Asia Minor with the edict of Claudius, the foreigners of 1 Peter could be the most difficult group to handle by the native population/indigenous society whether it is about integration or assimilation or accepting as a parallel society/religion. This can be indicated by the suggestive formulations "they accuse you" (2:12 NIV), "do not be frightened" (3:14 NIV) and so on (3:15–16; 4:4; 4:14). They are rejected because of their commitment to Jesus Christ, which

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[71] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 31.

commitment indicates a hardly tolerated and antipathetic sectarian behaviour (Elliott).[72] Surrounded by prejudices, ignorant talk and foolish men (2:15), the believing community was target of dishonoring actions (Campbell).[73]

2.3.2.2. Glocalization of suffering

Of course, some elements of the social conflict could be also be "deported" from the pre-colonization situation of Christians in and around Rome, as suggested by the concluding section of the letter: "Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world" (5:9). In this sense we can experience a broadened, a global transhistorical and transcultural tension between Christians and non-Christians as a reason for an ongoing suffering. What Peter implies here may be that the suffering transcends the historical bounds of Roman colonization and Asia Minor. Thus, 1 Peter provides a message of a glocalized Christian suffering, where both the local and global (4:14; 5:9) settings are in the view. In other words, in 1 Peter we find specific (local) and as well general (global) reasons for suffering.

2.3.2.3. The figurative dimension

The emphatic use of "foreigners" and "resident aliens" as terms of societal stigma could reflect just for a limited time a literal meaning in the reception of 1 Peter. As Jobes rightly observes:

> the later semantic extension of *parepideμmos* (noncitizen) explains how the original historical reference came to be understood in purely spiritual terms of "pilgrim" when the letter circulated beyond its original setting. The perception of Christians as foreigners both in Rome and in their new location yields its power to the truth that Christians are foreigners and resident aliens anywhere in a world that is hostile to the gospel of Jesus Christ.[74]

2.4. Conclusion

The concern of this chapter was to identify by diachronic means what kind of suffering is in view in 1 Peter. I have presented the critical points of the protocol and remote interpretation of suffering, as suffering because of official persecution. After that, various designations have been given to the social occasion of suffering, based on the pioneer insights

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[72] Elliott, *Home for Homeless*, 107–108 and 118–119.
[73] Campbell, *Honor, Shame and Rhetoric in 1 Peter*, 27.
[74] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 41.

of James Elliott and Barth Campbell. Their efforts are central in stimulating an awareness of the social reality of 1 Peter and raising suspicion about the superiority of the metaphoric reading. And finally we reached the conclusion that the new theory of Roman colonization, as a mediator theory, provides the most advanced (dialectic) understanding of Christians' suffering in 1 Peter. Accordingly, the recipients of 1 Peter suffered because the political ambition of Roman government in establishing colonies in the remote areas of Asia Minor. The believers were deported from their home, and established in a pagan society, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

However, I might mention that this practice presented here does not imply that the issue of historical and social occasion of the letter and suffering is by any means settled. Even if a final conclusion could be reached the question is still open and leaves space for further investigation and also for exegetical reconsideration.

3.　Exegetical approach to the selected suffering-texts

Following on the previous chapters' diachronic examination of 1 Peter and the occasions of suffering, in this chapter I focus on some particular Petrine texts, providing an exegetical approach.

Because the reflections on suffering appear sporadic, the Petrine message cannot be localized in one place. Accordingly, I enable a dialogue between more texts, and see how the teaching of suffering is reframed by this dialogue.

The main texts (including their contexts) relevant for this dialogue are considered to be the following: 2:19–21; 3:17; 4:16 and 4:19. These passages are concerned with suffering **for** doing, suffering **from** the „good" name and suffering **to** do good. Thus, in the exegetical research I will look closely to those texts in which the suffering and doing good interaction is condensed. It seems that this dialogue of suffering-texts provides a space for approval and critique of ethics, with which we will deal more specifically in the last chapter.

I will introduce the exegetical approach by giving a brief outline concerning the macro structure of 1 Peter. This will be done using a combined and harmonized version of theological and rhetorical model. I find this step necessary in order to locate the selected suffering-texts more easily and to see how the respective passages are involved in the communicative function of the macro structure.

3.1. Structure of 1 Peter

3.1.1. Design of a combined structure and explanation[75]

EXORDIUM – 1:3–12

A: Greetings to God's chosen people, who are foreigners 1:1–2

    FIRST ARGUMENTATIO – 1:13–2:10

    B: Details about their identity as God's chosen people and foreigners – 1:3–2:10

        a. Thanksgiving – 1:3–12

        b. Hope and holy life – 1:13–21

        c. A life of genuine love – 1:22–25

        d. The household of God – 2:1–10

    SECOND ARGUMENTATIO – 2:11–3:12

    C: (C1?)Living as foreigners in a hostile society – 2:11–4:11

        a. Empowering an honorable conduct within the structures of this age 2:11–3:7

    (?) THIRD ARGUMENTATIO – 3:13–4:11

        b. First conclusion – responding to hostility – 3:8–17

        c. First excursus: Jesus's suffering – 3:18–22

        d. Second excursus: Christians' suffering – 4:1–6

        e. Second conclusion – The solidarity of the community in troubled times – 4:7–11

PERORATIO – 4:12–5:14

  D: (C2?)Responding to and reframing suffering – 4:12–5:11

        a. Reframing suffering positively – 4:12–19

        b. Honorable conduct and unity in face of suffering – 5:1–5

        c. Glocalization of suffering and the caring God – 5:6–11

E (D?): Letter ending and final greetings (quasi-exordium) – 5:12–14

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[75] The (harmonized) schematic design of 1 Peter is based on the rhetorical structure provided by Barth L. Campbell and on the thematic (or theological) structure found in the commentaries of Karen Jobes, Peter H. Davids, Ramsey Michaels, Paul Achtemeier and E.G. Selwyn.

While the first major section of 1 Peter reflects coherency between the thematic and rhetoric composition, the middle corpus, starting with the third argumentatio (3:13–4:11) encounters some dissonance. In my opinion the thematic and rhetoric models mutually correct each other. In the *first* critical point, the thematic model rectifies the rhetoric one, by "reducing" the third argument to be some kind of "peroratio" for the second argument. I believe this, because the so-called third argumentatio is thematically closely tied to the preceding section. Rhetorically speaking it would be something unusual to use the same example in different arguments (see Jesus' suffering as repeated example for both arguments, 2:21–24 and 3:18–22). Moreover, the third argumentation seems to start with a "non-conformist" proposition, because instead of a statement, Peter addresses a question: "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?" (3:13)

The second critical point starting with 4:12 is concerned not just with the thematic or rhetoric issues but with redaction criticism as well. What is more, the passage introduced by 4:12 is like an *Achilles' heel* of 1 Peter. I believe that the vulnerability of this section is stressed too far by those critics who claim that the break with the doxology (4:11), the new moment of address (Ἀγαπητοί, 4:12) and the historical interpretation of "fiery ordeal" (as a sign of a harsh and official persecution) raise source and redactional questions.[76] However, recently the unity of 1 Peter is convincingly supported by literal and rhetorical criticism.[77] Interpreted positively, all these elements signal a great rhetorical turn in the Petrine discourse: the two major arguments come to a surprising and intriguing end.[78]

Nevertheless, some scholars (e.g. Peter Davids[79]) defend the literal unity so much that they refuse to express the new rhetorical value of 4:12–5:14, pushing the "Achilles' heel" to be a considerable part of the second major section of 1 Peter (Living as Foreigners in a Hostile Society, 2:11–5:11).

All things considered, the harmonized structure will follow those rhetorical (Campbell) and thematic (Michaels, Jobes) patterns which let the Achilles' heel function as a great call, for an alternative letter-closing.

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[76] The main scholars who see here a case of redaction criticism are: Perdelwitz, 1911; Windisch, 1930; Moule, 1955–56; Reicke, 1964; Beare, 1970. For further explanation see Jobes, *1 Peter*, 285.
[77] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 8.
[78] Campbell, *Honor, Shame and Rhetoric in 1 Peter,* 199–228.
[79] Davids, *A theology*, 122–123.

3.2. Exegesis of the selected suffering-texts

The analysis of the four texts will be worked out in two sections, due to the fact that 2:19–21 and 3:17 belong to one specific context, and the 4:16-19 to another literary unit.

3.2.1. Exegesis of 2:19–20 and 3:17

3.2.1.1. The larger context of 1 Peter 2:19–20 and 3:17

[18] Οἱ οἰκέται ὑποτασσόμενοι ἐν παντὶ φόβῳ τοῖς δεσπόταις, οὐ μόνον τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς καὶ ἐπιεικέσιν ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς σκολιοῖς.

[19] τοῦτο γὰρ χάρις εἰ διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ ὑποφέρει τις **λύπας πάσχων ἀδίκως**.

[20] ποῖον γὰρ **κλέος** εἰ ἁμαρτάνοντες καὶ κολαφιζόμενοι ὑπομενεῖτε; **ἀλλ᾽ εἰ ἀγαθοποιοῦντες καὶ πάσχοντες ὑπομενεῖτε, τοῦτο χάρις παρὰ θεῷ.**

[21] εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ἐκλήθητε, ὅτι καὶ **Χριστὸς ἔπαθεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν** ὑμῖν ὑπολιμπάνων **ὑπογραμμὸν** ἵνα ἐπακολουθήσητε τοῖς ἴχνεσιν αὐτοῦ,

[22] ὃς ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἐποίησεν οὐδὲ εὑρέθη δόλος ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ,

[23] ὃς λοιδορούμενος οὐκ ἀντελοιδόρει, πάσχων οὐκ ἠπείλει, παρεδίδου δὲ τῷ κρίνοντι δικαίως·

[24] ὃς τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον, ἵνα ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἀπογενόμενοι τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ ζήσωμεν, οὗ τῷ μώλωπι ἰάθητε.

[25] ἦτε γὰρ ὡς πρόβατα πλανώμενοι, ἀλλὰ ἐπεστράφητε νῦν ἐπὶ τὸν ποιμένα καὶ ἐπίσκοπον τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν.

[18] Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.

[19] For this is a **gracious thing**, when, **mindful of God**, one endures sorrows while **suffering** unjustly.

[20] For what **credit** is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you **do good and suffer** for it you endure, this is a **gracious thing** in the sight of God.

[21] For to this you have been called, because **Christ also suffered for you**, leaving you an **example**, so that you might follow in his steps.

[22] He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

[23] When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

[24] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

[25] For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

The first instance of a direct connection between suffering and good works is present in the Petrine household code, 2:18–25. This passage belongs to the second major part of the letter (2:11–4:11) which is concerned with showing a *modus vivendi* for God's people in the hostile society. The ethical (τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἔχοντες καλήν, "keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable", 2:12) and theological-eschatological (δοξάσωσιν τὸν θεὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς, "glorify God on the day of visitation", 2:12) heaviness of the exhortation addressed in 2:11–12 (being a propositio for the second argumentatio) is unfolded in three particular situations: the civic realm (how to behave as citizens, 2:13–17), the household realm of servants (2:18–25) and lastly, the household realm of wife and husband (3:1–7). After that, the three "theses" are followed by a quasi-peroratio, introduced by 3:8 ("finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another" NIV), and concluding the whole section first with 3:17 ("It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil" NIV). All particular elements of commendable behavior are recollected and built into a deliberate rhetoric, calling not just the slaves, wives and husbands, but everyone (πάντες, 3:8) to a decision which concerns, in particular, well-doing in times of suffering (see the 2:11 and 3:1.6 reframed in 3:13–14).[80]

Nevertheless, to the context of 2:11–3:17 are attached two further expositions, a kind of theological excursus on Jesus' suffering and the Christians' suffering, two themes already anticipated in 2:19–24 and in the first closing (3:14.17). The embodied excursuses call for a second closing, in which all ethical, theological and eschatological aspects of 2:11–4:6 are marked off in the concentric structure created by the double inclusion of the glorified God and the day of visitation, the end of all things (2:11 and 4:11).

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[80] Davids, *A theology*, 123.

Thus, the larger context of 2:19–20 and 3:17 can be sketched in the following way:
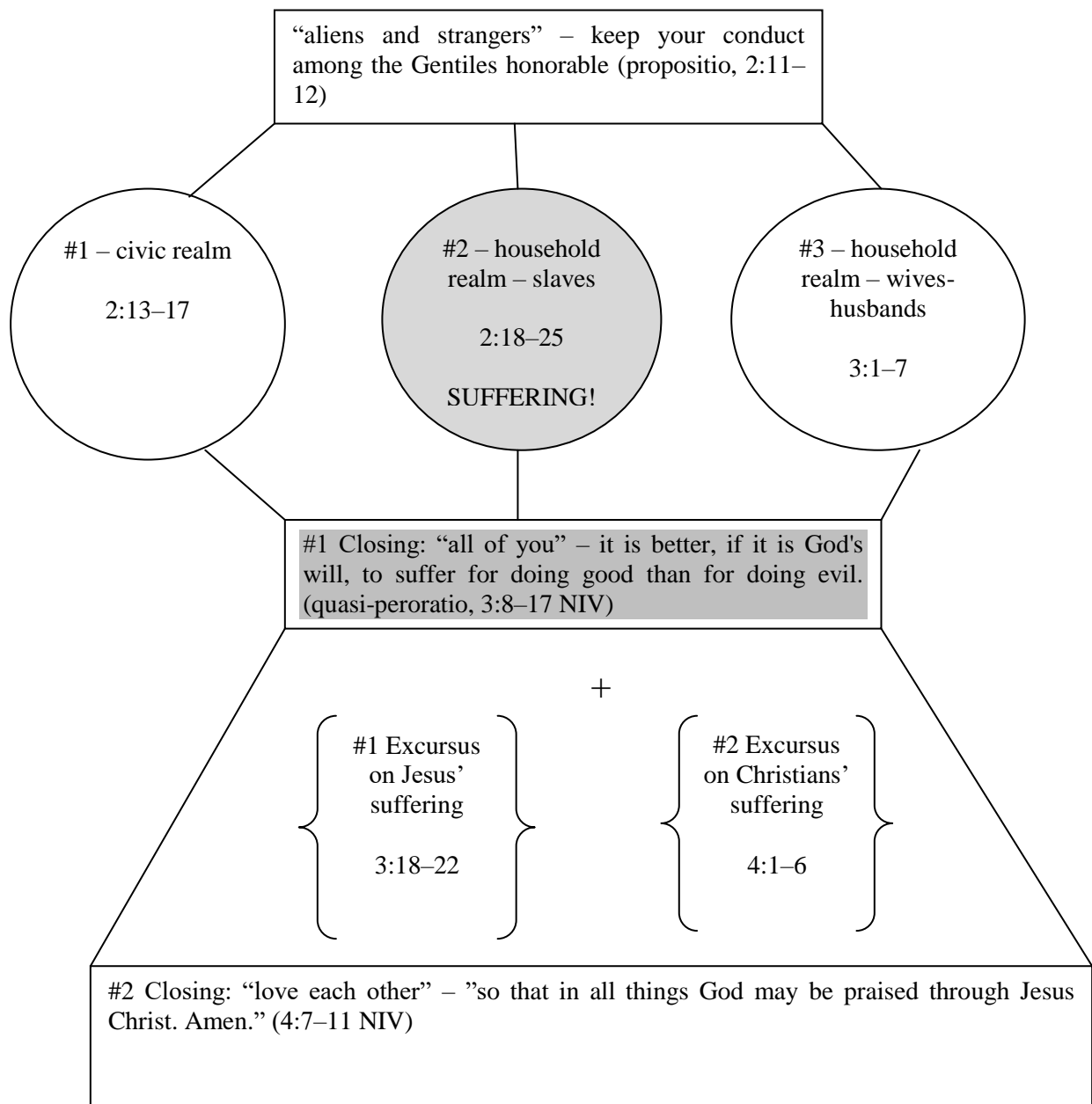
3.2.1.2. The immediate context of 2:19–20

The immediate context of 2:19–20, as was already indicated, discusses the situation of the slaves (Οἱ οἰκέται, 2:18) who are called to submit (ὑποτασσόμενοι) themselves in every case to their masters. The Petrine teaching recalls the other household passages from the New Testament which are dealing with the same issue, evidently with a different focus (Col 3:22–4:1; Eph 6:5–9; 1Tim 6:1–2; Titus 2:9–10). As Selwyn argues, most probably Peter works with early material, which represented a common tradition (instead of mutual literal dependence) for every parallel passage concerned with slaves and masters.[81]

Nevertheless, what we encounter in 2:18–25 is something that can be called revolutionary. Peter promotes a constructive attitude of slaves which is independent from the masters' nature and behavior (in the NT only the Petrine teaching speaks about good and harsh masters). Or put more generally, independent from social conditions. This is indeed a revolution of the pre-Christian ethics of slavery in Asia Minor.[82] Whether they have a good, a gentle or a harsh master, they must respond in the same way: fear your master (present in all household codes of New Testament) and do good continuously (a Petrine feature). The acute situation of the slaves, followed by wives and husbands, became the most "transparent" occasion for Christianity and Christians to make the most obvious theological and ethical difference.

The revolutionary call comes with a (re)new(ed) ambition (χάρις and κλέος, 2:20, later μακάριοι, 4:14): suffering for doing good is grace/gift before God (see explanation below on explanation of 2:19–21).

Peter emphasizes further that being a slave of a harsh master and suffering because of this "deep" social situation is a "unique" opportunity for the *imitatio Christi* (2:21–24). The *imitatio Christi* brings them to a "high" spiritual situation because they are now "returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (2:25). They do not have to search anymore ("straying like sheep", 2:25) for an inspirational example or for a "safe voice". The caring God shows "no limits": Jesus Christ cared sufficiently to leave for them an irresistible example (ὑπογραμμὸν – hapax legomenon, 2:21) and to make them part of the divine healing process ("By his wounds you have been healed", 2:24).

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[81] Selwyn, *St. Peter*, 429–434.
[82] Selwyn, *St. Peter*, 431.

Along with this rather revolutionary motif, the alternate speech mood (specific-general) of 2:18–25 points to a further remark. Even if Peter addresses directly the slaves in 18v, the teaching of the passage is not limited only to them, but it reflects a more general instruction.[83]

While the slaves are invited to follow a paradigm, meantime they become a paradigm as well for their endurance of suffering for doing good – an example for following the example.[84] Not just the first example is χάρις (the suffering of Jesus Christ), but the second occasion for an example is also χάρις (the suffering of the slaves).

The proposition of this section (2:18) is elaborated in two chiastic argumentations,[85] both of them bearing a general tone. The first argumentation patterned into a chiasm has an indirect link with the *teaching/saying* of Jesus (*verbum Christi*, Lk 6:32–34). The second part is directly connected to *the actions and behavior* of Jesus while He suffered for our sins.[86] Here Peter urges the audience to an *imitatio Christi*, empowering and contextualizing perhaps an early Christological hymn involving such intertexts as Isaiah 53 and Psalm 23.[87]

The structure of 2:18–25:

Servants, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, 2:18	
VERBUM CHRISTI 2:19–20 (Lk 6:32–34) If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is grace before God.	IMITATIO CHRISTI 2:21–25 Christ suffered for you, leaving you an *example*, that you should follow in his steps.

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[83] Michaels, *1 Peter,* 135.

[84] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 180.

[85] Campbell, *Honor, Shame and Rhetoric in 1 Peter,* 127–134.

[86] a. Christ as the Savior who redeems Christians by his death ("Christ suffered for you …," v 21b).
     b. Christ as the Example to Christians of suffering for doing good (" … leaving you an example, that you might follow in his footsteps," v 21c).
     b´. Elaboration of Christ as Example (vv 22–23).
  a´. Elaboration of Christ as the Savior who redeems by his death (vv 24–25). See further explanation on this structure in Michaels, *1 Peter,* 143.

[87] Michaels presents a possible reconstruction of the hymn, but he is more convinced that this passage is a midrash on Isaiah 53. However, the two interpretations do not exclude each other mutually. The final form of 2:21–25 might be considered a result of a co-processed material. Whether an early Christological hymn, a midrash of Isaiah 53 or a midrash of Psalm 23, all materials can be in view.

3.2.1.3. Explanation of verbum Christi and suffering for doing good – 2:19–20

[19]a. Τοῦτο γὰρ **χάρις**,

b. εἰ διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ **ὑποφέρει** τις λύπας,

c. **πάσχων ἀδίκως**.

[20]Ποῖον γὰρ **κλέος**, εἰ ἁμαρτάνοντες καὶ κολαφιζόμενοι ὑπομενεῖτε;

c'. Ἀλλ᾽ εἰ ἀγαθοποιοῦντες καὶ **πάσχοντες**

b'. **ὑπομενεῖτε**,

a'.τοῦτο **χάρις** παρὰ θεῷ.

[19]a. For this is **grace**,

b. when, with **conscious of God**, one **endures** sorrows while

c. **suffering unjustly**.

[20] But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it?

c'. But if you **suffer for doing good**

b'. and you **endure** it,

a'. this **is grace** before God.

Even if the underlying sources of these two verses cannot be identified with certainty, it is probable that Peter was inspired by the words of Jesus. In accordance, the special chiastic structure (the rhetorical question borrowed from Jesus – Lk 6:32–34 – interlocked in the chiasm) illustrated above and the specific vocabulary (see the highlighted words as marks of the actualization process) of 19–20v provide enough reason to view this passage as an actualized *verbum Christi*.

The passage in view is like the theological *anatomy of suffering for doing good.* Suffering for doing good and the positive attitude of endurance derived from the "conscience of God" is two times confirmed as being a *grace* before God (χάρις). Nevertheless, this actualization of this verbum Christi contains several critical points which call for a careful and deeper dissection.

I will address below the difficulties around the interpretation of χάρις (grace), συνείδησιν θεοῦ (conscious of God) and ἀγαθοποιοῦντες καὶ πάσχοντες (do good and suffer), but before doing it, I find helpful to organize in a table the lexical informations about the pivotal terms which dominate this section and the whole epistle as well.

ἀγαθοποιός, όν[88]	of one who behaves in a way that is good *upright, doing good*; substantivally ὁ ἀ. *well-doer, one who does right* (1Pt 2:14), opposite κακοποιός (*evildoer, criminal*).
κλέος, ους, τό[89]	as a good reputation *credit, honor, praise* (1Pet 2:20)

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[88] Friberg, Friberg, & Miller, *Analytical Lexicon,* 28.
[89] Friberg, Friberg & Miller, *Analytical Lexicon,* 231.

πάσχω[90]	2aor. ἔπαθον; pf.πέπονθα; (1) basically, of what happens to a person *experience, undergo* something; (2) in a good sense *experience* (possibly Gal 3:4); (3) predominately in a bad sense *suffer, undergo, endure* (Mat 16:21; probably Gal 3:4); euphemistically *die, suffer death* (Luk 22:15).
συνείδησις, εως, ἡ[91]	(1) as a perceptive *awareness* within oneself, *consciousness* (Hebr 10:2; 1Pt 2:19); (2) as the faculty of moral consciousness or awareness by which moral judgments relating to right and wrong are made *conscience* (Acts 23:1).
ὑπομένω[92]	1aor. ὑπέμεινα; pf. ptc. ὑπομεμενηκώς; (1) with ἐν and the dative of place *remain behind, stay* (when others depart) (Lk 2:43); (2) as refusing to flee *hold out, stand one's ground, endure* (Mat 10:22); (3) with the accusative of the thing *be patient under, suffer, endure, put up with* (Hebrew 12:2); (4) absolutely *endure, continue firm, persevere* (Romans 12:12; James 5:11).
χάρις, ιτος, ἡ[93]	*grace*; (1) as a quality that adds delight or pleasure *graciousness, attractiveness, charm* (Luk 4:22); (2) as a favorable attitude; (a) active, of what is felt toward another *goodwill, favor* (Acts 2:47); (b) as a religious technical term for God's attitude toward human beings *kindness, grace, favor, helpfulness* (John 1:16.17; Eph 2:8); (3) concretely; (a) of exceptional effects produced by God's favor *ability, power, enabling* (Romans 12:6; 1 Cor 15:10); (b) of practical proofs of goodwill from one person to another *kind deed, benefit, favor* (Acts 24:27; 2 Cor 1:15); *collection* for the poor, *generous gift* (1 Cor 16:3); (4) as an experience or state resulting from God's favor *state of grace, favored position* (Romans 5:2); (5) as a verbal thank offering to God *gratitude, thanks* (1 Cor 15:57; 2 Cor 9:15); (6) as contained in formulas that express greetings or farewell in letters *goodwill, favor, blessing* (Romans 1:7; 16:20).

The Petrine construction of χάρις generates more competing interpretation of it. First, χάρις could be linked to the divine provision, granted to the Christians in Asia Minor in time of trouble.[94] As Travis Williams states, in this perspective unjust suffering was a "channel for grace", or further stressed, a gift from God (Phil 1:29). However, this direction of interpretation is often seen to be anachronistic, reflecting more a post-reformation *sola gratia* projection. Secondly, χάρις can be understood as a praiseworthy human action, an interpretation reflected in English Bible translations by "commendable", "gracious thing", "acceptable", "credit". Williams in his article is willing to offer the most developed understanding by including a new aspect in God's positive evaluation of human actions. He

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[90] Friberg, Friberg & Miller, *Analytical Lexicon,* 303.
[91] Friberg, Friberg & Miller, *Analytical Lexicon,* 365.
[92] Friberg, Friberg & Miller, *Analytical Lexicon,* 392.
[93] Friberg, Friberg & Miller, *Analytical Lexicon,* 407.
[94] Williams, "Reciprocity and Suffering in 1 Peter 2,19-20".

shows by examining the Greco-Roman social domain of χάρις (gift-exchange and reciprocity), that the Petrine author redefines χάρις as a requital of divine favors.[95]

Despite Williams' efforts, the fresh perspective does not bring the *Gordian-knot* of χάρις to a solution. The biggest challenge of this interpretation is that does not reflect in any way the relevance of the counter-passage, namely the section about Jesus Christ and following his example with which together constitute an elaborated answer to 2:18. What kind of influence has the idea of reciprocity on the teaching about Jesus' suffering? Nevertheless, the reciprocity can easily generate a vicious circle where the χάρις could become the best way for receiving κλέος. The lexical change of κλέος-χάρις is differentiated by Williams in the following way: "the former relates to the reputation one achieves on a human level, while the latter describes how one responds to a divine benefactor".[96] However, in this differentiation the "response" can be an achievement as well, making little difference between κλέος and χάρις. Looking at the chiastic structure of 19–20, we can observe that κλέος is not positioned to be a counter-term for χάρις or at least not primarily.

However, it is not clear enough why, if Peter used the Jesus tradition, he switches from χάρις (Jesus constantly addresses his rhetorical questions through χάρις, see Luke 6:32–34) to κλέος (as an index of honor-status derived from καλέω). One possible interpretation could be that the apostle used the word-play of κλέος from vs 20 and ἐκλήθητε (aor.passive, καλέω) from vs 21, to reinforce the idea that enduring suffering for doing good (continuously) is originally a special *calling/vocation* of the believers, independent from any cultural or social, in this case honor-shame, code. This interpretation may be supported also by the last verse of this passage, where the wordplay of κλέος- καλέω comes virtually to an end when the believers are confronted with their previous status as sheep going astray, not hearing the "calling" of the Good Shepherd (v25).

Nevertheless, the good news of this calling is what Peter names χάρις. Taking into consideration what was said above, χάρις might be intended to signal the priority of divine action in the sense that both the audience's *conscience of God* (συνείδησιν θεοῦ[97], as genitivus obiectivus close to the meaning "fear of God"[98], "awareness of God"[99] or for "sake

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[95] Williams, "Reciprocity and Suffering in 1 Peter 2,19-20".
[96] Williams, "Reciprocity and Suffering in 1 Peter 2,19-20".
[97] Some manuscripts (C, Ψ, 33, 323, 1739, some Vulgate, Syriac manuscripts) substitute ἀγαθὴν for θεοῦ (see 1 Peter 3:16.21 and 1Tim 1:19) in order to make the reading smoother by the familiar term of "good conscience". Yet, the passage indicates not a moral conscience but more a theological one. See further discussion in Michaels, *1 Peter*, 133 and Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 189.
[98] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 195.
[99] Michaels, *1 Peter*, 140.

of God"[100] – Romans 13:5, as an index to the converted status) and the *endurance* of suffering for doing good (ἀγαθοποιοῦντες) are **gifts (of grace)** from God (not as a technical term for grace). What seems to be a praiseworthy human action is an obvious sign of God's active presence. All the credit goes to God.[101] He is on the side of the sufferers, supporting them and consoling them with (undeserved!) gifts of God-conscience, in some extent as knowledge of God, θεοῦ as genitivus obiectivus and endurance. Thus, *the undeserved suffering is rightly balanced by undeserved gifts*, a consolation for which God's name should be praised. This is emphasized by the composition given that the whole passage is embodied in the amazing power of Soli Deo Gloria, 2:11 and 4:11.

What is more, Peter promotes a very concrete form for praise: the good deeds (ἀγαθοποιοῦντες). In this context, the only response of the sufferers to this particular χάρις is praising God for it, the good deeds being the most appropriate form of the praise.[102]

Conclusion on 2:19–21

Thereafter, good deeds become an *identity marker* especially in times of suffering for the "foreign worship" which entered whether with occasion of colonization or with the spread of Christianity among the indigenous population and pagan society of Asia Minor. Additionally, as a program of life and worship, the duty of well-doing is already anticipated in the teaching of Jesus.[103] Praising God with good deeds has a pragmatic consequence. As Selwyn stresses, good deeds "were the best way to disarm prejudice and calumny and win opponents over".[104] Good deeds in the context of sufferers are recognizable goodness[105], and become a metonymy for unjust suffering and for commitment to God.

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[100] Selwyn, *St. Peter*, 176.

[101] This statement is embodied centuries later in the confession of Heidelberg Catechism (62–64Q), especially 63 – Q. How can our good works be said to merit nothing when God promises to reward them in this life and the next? A. This reward is not earned; it is a gift of grace. Cf. James 1:17.

[102] It is hard to explain in the Petrine context why the apostle would use χάρις to express the idea that suffering for doing good as a behavior what will be rewarded. This terminology would be confusing. Peter could use a more proper technical term, μισθὸς as it appears in the Jesus tradition and other epistolary materials (Mat 5:12; 20:8; Lk 10:7; John 4:36; 1 Tim 5:18; 2 Pt 2:13.15).

[103] See Jesus' program to break the Sabbath, a religious status quo with doing good, Luke 6:9.33–35. In 1 Peter doing good breaks the social status quo, for example the status quo of honor-shame code.

[104] Selwyn, *St. Peter*, 53.

[105] Selwyn, *St. Peter*, 89.

3.2.1.4. Explanation of 3:17

κρεῖττον γὰρ ἀγαθοποιοῦντας,
     εἰ θέλοι τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ,
πάσχειν ἢ κακοποιοῦντας.
	For it is **better** to suffer for doing good,
	     if that should be God's will,
	than for doing evil.

As already noted above, 3:17 is situated in the second major part of 1 Peter, 2:11–4:11, specifically in the first closing of it, 3:8–17. As the last word of this subsection it bears significant weight and constitutes a silent amen.

At first sight 3:17 seems to extend the advice from 20v given to the slaves, addressing the whole community whose members encounter suffering on many levels (as foreign citizens, as slaves, as wives, etc.). Peter uses the pattern of better-proverb (*Tobspruch*, similar to 1 Cor 7:9; 2 Pet 2:21; Mark 9:43.45.47; Matt 5:29.30; 14:21; 18:6.8.9; Mark 14:21[106]) introducing suffering from doing good and from doing evil as experiences weighed against each other. The choice of this terminology could have a decisive and even an immediate consequence, for example: the disobedient or escaping slaves could be killed by masters if they choose to respond in bad ways to their suffering. The way Peter addresses the believers reminds to the Deuteronomic instruction about life and death: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life…" (Deut 30:19).

The sharp direct speech from Deuteronomy and from the Petrine construction leaves no space for hesitation in the very moment of choice, a decision urged also by the closeness of the visitation day, 4:7. Choose life; choose to suffer for doing good, which is implicitly a great call for choosing to do good.

Furthermore, as in the case of 2:19–20, here as well, 3:17 is followed by a theological excursus where the convincing argument of Jesus Christ is once again introduced (3:18–22). After that, in the second excursus of this section, starting with 4:1 comes a detailed explanation of 3:17. Why is it better to choose to suffer from doing good rather than suffering for doing evil? The answer for this question is already anticipated in 3:10–12, where the intertextual quotation of Psalm 34:13–17 prepares the ground for the good choice.

Nevertheless another contrast can be detected, different from suffering for doing good or bad. Peter mentions the will of God several times (2:15; 4;19) here as well, and this might

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[106] Michaels, *1 Peter*, 191.

be contrasted with the possibility offered to the believers to choose. In the other two occurrences, the will of God (θέλοι τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ) shares the same sentence with suffering (πάσχω) and doing good (ἀγαθοποιέω).

Without pushing this contrast to dogmatic implications regarding the relation between divine determination and free will of the humans, I seek here to reproduce a meaning which might be more proper to the Petrine context.

Accordingly, the similar vocabulary of 2:15, 3:17 and 4:19 suggests that the believers have to learn to accept God's will which has alternate subjects in these occurrences. In 2:15, God's will is good deeds as reactions to the dishonoring gestures of the "foolish men", while in 3:17 the subject of God's will is suffering for doing good. Specifically in this case the will of God is preceded by εἰ (if), marking suffering for doing good not as an eschatological necessity, as but a possibility (*potentialis*).[107] The motif of possibility is already anticipated in 3:14, where the optative form of suffering (you may suffer, πάσχοιτε διὰ δικαιοσύνην) indicates that "such suffering is a real possibility, but not a present one".[108]

In 4:19 the construction of "suffering for doing good" is pulled apart and the subject of God's will is suffering in general terms[109] (see explanation on this verse below). Thus, each element of "suffering for doing good" becomes independent but codependent as well, the subject of God's will. In the last case (4:19) commitment to God ("entrust their souls to the faithful Creator") and doing good could be understood as symbolic of the acceptance of God's will.

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[107] Feldmeier, *The First Letter of Peter*, 197.
[108] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 227.
[109] As Selwyn puts it, God's will gained here a "fuller meaning". See Selwyn, *St. Peter*, 227.

For it is **God's will** that by **doing good** you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. (2:15)	— doing good ─┐
It is better, if it is **God's will**, to **suffer for doing good** than for doing evil. (3:17)	— suffering for doing good ─┤ the will of God ─ progress of acceptance
Therefore let those who **suffer** according to **God's will** entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while **doing good**. (4:19)	— suffering ─┘

struggles of acceptance ──────────→ **trusting** in the faithful Creator+ **doing good**

Conclusion on 3:17

Suffering for doing good, according to 3:17 and to the immediate context is expressed by Peter as a *potential* problem for all Christians. The teaching of this verse suggests a suffering which is possible even when doing what is right.[110] The situation in which the believers live in Asia Minor is an extremely open and vulnerable one, legitimizing the "no surprise" way of living. Although the suffering could be a "sporadic reality", they do live "in an environment charged with suspicion and hostility which has erupted and can erupt into violence and persecution at any time". [111] The preference for well-doing in times of suffering is a divine preference, but not a normative one. This verse provides correction and not affirmation for such a theological claim that "God causes the Christians to suffer in this life for a spiritual well-being".[112]

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[110] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 226.
[111] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 230.
[112] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 233.

3.2.2. Exegesis of 4:16 and 4:19

3.2.2.1. The context of 4:16.19

Rhetorically speaking, 4:12–5:12 constitutes a *peroratio* for 1 Peter.[113] The previous material of the letter is summed up, some issues recapitulated and amplified, and there is a stressed appeal to pity as well.[114] The peroratio is further subdivided in three smaller units, as follows:

- 4:12–19 – Christian suffering – in the present (12–16)

  – eschatological perspective (17–19)

- 5:1–11 – Final exhortation to the community – appeal to elders (1–5)

  – humility and exaltation (6–11)

- 5:12–14 – Final words and greetings

The primary context of 4:16.19 is the first unit, the "block of suffering" which contains two final thoughts about suffering for Christ: this suffering is to be expected and those who suffer are to continue to live righteously as an expression of abiding trust in God despite circumstances.[115] The *ecology of suffering* as it appears in this closing part has many intriguing and striking elements. For instance the context of suffering provides not just eschatological glory, but also a pneumatic association, as it appears in the "δόξης καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα" construction. The rest of the Spirit of Glory upon the sufferers is also a χάρις (μακάριοι) revealed in times of suffering. This block of suffering creates an occasion for an emphatic reflection on the triune God. Christ brings glory – 4:13, the Spirit of Glory which rests on you – 4:14, the faithful Creator – 4:19.

It is also striking how previous images and motifs are reframed in the context of suffering: the motif of fire (1:7 – 4:12), surprise (4:4 – 4:12), the revelation of Jesus and his glory (1:7 – 4:13), the joy of the believers (1:6.8 – 4:13.14), the suffering of Christ (2:21–24; 3:18; 4:1 – 4:13), and the will of God (2:15; 3:17 – 4:19).

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[113] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 309.
[114] Campbell, *Honor, Shame and Rhetoric in 1 Peter,* 199.
[115] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 285.

3.2.2.2. Explanation of 4:16.19

a. 4:16

εἰ δὲ ὡς Χριστιανός, μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω, δοξαζέτω δὲ τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῷ μέρει τούτῳ.	Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God because of this.

The Greek verb πάσχω, although missing in this sentence, must be implied. The πάσχω present in 4:15 functions in a conjunctional way, by holding together the two successive clauses of 15–16.[116] The English translations (ESV, NIV) includes the verb suffering by disarming the original figure of speech (conjunction) and creating an immediate understanding.

The use of Χριστιανός is a surprise in Petrine diction. The Greek suffix of -ιανός indicates a case of Latinism, deriving from the Latin –ianus.[117] This kind of construction was used to denote a title or name of a person and the followers or supporters of that person, thus Χριστιανός being translated as "belonging to Christ". The term has just two parallels in the New Testament, namely in Acts 11:26; 26:28, there present in a more historical setting. The first of these two occurrences suggest that Χριστιανός has an Antiochian origin (between 39–44), as an alternative and perhaps a secular ()[118] designation for the disciples (see Acts 9:1.10.36.38 and especially 11:26, μαθητής). It seems that Peter accepts (theologically, unlike Paul, who never use this term) and welcomes this label as the most proper and "modern"/actual, that is to say, post-Easter and post-Pentecost, form to describe the community of those who followed and worshiped Jesus Christ.

In the 2nd century the "Christians" showed no hesitation in adopting Χριστιανός as a viable self-designation (becoming more frequent in the writings of Ignatius, Polycarp and Diognetus), yet in the Petrine context, in the middle of the 1st century, the believers needed to hear an "authoritarian voice" in order to embrace this nickname with more courage.

However, "suffering as a Christian" (ὡς Χριστιανός) can be viewed as an extension of "insulted because of the name of Christ" (ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστου), as it appeared in v14. These

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[116] Campbell, *Honor, Shame and Rhetoric in 1 Peter,* 212.
[117] See a broader discussion on this issue in Horrell, "The Label Χριστιανός".
[118] Within Roman administration or a spontaneous social/cultural logic, remains a question. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 268.

two expressions seem to be involved in a conflation of reading reflected in the problematic case of "glorify God in the name" (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ, 4:16b). Recently, due to new text-critical methodology, the hegemony of ὀνόματι-reading[119] (strongly supported by external evidences, notably א, B and cop^sa,bo) is diminished, and instead the alternative reading offered by the Byzantine text is validated, which includes a less theological formulation, ἐν τῷ μέρει τούτῳ, meaning "in that matter" (see 2 Cor 3:10; 9:3; Col 2:16).[120] The category of *lectio difficilior* (hardest reading) gives a clue in understanding and accepting the ὀνόματι as substituted for the μέρει, but not in a classical meaning. As Michaels argues:

> it is hard to believe that they would sacrifice the theological richness of the "name" in favor of such a colorless word as μέρος, "matter" or "capacity," merely to clarify the meaning for their readers.[121]

Thereafter, the "hardest reading" has to be given priority in the sense of the prosaic reading of μέρει, by observing further that this option recalls the Petrine style as well, already familiar from 2:12 and 3:16. Accordingly, μέρει can be viewed as an extensive/alternative form for ἐν ᾧ, a construction that in Peter's vocabulary introduce a "case", a "situation".

Nevertheless, as Achtemeier rightly points out[122], the dativus construction of ἐν τῷ μέρει τούτῳ enables to translate this sentence at least in three ways: first, as dativus locativus, God glorified *within* the sphere of Christian faith, secondly, as dativus instrumentalis, God glorified *by* the simple way of being in that situation of suffering, and finally as dativus of cause, God glorified *because* of this matter/case/situation. Although all three ways of speaking about God's glory and suffering have their own legitimacy and interest, the immediate context sustains the latter one: do not be ashamed because you suffer as a Christian, but glorify God because you suffer as a Christian.

The term **αἰσχύνομαι** appears exclusive mid. and pass. in NT as *be ashamed* Lk 16:3; 1 Pt 4:16, *be put to shame, be disgraced* 1 John 2:28; *be embarrassed* 2 Cor 10:8; Phil 1:20.

By making direct link between suffering and shame Peter signals the social implication concerning the image and state of the sufferer. As far as it is understood as something anti-life or life-threatening, suffering will always be linked with shame, constituting a sign which

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[119] Giving up on ὀνόματι and choosing for the μέρει, as it appears in the new Afrikaans translation and in the 28th edition of Nestle-Aland, is a big step in rehabilitation of Textus Receptus.
[120] Kok & De Winter, "What's in the name?".
[121] Michaels, *1 Peter,* 270.
[122] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 315.

disturbs the life.[123] However, in the context of 4:16, being ashamed is contrasted with glory, mirroring a more theological meaning expressed by Jobes shortly in the following thought: the sufferers could be tempted to think "that perhaps their faith in Jesus Christ is ill-founded or that perhaps they should be ashamed of themselves for believing something that so offended their society".[124]

1 Peter provides descriptive and prescriptive material for "suffering as a Christian". All what was said before can be summed up in this principle. It includes the notions of χάρις (2:19–20), θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ (3:17; 4:19), πύρωσις (the testing/proving and purificative fire, 1:7; 4:12; Malachi 3:2.17)[125] and the pagan ξενίζω (the surprise of the pagan society, 4:4) and excludes the κλέος (2:20) and the Christian ξενίζεσθε (not being surprised, 4:12). "Suffering as Christian" reinforces the names "aliens and exiles" given to them as well.

The motif of "glorifying God" combined with "suffering" has at first glance a missing part in 4:16, notably the "good deeds". However, in the light of the explanation given above, employing Χριστιανός makes unnecessary the use of ἀγαθοποιέω/ἀγαθοποιΐα (doing good, well-doing), otherwise it would be a case of tautology. This explanation is consistent with 4:19, where although the word Χριστιανός is missing, the whole verse is a definition of the "suffering of Christians", and where the commitment to the faithful Creator and the good deeds are irresistible identity markers of the "foreign worship" named by Peter as characterizing a Χριστιανός.

Conclusion on 4:16

In conclusion, verbalizing the suffering by "suffering as Christians" results an inclusive meaning, where all three major nuances of the interaction between suffering and doing good hold together. Suffering as Christians means suffering *for* doing good (2:19–20), *from* the (good) name of Christ (4:14) and suffering *to* do good (as an act of praise, 2:19–20 and 4:19). These three components echoes something similar to what Karen Jobes said: "when suffering comes for the *right reason* it is an opportunity for joy and blessing."[126] Because of these specific interactions, suffering for Christ is actually a mark of honor.

Now, some explanation will be provided on the latter expression: suffering to do good.

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[123] The motif of shame could have as its background the current social code current in the 1st century's Asia Minor, but could be inspired by the vocabulary of the Psalms too, especially by Psalm 31:14–18 (Psalm 24:2.20; 30:2; 70:1 and Jer 17:18).

[124] Campbell, *Honor, Shame and Rhetoric in 1 Peter,* 212.234; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 290.

[125] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 304; Campbell, *Honor, Shame and Rhetoric in 1 Peter,* 200–204.

[126] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 285.

3.2.2.3. Explanation of 4:19

ὥστε καὶ οἱ **πάσχοντες** κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ πιστῷ κτίστῃ παρατιθέσθωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν ἐν **ἀγαθοποιΐᾳ.**	Therefore let those who **suffer** according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while **doing good**.

4:19 can be viewed as a concluding clause (ὥστε καὶ) for the Petrine teaching on suffering (both for 4:12–19 and for 1:1–4:11), and its uniqueness is marked by the overwhelming force of two hapax legomena, notably the πιστῷ κτίστῃ (faithful Creator) and ἀγαθοποιΐᾳ (well-doing).

The construction of παρατιθέσθωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν, "let [them] entrust their lives" as present imperative (and not aorist) does not imply the (or a) moment of conversion, but a continuous spiritual dedication to God, no matter of the critical times of suffering for doing (suffering for social reasons?) good and from being Christians (suffering from religious reasons?).[127]

The first hapax legomenon of this concluding verse is πιστῷ κτίστῃ, "to a faithful Creator", a confessional address which reflects a faith in divine creation, making superfluous the speculative solutions for the problem of suffering (unlike in the narrative of Job).[128] This way of addressing God provides a theological basis for the ethical calling of "doing good". The world and every human being are created by God, and doing good as a "creature" reflects faith in God, as the Creator.

The calling to "entrusting their life to the faithful God" which brings the believers closer to God and to each other is followed by the call to "well-doing". This call has the potential to bring closer together the world created by God which seems to fall apart. Thus, the cultic action of "entrusting the soul" is completed with the action of well-doing.

Nevertheless, the "good deeds" (here as a noun, ἀγαθοποιΐα – "well-doing", the second hapax legomenon of 4:19), as a part of the cultic move of "entrusting the soul", empowers the meaning given in 2:19–20, as a thankful response for the χάρις by conscience of God and endurance in suffering. Thus, the presence of the believers' good deeds outside of their circle or outside of the "official gatherings" become a dynamic paradigm for *liturgy of life*,

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[127] The expression reminds us Ps 30[31]:6 LXX: εἰς χεῖράς σου παραθήσομαι τὸ πνεῦμα μου, "into your hands I entrust my spirit". See for further explanation Michaels, *1 Peter,* 273.

[128] Selwyn, *St. Peter*, 76.

cultivating "soft difference" [129] between the "official worship of Christians" and the pagan society/culture in Asia Minor, of course without corrupting and compromising the "gospel of God" (4:17).[130] This explanation avoids instrumentalizing well-doing and suffering, confirming a dativus temporalis in ἀγαθοποιΐᾳ, translated as "while doing good" or as Michaels suggests, "in doing good", as opposed to Jobes[131] and Achtemeier[132] who sustain a dativus instrumentalis, "by doing good".[133]

The motif of continuity reflected in this temporal construction (ἐν) and in the present imperative form (παρατιθέσθωσαν) models a less hectic spiritual and cultural behavior and a more calm and consistent trust and attitude. The time of suffering does not release or deactivate the believers from doing good and from their devotion to God. It is a time for improving decisions and deconstructing conventions.[134]

As Achtemeier argues, "the Christian suffering represents the beginning of God's final judgement"[135], thus it cannot be afford to "play with the time" and to postpone the final judgement because of the time of suffering. On the contrary, every slander and abuse of Christians hastens the day of visitation (2:12), as a day when wounds will be healed and the sufferers can rejoice.

The Petrine context seems to be an actualized/contextualized concept of suffering rooted in Jewish tradition. In this context, the only solution for suffering is accepting that there is no solution, there is no tactic by which one could prevent suffering. One thing which can be prevented and avoided is doing evil when it comes such testing times as suffering.

Every rationalization of suffering is rejected in the text, even more the times of suffering are surrounded by a "mystical enthusiasm" stimulated by the active work of the triune God, present emphatically in hardship. The suffering is not a crisis of faith and of moral life yet is a serious challenge for both, the meaning of which will be elaborated in the last chapter of the thesis.[136]

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[129] Volf, "Soft Difference".

[130] The participle of the verb ἀγαθοποιεῖν (doing good) has dominated the ethical teaching of the entire epistle (2:15.20; 3:6.17; cf. 2:12.14; 3:11–12.13).

[131] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 295.

[132] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 318.

[133] Michaels, *1 Peter*, 274.

[134] Deconstruction of the stoic definition of suffering (freedom of suffering: apateia) which was very popular in the 1st century (Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 333) or the deconstruction of the conventional questions such as "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (Joh 9:2) – suffering because of a particular or personal sin.

[135] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 304.

[136] Selwyn, *St. Peter*, 2–3.

Conclusion on 4:19

The final distinctive voice about suffering binds two aspects of life together, namely faith and good deeds, which are often separated and positioned in a hierarchical structure. Nevertheless, the testing of suffering addresses questions not just about faith and trust in God, but questions about the believers' behavior and deeds. Critical times reveal that both are equally important, and call for being alert that suffering has great potential to challenge the coherency and integrity between faith and deeds, or inside and outside the Church.

Furthermore, the meaning of 4:19 is also open to the interpretation of suffering as a unique occasion to become more attached to God the Creator and to do good, as a way to become more attached to the members of the household and to the all creatures of God.

3.3. Concluding remarks on exegesis

The goal of this chapter has been to bring into dialogue the voices of the suffering-texts concerned specifically with the interconnection of suffering and doing good. The three prepositional constructions, namely the **suffering** *for – from – to* **do good,** both individually and collectively express the compact reality of Christian sufferers.

In sum then it can be concluded that this section provided explanation which is related to at least three things.

First, the Christians' salvation and deliverance is already in progress in the χάρις which is revealed in the times of suffering. On the other hand, suffering marks also that final glory and salvation is not fulfilled yet (1:5; 4:17). The existence of a conscience which knows about God or fears God enables new ways of conduct and new reactions toward the challenges of reality. The endurance and the continuous well-doing in spite of bad consequences became an extrinsic expression of the intrinsic reality known as the conscience of God. In the context of Asia Minor, such behaviors became identity markers which surprised the outsiders.

Secondly, during the exegesis it was uncovered that the *nature of doing good* is embodied deeply in χάρις. Even if from outside it seems to be a praiseworthy human action, well-doing in the context of suffering is a clear sign that the believer is in close relation with God and he or she is willing to make this devotion to God transparent in the acts of well-doing. This understanding implies more than just accomplishing the expectations and rules of another belief system. That is why the reader cannot find any specification or a concrete example of what is doing what is good. A constant interaction with the living God in hardship will result in a sensitivity and creativity in acting in accordance with loyalty toward God. As it is beautifully articulated in the beginning of the epistle, "though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory" (1:8).

Lastly, it must be noted that Peter does not want to make the suffering *per se* desirable. The good deeds are not making the suffering, but the faithful Creator desirable. In addition, gifts from God received in hardship, and the way God reveals himself in difficult times, are a taste of the future vindication and glory and that is indeed something desirable.

4. Ethical challenge of suffering according to 1 Peter

Turning to the last chapter of this thesis we come closer to specifying how the interaction of suffering and doing good in 1 Peter shapes the ethics of suffering. All that was said above in this thesis suggests an ethical dimension of Christians' suffering, which calls for further attention and for some post-exegetical reflections.

I attempt to explore the matter of this chapter in two steps. First, in order to assess the question of ethical challenge, I will discuss briefly terms how the Petrine ethic functions. In the second part, I will develop an understanding of the ethical challenge of suffering with special attention to the custom of "doing good".

4.1. 1 Peter and ethics

The definition of the ethics of 1 Peter is still a work in progress. However, as Davids notes, Petrine ethics have come to the fore recently in studies which concentrate on the ethical lists (Household codes) or specific ethical themes. However, these selective interests seem to have as result the fragmentation of the ethical impact of 1 Peter.[137]

Certainly, the suffering Christian communities in Asia Minor received in Peter's first letter *relevant* and not comprehensive ethical guidance. Because of this, a great deal of confusion surrounds the question of what is theology and what is ethics in 1 Peter.[138] The theological and ethical agendas of the letter are strongly intertwined and do not follow the paradigm of indicative-imperative, as in the case of the Pauline letters.[139] But it seems fair to ask whether the syndetic structure (without clear contour) is a problem in regard to 1 Peter or whether is not more "our" problem because of the perplexing difficulty in defining the relationship between theology and ethics or faith and actions.[140] Some scholars, as Selwyn and Michaels, recognize in this syndetic structure a primitive ethic[141] or a "simple, simplistic" ethical vision being summed up in the single generalized notion of "doing good" (ἀγαθοποιεῖν; 2:12.15.20; 3:6.13.17; 4:19), derived either from Ps 33[34]:15 (as cited in 3:11) or from a saying of Jesus similar to Luke 6:27.33. Stated negatively, the command is to "do no sin".[142] The "simplistic or underdeveloped ethic" in fact should not be underestimated,

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[137] Davids, *A theology*, 98.
[138] De Waal Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter*, 1–4.
[139] Carson & Moo, *An Introduction*, 650.
[140] Davids, *A theology*, 98.
[141] Selwyn, *St Peter*, 64.
[142] For further consideration see Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 273 and Michaels, *1 Peter*, lxxiii.

because it has high potential for creating continuity in the transitional time of Christianity when many of the believers were neophytes, "young converts" (including both Jewish and Gentiles converts).[143] The primitive ethics as a more *intuitive* one reflects here a new epistemological justification: the intuition is replaced by *imitation (imitatio Christi* – 2:21–25).

However, the question becomes even more complex if the driving force of the eschatology which governs both the paraenesis and kerygma in 1 Peter is taken into account.[144] The eschatology here reflects an elliptical structure, in the presence of two focal points: "already" as realized eschatology ("Christ was manifested in the *last times* for the sake of you" – 1:20; "For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God" – 4:17) and "not yet" as future eschatology ("the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the *last time*" – 1:5; "day of visitation" – 2:12).[145] This elliptical structure results an interim theology and ethics, a transitional time when the "spiritual milk" is necessary not for "growth in maturity" (a short-term goal), but to "grow up into salvation" (a long-term goal, 2:2). Thus, the relevance of the exhortations (household codes – 2:13–17; 2:18–25; 3:1–7; 5:1–5; 4:6–9) and lists of virtues (1:22; 3:8; 4:7–11) present in the letter is in promoting *growth in Christian character*, implying a theocentric ethic[146], rather than growth in moral character, implying an anthropocentric ethic.

Furthermore, the moral aspiration of the Petrine discourse is conditioned by the new birth as a new creation "through the living and abiding word of God" (1:23). The new birth and new creation are markers of the moment of conversion which "abruptly turned previous insiders into outsiders"[147]

Since the believers addressed in 1 Peter are redeemed from their futile way of life (1:18) and because they are declared theologically holy (1:16) they need to estrange and to distance themselves from the dysfunctional heritage of Greco-Roman paganism, and also influential Jewish ethics. Instead of *ethical integrity*, it is preferable to say that Peter promotes an *ethical intelligence*[148] which is conscious of the risk of this heritage (see the lists of vices in 2:1;

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[143] De Waal Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter,* 45.
[144] De Waal Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter*, 83.
[145] The opposite is stated by Ronald Russell in the article "Eschatology and Ethics in 1 Peter". Russell argues that "not now" is a motive and not a basis in the Petrine ethics.
[146] See Feldmeier, *The First Letter of Peter*, 107.
[147] Kok, Nicklas, Roth & Hays, *Sensitivity towards outsiders,* 2.
[148] The ethical intelligence is further specified (or improved) in 2 Peter 1:5–7, as an ability to differentiate and to synthesize such steps and qualities which "keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:8).

4:3.15) but also of the potential of the Christian ἀναστροφή ("conduct", "way of life" – 1:15.18; 2:12; 3:1.2.16) tested by fire (1:7; 4:12).

And finally, it is worth noting that Peter provides an ethical guidance inspired by the Old Testament and Jesus traditions, thus, his concerns do not arrive in an ethical vacuum.[149] These traditions give form and motive for his ethical teaching, creating a web of connections between the over-arching reality of God's salvation and the actual life and challenges faced by the believers from Asia Minor. The intertexts are in a way authority texts, agreeing with Gene L. Green's conclusion that "the imperative given to those in the past becomes normative for the reader's present situation".[150]

In the following two tables are summed up the most relevant ethical imperatives from the Old Testament and Jesus tradition as they appear in 1 Peter, noting that Peter does not improve these traditions in the sense that he brings them to a higher level. Peter improves in the sense that brings these traditions to the level of his audience scattered in the main areas of Asia Minor.

1 Peter	Old Testament (LXX)	Intertexts	Observations
1:16	Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 20:7.26	"Be holy, because I am holy"	The Holiness Code has a pragmatic and a re-evaluated consequence. According to Michaels "ἅγιοι provides the genesis of 1 Peter's ethical implications of the ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος (1:2) mentioned earlier".[151]
2:21–25	Isaiah 53	*Imitation Christi*: "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example"	No direct ethical instruction in Isa 53, the focus is on introducing the pattern of *imitatio* in the ethical discourse.
3:5–6	Genesis 18:12	*imitatio Sarah*: "you are her children, if you do	imitatio model applied on the Christian wives

[149] Green, Gene L., *"The use of the Old Testament for Christian ethics in 1 Peter"*.
[150] Green, Gene L., *"The use of the Old Testament for Christian ethics in 1 Peter"*.
[151] Michaels, *1 Peter*, 59; Mbuvi, *Temple, Exile and Identity in 1 Peter,* 82.

		good”	
3:6b	Proverbs 3:25	“do not fear anything that is frightening”	This imperative concerns the times of suffering too as something “frightening”.
3:10–12	Psalm 33:13–17	“Whoever desires to love life and see good days… let him turn away from evil and do good”	The original LXX variant is in some elements changed by Peter adding eschatological nuance: “seeing good days” as “days of future glory”.[152]
5:5b	Proverbs 3:34	“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble”	Common in the paraenetic teaching of the early Church – Jas 4:6; Mt 23:12.

1 Peter	Jesus tradition	Intertexts	Observations
2:18–20	Mt 5:38–48 Lk 6:27–36	“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Mat 5:44) “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you” (Luk 6:27)	Verbum Christi – at the heart of 1 Peter.
3:9		”But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” (Mat 5:39) bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. (Luk 6:28)	

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[152] For a broader discussion, see Greene, Gene L., *“The use of the Old Testament for Christian ethics in 1 Peter”.*

4.2. Ethical challenge of suffering and the custom of doing good

In this section I will express the type of ethical challenge which must be faced by the resident aliens and foreigners of 1 Peter in the midst of suffering. I will do that by analyzing whether the message for the Christian believers is a comfort or a challenge. Next to that, the relevance of doing good will be also reconstructed.

4.2.1. The Petrine message: comfort or challenge?

The analysis of the suffering-texts which I have undertaken in the previous chapter has presented insights which lead towards being more sensitive toward the interaction of suffering and doing good, and toward the ethical teaching which operates according to it. It seems that this dialogue of suffering-texts provides both *approval* for a constructive ethical intelligence and *critique* to the destructive inclinations.

The suffering discussed in 1 Peter makes space for an intensive ethical appeal and approval basically summed up in the redundant term of "doing good" (7x). As noted above, the suffering endured by the Christians from Asia Minor probably was caused by political ambitions (the colonization of Emperor Claudius) and social oppression. If there were any persecutions they would seem to have been limited to verbal slander, malicious talk and false accusations (1:6; 2:12.15; 3:9.16; 4:12.16). Hence, the biggest challenge concerned the question of how the Christians should react to this treatment and how they should live out their Christian loyalty in a hostile society. The temptation to retaliate in kind or to disengage became a real threat. That is why in 4:15 we encounter a sharp critique of the "bad way of suffering": "If you suffer, it should not be as a *murderer* or *thief* or *any other kind of criminal*, or even as a *meddler*". Or immediate in the next verse Peter criticizes those who are *ashamed* because of suffering from being Christians (4:16). Yet, how should the followers behave in relation with the oppressors? How can they avoid "doing evil" and following the Petrine modus vivendi in doing good to those who make them suffer? Will this refocus bring solution or comfort? Then again, the extended warning to have a *submissive attitude* which concerns the slaves (2:18–25), wives (3:1–7), the youngest members of the church (5:5) and the believers as citizens (2:13–17), suggest that they were "restless in their position". They would be tempted to rebel against their inferior position and against the arrogant treatment they often received.[153]

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[153] Filson, "Partakers with Christ".

Due to the overwhelming hardship, the foreigners and resident aliens of 1 Peter are stuck in an anxiety-provoking situation: their faith, hope and love are dominated by grief and seem to cherish because of various trials (1:6). This *"grief"* (λυπηθέντες, pass) seems to be one of the most significant motivations for writing this letter, and could be a serious sign of the magnitude of the theological and ethical challenge of these critical times, taking into consideration that many underlying struggles[154] are intensified and exposed by suffering.[155]

In this acute situation Peter fosters the ethics of doing good especially in times of suffering, his urgency culminating in 4:19: "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good". As Filson comments: "this is the principle of the cross", reflecting the spirit we find expressed in Romans 12:21: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."[156]

As the analysis of 4:19 suggested, "doing good" is not an ethical instrument in the "hand" of the believers, is not something external and artificial as a calculated response, but is the natural outcome of faith and trust in God the Creator. As J. de Waal Dryden points out, the "two elements [faith and doing good] are distinguishable but inseparable".[157] Notably, a continuously entrusted soul and well-doing are not automatic byproducts of times of suffering.[158]

With attention to the idea that the adorning of Christian women should be the "hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit" and with good deeds (3:4–6), in the same manner this is true in regard with the Christian community: the imperishable beauty of it is the *visible adorning* of the good deeds. Moreover, the adorning by good deeds is not just about beauty and visibility but a means to arm themselves with readiness in suffering, by a beauty ready to be seen. Nonetheless, the riddle still remains whether the call to do good deeds in the Petrine context brings growth in character,[159] or whether they function primarily as identity markers of the new worship and as markers of the

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[154] Such underlying struggle could be the theological challenge of suffering, which is not expressed directly by Peter. For instance, God's care for the sufferers could be easily questioned under the pressure of "grief". Those passages which are reminders of God's grace and goodness communicate that suffering is no longer a proof of God's neglect (1:3–12; 2:24–25; 5:7).

[155] De Waal Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter*, 43–47.

[156] Filson, "Partakers with Christ".

[157] De Waal Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter*, 47.

[158] De Waal Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter*, 46.

[159] It is likely that Peter consciously omits to use in ethical sense the motif of "growth" for not being confused with the morality of current philosophies (esp. Stoicism, Epicureanism). He uses it only once in an unusual theological construction: "growing into salvation" (αὐξηθῆτε εἰς σωτηρίαν, pass, 2:2 – σωτηρίαν missing from the Mss).

Christian's *liturgy (worship) of life*[160] present and visible in a hostile society. Even if the two interpretations are not mutually exclusive, the latter seems to have priority in the context of Asia Minor.

But does the approval and critique bring *comfort* in the midst of suffering or is it an extra *challenge* to the sufferers? We might say that it is both: it is *comfort* in the sense that the good deeds are signs of χάρις (2:19) which balance the undeserved suffering with undeserved gifts (conscience of God and endurance – 2:19–21, the ultimately undeserved gift is receiving an overwhelming position as restored, confirmed, strengthened, and established – 5:10). Yet, at the same time, Peter addresses the challenging situation of his audience by introducing a new missionary challenge: suffering as unique opportunity for doing such good things which will capture immediately the attention of outsiders (a missionary *captatio benevolentia*, "they may see your good deeds and glorify God" – 2:12).[161] Thus, good deeds in times of suffering seem to have, according to 1 Peter the biggest potential for making a difference at the same time within the Christian community (the domestic aspect of exhortations – inner or home mission) and outside in the hostile world (the social aspect of the exhortations – foreign mission).

4.2.2. The vision of good deeds and its implication in suffering

It is important to realize that Peter delivers a message of vindication by his view of good deeds, without disseminating moralism. But would any modern philosopher or therapist ever combine suffering and doing good in such a direct and natural way? Would not the grief and anxiety of those who listened to Peter's letter be even greater? This would surely be the case if suffering and doing good were not declared by Peter both as part of the will of God. It is not Peter's high ethical sensitivity toward the brothers and outsiders which inspires his view of good deeds, but the authority and revelation of God's will (2:15; 4:2.19). With respect to 4:2, the good deeds are not even "human desires" (ἀνθρώπων ἐπιθυμίαις), but part of God's will. Thus, God the Father is the one who makes his approval and critique concerning the "standard for appropriate behavior"[162] revealed in the message of the apostle.

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[160] "Doing good" being close to the motif of sacrifice and the image of worship of life – "to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" – 2:5.

[161] The link between mission and ethos is plausible observed by Rob van Houwelingen in the context of the Epistle to the Hebrews. For further informations see Van Houwelingen, "Mission and Ethics in the Epistle to the Hebrews".
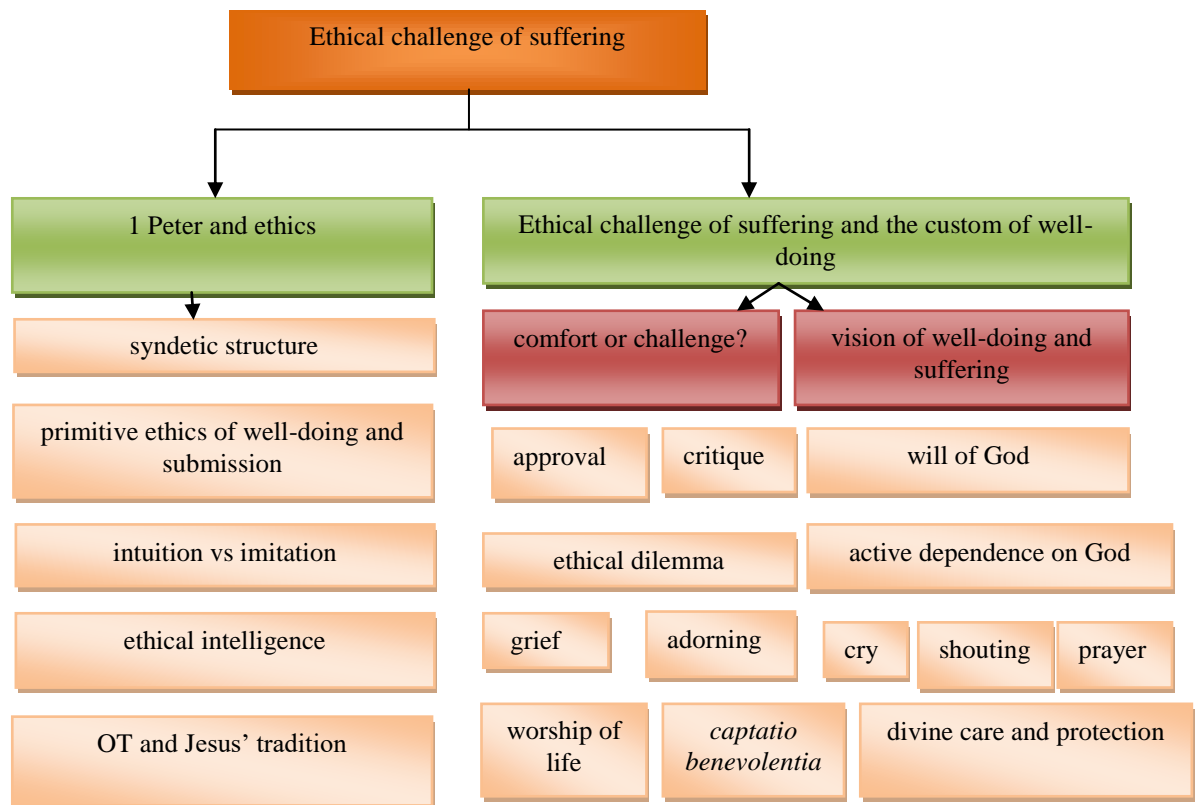
[162] Davids, *Theology*, 158.

Hence, what Peter stimulates here is indeed a "refocus of their lives in times of suffering", a call similarly echoed in other documents of the NT.[163] Accordingly, Peter calls his audience to growth in *active dependence on God,* and not in active dependence on the social-political or on the dysfunctional spiritual (grief of the believers) situation.

The latter two are an ongoing source of anxiety and distress, while the former an ongoing source of rest and joy ("Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" – 5:7), reaching a state when the sufferers can declare that "in his will is our peace" (a famous quote from Dante Alighieri). While in the world the *cry* of the sufferers and the *shouting* of the roaring lion (5:8) are stressed against each other, yet, the distinctive voice of *Jesus' prayer* addressing the faithful Creator is the most powerful and loving voice which breaks the sky: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one" (John 17:15; Hebr 4:14). The divine protection and care of the sufferers is far from being conceived as abstract or theologized one. The sufferers are bonded in Christ's suffering and glory but in His wrestling prayers as well. Prayers in which we are all connected together with the brotherhood throughout the world by whom "the same kinds of suffering are being experienced" (5:9).

The following visual representation provides a unified and structured account of the main turning points of the explanation given to the ethical challenge of suffering in 1 Peter, with respect to chapter 4. As the diagram shows, the central theme of this chapter contains two concept nodes, *1 Peter and ethics* and *the ethical challenge of suffering and the custom of well doing*. To each of these concept nodes is attached a network of motives which are involved in creating, receiving and transmitting information about 1 Peter's agenda on suffering and doing good. The second node is further divided in two. The starting points of the three resulting networks are marked, but the items are organized with no other links, there are no lines branching out and intersecting. The "dynamic freedom" given to the relationships between motives suggests that the *knowledge* communicated by them is part of a composite virtual space, where no connection can be easily deduced. It presents a knowledge operating as a deconstruction of a close, normative and unidirectional meaning when it is about the hermeneutics of the suffering. Accordingly, the meaning can be constructed from up and down, left and right, forward and backward, from all direction a relevant sense can be found. But what is more important to note, is that the center of this diagram is not a "meaning", but a

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[163] Van Houwelingen, "Mission and Ethics in the Epistle to the Hebrews".

"relationship": the relationship between God and the sufferer. The ethical challenge analyzed by this work reflects that what is at stake is not simply an ethical exigency but the very nature of the relationship between God and human, God and believer.

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                    │  Ethical challenge of suffering  │
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                         │                    │
            ┌────────────┘                    └────────────┐
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┌───────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
│   1 Peter and ethics  │          │ Ethical challenge of suffering and the │
└───────────────────────┘          │       custom of well-doing             │
            │                      └──────────────────────────────────────┘
            ▼                              │           │
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│   syndetic structure  │         │ comfort or   │ │ vision of well-doing  │
└───────────────────────┘         │ challenge?   │ │ and suffering         │
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┌───────────────────────┐
│ primitive ethics of   │         ┌─────────┐ ┌─────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
│ well-doing and        │         │ approval│ │ critique│ │  will of God │
│ submission            │         └─────────┘ └─────────┘ └──────────────┘
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│  intuition vs imitation│        └──────────────┘ └──────────────────────────┘
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┌───────────────────────┐         │ grief│ │ adorning │ │ cry ││ shouting││ prayer│
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4.3. Conclusion

Lastly, it is argued that Peter's moral vision at its core consists of a belief in the power of well-doing. As the vocabulary of 1 Peter indicates, the ethics of doing good in the midst of suffering is basically the ethics of a *homo viator* (the readers being "resident aliens, foreigners"). Good deeds and suffering are relevant while we are on the road. In the context of this specific ethics Peter does not propose an understanding *of* suffering but understanding *through* suffering (as a process). Thus, the suffering itself has a hermeneutic function. It interprets God, the world and the sufferer in that very moment when it hurts. This hermeneutic function is what is called in the theological milieu like, "testing".

Furthermore, the principle of well-doing militates against positing a sectarian mindset behind the First Epistle of Peter, which represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the ethos underlying it. The vantage point of the *missio Dei* forms an integral part of Peter's ethos, expressed in the use of "faithful Creator" (πιστῷ κτίστῃ, 4:19) in the context of suffering and well-doing.

However, the Petrine message concerning suffering does not aim to suppress it or to diminish its heaviness. Suffering really hurts (4:1.12), it will hurt and be painful, but it is not something "anti-life".[164] Therefore, 1 Peter addresses such moaning and groaning in a way which is freed from desperation, and which communicates a great call for tears of faith and for tears of good deeds.

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[164] Filson, "Partakers with Christ".

Epilogue

Returning to the reason for this research, it can be said that when it comes to suffering, the Transylvanian Christian Hungarians are indeed not surprised, suffering being something "too normal". The high rate of aggression in families, as sexually abused or beaten wives and children, abandoned children of the streets, the cases of poverty, the Hungarian and reformed identity as a minority identity in Romania, being a foreigner in your own land and the ongoing interethnic (Hungarian-Romanian) and inter-denominational (East Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant Church) tensions are all markers of a reality in which the believers are constantly exposed to anxiety and suffering. In this historical-social milieu the suffering is more likely to produce bitterness and selfishness or ethical indignation at the misery of the social reality rather than ethical intelligence which focus on bringing out the best from the *status quo*.

But even though in many cases the suffering is a *taboo* subject, especially when it is about suffering because of the low income, infidelity in a marriage, disease or alcoholism, in each case there are many silent sufferers involved, which wait for the comfort of the Church.

The survival strategies are diverse: making others suffer too, not to feel lonely or different with your suffering from others; (transitional) active dependence on Church and prayer community, but also isolation from the world and from the Church by minimalizing the social interference. Yet, in this isolation Christians obviously deprive themselves of doing good.

Consulting 1 Peter to help us in expressing the ethical challenge in the midst of suffering, we find a great affirmation of the fact that *ethical praxis is an essential component of a life directed to God.* Suffering is not an exception to this. Nor is the overwhelming context in which Transylvanian Hungarian Christians have to live. The ethical appeal in critical times needs new attention and reconsideration in the Transylvanian context. The suffering does not entitle inactivity, ignorance or destructivity. Rather, it requires faith which persists through the tests of the hardship in doing good.

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