

# **The Petrine Plot Twist**

## **Strategies of Umwertung as a Unifying Concept for Understanding 1 Peter**

Peter Hansum

S3632490

First Reader: Professor Roig Lautaro Lanzillotta

Second Reader: Dr. Pieter Barry Hartog

## Table of Content

<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	3
<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>A matrimony of methodology</b> .....	8
<b>1 Peter and the combination of CRCNT and sociological-exegesis</b> .....	9
<b>1 Peter as an ancient rhetorical address: classical rhetorical criticism of the New Testament</b> ..	9
<b>1 Peter in context: sociological exegesis</b> .....	12
<b>Building the Living Temple</b> .....	14
<b>The situation of 1 Peter</b> .....	14
<i>Authorship and date</i> .....	14
<i>Audience</i> .....	16
<i>A Cause for writing the Epistle</i> .....	19
<i>Naming and shaming as a means of stimulating desired behavior</i> .....	21
<b>Reversal strategies in 1 Peter 2:4-10</b> .....	22
<b>Strategies distilled</b> .....	30
<b>Extrapolation to the Letter as a Whole</b> .....	33
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	37
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	38

## List of Abbreviations

- NASB: New American Standard Bible
- Pet: Peter
- Matt: Matthew
- Gal: Galatians
- Ex: Exodus
- Isa: Isaiah
- Jer: Jeremiah
- Hos: Hosea
- Ps: Psalms
- CRCNT: classical-rhetorical criticism of the New Testament
- SSCNT: social-scientific criticism of the New Testament.

## Introduction

The son of a banker took over his father's business. For a few years all seemed well and his father's bank flourished. After some time however, a scandal erupted around the young, prosperous man. His father and he were accused of counterfeiting currency and forced to leave town. This tale was not taken from the Wall Street Journal, though it might well have been, but is the story of an ancient philosopher named Diogenes of Sinope.<sup>1</sup> After being banned from his hometown for counterfeiting he moved to Athens where he became an influential philosopher in the school of the cynics.<sup>2</sup> The cynics lived a life of continual questioning of the social conventions of their day and often lived in unconventional, even anti-conventional fashion.<sup>3</sup>

As it turns out Diogenes' fraudulent past would prove to be useful. According to legend, when he described the philosophical agenda of the cynics he said that they sought to 'remint coins' (*paracharatein to nomisma*).<sup>4</sup> With this term Diogenes was saying that he was to take something well known, like a coin (*nomisma*), which can also refer to social convention and then alter this coin, or social convention, so that it would be radically different from its past state.<sup>5</sup> Diogenes wished his fellow cynics to live in a fashion radically different from society.<sup>6</sup> According to the emperor Julian the main agenda of the cynics was to 'correct what the masses think' especially with regard to moral values, as such the motto of the cynics was one of non-conformism.<sup>7</sup>

Friedrich Nietzsche would similarly develop critiques of his society, arguing for a revaluation of values and non-conformism to its conventions.<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche refers to this as the

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<sup>1</sup> Percy Gardner, "Diogenes and Delphi," *Class. Rev.* 7.10 (1893): 438; Joachim Friedrich 1903-1974. Ritter et al., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Völlig Neubearb. Ausg., 13 vols., Bd 11 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971), 105.

<sup>2</sup> Ritter et al., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 105. According to legend, even Alexander the Great came to visit Diogenes, who lived in a jar somewhere on the streets of Athens. The powerful king walked up to him and offered him whatever he asked for as a gift. Diogenes replied that if he was truly to ask for anything, that maybe dear Alexander could scooch a bit so that he would no longer be blocking his sun. To this Alexander replied 'If I wasn't Alexander I would like to be Diogenes.'

<sup>3</sup> Ritter et al., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 105.

<sup>4</sup> Gardner, "Diogenes and Delphi," 438. Gardner tells the tale of Diogenes having to bail town due to his father's counterfeiting practices and recounts how Diogenes was instructed by the oracle of Delphi to remint the coins. This is also described in Diogenes Laertius 6.20 and 6.71.

<sup>5</sup> Ritter et al., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 105.

<sup>6</sup> Ritter et al., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 105.

<sup>7</sup> Ritter et al., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 105.

<sup>8</sup> Ritter et al., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 107. In Nietzsche's case this was an agitation against the Christian preference for the weak and the poor that, according to Nietzsche had its roots in the Jewish prophetic tradition in which the powerful were shamed and the powerless praised. Nietzsche argued for a return to the proper evaluation of strength and the aim to become a superhuman or 'Übermensch'.

‘Umwertung aller Werten’ and explicitly bases this on the notion of *paracharatein to nomisma* found in the works of Diogenes.<sup>9</sup> Henceforth I shall refer to this notion of revaluation of values and non-conformism to broader contemporary society as ‘Umwertung’.<sup>10</sup> I understand Umwertung as the employment of rhetorical devices to achieve a reversal of certain social norms and values. In such a way norms and values previously held in high esteem are now relativized in favor of those that were insignificant but are now deemed important.<sup>11</sup>

Not only in philosophical rhetorical discourse such as the one of Diogenes or Nietzsche was the notion of Umwertung widespread. It may also be found within the canon of the New Testament. The famous revaluation of societal convention argued by Jesus in Matthew 20:16 immediately comes to mind: “*So the last will be first, and the first will be the last.*” (Matt 20:16 NASB).

Margaret Mitchell and Ben Witherington point out that this element of revaluation and non-conformism is also present in the works of Paul.<sup>12</sup> Witherington calls attention to the oxymoron in Paul's writings of having a crucified lord and a ‘wisdom of the cross’.<sup>13</sup> How could a crucified criminal be God, and how can this self-inflicted suffering be wise? Yet this is what Paul argues in his first letter to the Corinthians. Again one finds here a case of revaluation of values in ancient rhetoric.<sup>14</sup> Or as Witherington aptly puts it ‘Paul is not in the business of simply baptizing the cultural views of Roman society. To the contrary, he

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<sup>9</sup> Ritter et al., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 107; R. Bracht Branham, “Nietzsche’s Cynicism: Uppercase or Lowercase?,” in *Nietzsche and Antiquity: His Reaction and Response to the Classical Tradition*, ed. Paul Bishop (Boydell & Brewer, 2004), 170–81, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/nietzsche-and-antiquity/nietzsches-cynicism-uppercase-or-lowercase/5479E677B1A0120C63BD56A4FFC7CB8C>. So much so that some even referred to the thought of Nietzsche as ‘neo-cynicism’ (Ritter, 107). Nietzsche based his term ‘Umwertung aller Werten’ on the works of Diogenes Laertius 6.20 and 6.71.

<sup>10</sup> This does not mean that I believe that all these authors were arguing for an identical Umwertung when it comes to its content. However, the structure behind all of these rhetorical discourses is similar namely: the revaluation of society’s values and the challenge to live in a non-conformist fashion.

<sup>11</sup> I have chosen to define Umwertung in such a manner since these same patterns of argumentation are discernable in the texts of Diogenes, Paul, the Gospels, and Nietzsche.

<sup>12</sup> Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich. : Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans ; Paternoster Press, 1995); Margaret Mary Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*, *Hermeneutische Untersuchungen Zur Theologie* 28 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1991).

<sup>13</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 109.

<sup>14</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 155. Or as Witherington aptly puts it on page 155 ‘Paul is not in the business of simply baptizing the cultural views of Roman society. To the contrary, he undermines many of the most cherished values and redefines what real status amounts to, namely being in Christ or being sons and daughters of God’ (p155).

undermines many of the most cherished values and redefines what real status amounts to, namely being in Christ or being sons and daughters of God'.<sup>15</sup>

Diogenes, Jesus, Paul and Nietzsche, used rhetorical discourse and tactic as a means of critiquing and reversing the normal conventions, norms and values of contemporary society so that what used to be honorable is now shameful and vice versa. They wished their followers to live in a manner radically different from what they saw in their culture.

In this essay, I will argue that the rhetorical notion of *Umwertung* may also be found in 1 Peter. In the Epistle the author seems to believe that his addressees may find themselves in a dangerous predicament since the time of their conversion. Living as exiles in their community (v1:1), they are rejected by men (v2:4), which causes them to suffer various trials (1:6).

The author of the text writes a letter in which he seems to be arguing for his own version of the *Umwertung aller Werten*. I believe he wishes his audience to develop a new way of living in their society, of reminding that which is deemed valuable by culture so that they gain a new perspective on what is of value for them as a Christian. In this thesis I seek to study if this is indeed the case and if so, which specific aims and strategies the author employs to achieve this goal.

The following question will be central to this thesis:

*Does 1 Pet 2:4-10 promote an Umwertung aller Werten, and if so to what extent does this Umwertung apply to 1 Peter as a whole?*

This essay will consist of three chapters each of which seeks to answer a sub-question with a view to answering the main question sketched above. In the first chapter, I ask the following question 'which methodologies may be employed to study both the context and the argumentation of 1 Peter'? In it, I will provide the methodological framework of my study. I will suggest that 1 Peter was a work that was meant to be read out loud to an audience and was constructed as a structured, rhetorical address that employs motifs and strategies probably known to its addressees. These strategies and motifs consist of the varying ways in which the author seeks to achieve the intended reversal of values, an *Umwertung*.

The second chapter, deals with the question 'what is the context that lies behind the text and how does this context influence the rhetorical strategy in 1 Peter 2:4-10'? Here I will examine the situation of the letter as a whole and see how it influences the strategy of a very specific part of 1 Peter, namely chapter 2:4-10. I will first devote some space to a study of the context of the letter because only by understanding the cause that motivated its composition

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<sup>15</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 155.

may we understand the rhetorical strategies of the text. I will then show in which manner the author builds his argument for a revaluation of values by studying each verse separately. From this analysis, I distil a list of four strategies that the author employs to argue for his revaluation of values.

In the third chapter, I seek to answer the following sub-question ‘In what manner may the strategies of *Umwertung* found in 1 Pet 2:4-10 be extrapolated to the letter as a whole’? I will aim to extrapolate these strategies employed in 1 Pet 2:4-10 to the letter as a whole and see if these are employed consistently throughout the letter. I provide several, less in depth, examples of how one might use the strategies distilled in the second chapter to discover the way in which the author constructs an honor code in other parts of the letter.

Finally, in the conclusion of this thesis, I will argue that the author of 1 Peter is using the strategies of reversal to construct a new honor code for his audience.

With this essay I hope to provide a new way of understanding the letter that I have not yet encountered in current research. These new insights can be valuable for scholarship on 1 Peter in prompting further research.

## 1.

### **A matrimony of methodology**

In this chapter I will develop the conceptual and methodological framework in which I will conduct my study. I follow the example of Witherington, Mitchell and Barth Campbell who study these reversals of values in the work of Paul from a rhetorical perspective.<sup>16</sup>

A speech is always addressed to a certain group of people in a specific context or situation. Therefore, in this chapter I argue for the use of the same approach as Campbell and John Elliott who call for an alliance between sociological-exegesis and rhetorical criticism.<sup>17</sup>

In order to answer my research question, two aspects of the letter of 1 Peter must be examined namely its rhetorical *strategy* and its *situation*. The rhetorical strategy is defined by Elliott as ‘the deliberate design of a document calculated to have a specific social effect on its intended hearers or readers’.<sup>18</sup> With situation I mean the circumstances and context that demanded a rhetorical response in the first place and compelled the author to address them. Each of these aspects requires its own methodology that may be combined to form a sort of ‘happy marriage’, as has already been done by Campbell and to whose work I am indebted.<sup>19</sup>

In the first part of this chapter, I give insight into the methodology needed to study the rhetorical strategy of 1 Peter: classical-rhetorical criticism of the New Testament (CRCNT). In the second part I follow the methodology of sociological-exegesis used by Elliot in his *A Home for the Homeless*.<sup>20</sup> I will now name several studies that have combine these two methodologies in previous research.

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<sup>16</sup> Barth L. Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter* (Society of Biblical Literature, 1998); Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*; Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*.

<sup>17</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 9–25.

<sup>18</sup> John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), 11.

<sup>19</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*.

<sup>20</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*.



### **1 Peter and the combination of CRCNT and sociological-exegesis**

In Campbell's dissertation *Honor, Shame and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter* several studies are named in which rhetorical criticism and sociological exegesis were successfully combined in previous research. This research constitutes a solid academic precedent for the methodological alliance between CRCNT and sociological exegesis.<sup>21</sup> Another example of a combination of rhetorical and sociological methods for the study of the bible is Witherington's 'socio-rhetorical' commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians.<sup>22</sup>

The combination of rhetorical criticism and sociological exegesis of the New Testament has a solid footing in previous academic discourse. All these works emphasize that, in order to truly understand 1 Peter, we need to look both at its rhetoric and its social context. The next section discusses each of these methodologies in turn.

### **1 Peter as an ancient rhetorical address: classical rhetorical criticism of the New Testament**

1 Peter most likely was a so called 'circular letter'.<sup>23</sup> This means that the letter was meant to be passed along from community to community and be read aloud amongst the congregants, much like the rhetorical addresses that were common practice in antiquity.<sup>24</sup> Rhetoric (the use of argumentation to persuade one's audience) was a widespread practice in the ancient Graeco-Roman world that permeated written discourse. It seems likely then that the author of 1 Peter employed certain rhetorical strategies that were common in his day.<sup>25</sup>

Witherington argues that in Antiquity letters, were often read aloud to the audience. For this reason rhetorical eloquence was not only demanded and expected by the audience in messages delivered verbally but also in written texts such as the epistle of 1 Peter.<sup>26</sup> As such,

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<sup>21</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 13–25.

<sup>22</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*.

<sup>23</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 60. This also explains the order of the place names in 1:1, if the letter was meant to be sent from community to community this order of place names would be the most logical and make the most geographical sense.

<sup>24</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 47. Here Witherington points out that even the very name of the community or church, *ekklesia*, was a familiar term in antiquity that was used, not as a specific religious, much less a specifically Christian, term but as a term signifying a public assembly in the forum in which issues were debated using rhetorical discourse. Witherington argues that this would be a very natural and logical course for another biblical author: Paul. According to Witherington there is a vast amount of evidence that Paul chose to cast his letters in rhetorical forms that would correspond to rhetorical elements that were common practice in his day so that they would be recognizable by his audience. According to Witherington (45–46), the use of rhetoric was especially useful to early Christian authors such as Paul (or the author of 1 Peter for that matter), since it was a way of arguing peacefully within the Christian community, relying on the power of persuasion rather than force.

<sup>25</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 39.

<sup>26</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 145.

letters could sometimes function as a substitute for an actual oral speech, and were held to the same standards not only by those who composed them but also by the people who heard or read them.<sup>27</sup> This is why I believe it is justified to study the letter of 1 Peter as a rhetorical address, since both the authors and the receivers would have been aware of its rhetorical dimensions.

Because the analysis of the argumentation is one of the main focus points of this essay, I believe that rhetorical criticism is one of the most adequate strategies for studying these dimensions of 1 Peter. Campbell points out that over the years biblical scholars have developed ways in which rhetorical addresses in biblical texts may be studied in comparison to broader rhetorical practice in antiquity, this method is called: classical-rhetorical criticism of the New Testament (CRCNT).<sup>28</sup>

CRCNT is the study of the New Testament according to the established standards of Graeco-Roman rhetoric found in ancient handbooks on the subject.<sup>29</sup> According to Campbell this field studies which rhetorical strategies are employed by the author in written texts, but also how the hearers of this message were likely to respond to the author's rhetorical strategy.<sup>30</sup> I make use of this methodology in my analysis of the specific passage of 1 Pet 2:4-10 in the second chapter of this paper.

Campbell identifies several different stages of CRCNT.<sup>31</sup> I will show here how I apply these stages to my analysis of 1 Peter 2:4-10. Firstly, the rhetorical unit in the text needs to be identified, its length established. In our case this is 1 Peter 2:4-10. I established this as a demarcated pericope with the help of several commentaries on 1 Peter.<sup>32</sup> This demarcation is based on literary arguments that most aid my discussion below. Other divisions of pericopes using different arguments may well be established.

Secondly, one must determine the situation that originated the rhetorical address. Something must have been wrong or dysfunctional that compelled the author to write his

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<sup>27</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 145.

<sup>28</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 2. As Campbell points out here, major studies in the field of CRCNT emerged in the previous century. Especially by Hans Dieter Betz who employed this method in writing his commentary on Galatians. Introductions further exploring the method of CRCNT have written by George A. Kennedy and Burton L. Mack.

<sup>29</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 2-3.

<sup>30</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 5-10

<sup>31</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 5-10.

<sup>32</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, 2. printing., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2009); Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia--a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minn: Fortress Press, 1996); J. Ramsey Michaels, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 49, 1 Peter*, 1st edition. (Waco, Tex: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1988).

text.<sup>33</sup> In the case of our text we will look further into the ‘rhetorical situation’ in chapter two by using secondary literature such as commentaries and also the work of Elliot and Jason Borges.<sup>34</sup>

Thirdly, the rhetorical species and stasis are determined. The rhetorical species gives us insight into the kind of rhetorical text that is written and reveals the purpose of the author in addressing the audience.<sup>35</sup> The stasis refers to the basic issue at the center of the text, it refers to the main problem that the text seeks to discuss. The species and stasis will both be discussed in the second chapter by paying attention to the way in which previous rhetorical studies have approached 1 Peter.<sup>36</sup> In Campbell’s fourth stage one analyzes the invention, arrangement and style of the discourse.<sup>37</sup>

I have suggested above that the author of 1 Peter was well aware of the expectations of his audience. They expected him to employ certain rhetorical strategies, as was always the case in a public address. Inversely, the author applied his rhetorical tools in the best possible way to persuade his audience of the validity of his claims.<sup>38</sup> I have also argued in the introduction that one of the rhetorical strategies often used in antiquity, both outside and within the canon was the inversion of values that I called *Umwertung der Werten*.

Thus, it seems possible that when the author of 1 Peter was writing his letter, he was attempting to provide an revaluation of values. His audience would have been expecting the use of rhetoric since this was ubiquitous in their culture.<sup>39</sup> What is new to the thought of the author then is not so much the fact that rhetoric is used but rather the specific and surprising strategies and sources that the author used as well as the context in which he makes his case.

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<sup>33</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 6.

<sup>34</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*; Jason Borges, “‘Dignified’: An Exegetical Soteriology of Divine Honour,” *Scott. J. Theol.* 66.1 (2013): 74–87, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930612000312>.

<sup>35</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 6.

<sup>36</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*; Lauri Thurén, *The Rhetorical Strategy of 1 Peter with Special Regard to Ambiguous Expressions: By Lauri Thurén* (Åbo : Pargas: Åbo Academy Press ; Distribution, Tidningsbokhandeln, 1990).

<sup>37</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 8–9. These pages can be consulted further to consider Campbell’s explanation of exactly how this may be done.

<sup>38</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 11.

<sup>39</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 47. Witherington argues here that most audiences in antiquity were very adept at judging rhetorical discourse and would have been on the look out for any rhetorical strategies and tactics in the address of the author.

### 1 Peter in context: sociological exegesis

After having laid down the methodology that I will use to study the strategy of 1 Peter it is now time to turn to the methodology that I shall employ to study the *situation* of the text.<sup>40</sup> In this venture I am heavily indebted to the work of Elliott who calls for an exegesis that is sociological in nature.<sup>41</sup> This ‘sociological-exegesis’ is sociological due to its use of methods, perspectives and presuppositions that stem from the academic field of sociology.<sup>42</sup> It is exegetical in that it simultaneously uses exegetical methods to approach the text.<sup>43</sup> The primary goal of such a method, according to Elliott, is the ‘interpretation of the text as it has been designed to serve as a vehicle of socio-religious interaction’.<sup>44</sup>

Crucial for this way of examining scripture is an understanding of biblical texts as having been shaped by social factors as well as by historical and theological factors.<sup>45</sup> What was the reason for writing the letter in the first place, which social factors shaped the thoughts of the author himself and what was the desired impact of the text on the recipients of the letter? These are all questions that arise when I look at 1 Peter from a sociological-exegetical perspective and that I will seek to answer in the following chapters.

I will study these social dimensions by locating key terms used to refer both to the location and the audience of the work and seeing how social information can be distilled from these terms. Furthermore, I will be using secondary literature from the social sciences that study the context of 1 Peter and society in antiquity through a sociological lens such as that of Elliott and Bruce Malina.<sup>46</sup>

Aside from taking into account the social factors that shaped the world of the author and the recipients it is important to also note the social factors that shaped me as an interpreter of the text. By no means am I myself exempt from influence by the social dimensions of race,

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<sup>40</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 10. Here Elliott defines this situation as the ‘various typical fields of interpersonal or social interaction which have shaped the composition of a text’.

<sup>41</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 2. As Elliott argues here, we need not only look at the explicit sociological evidence that may be found within a text. A sociological-exegete also seeks to unravel the implicit evidence of the sociological evidence that may be found when one ‘reads between the lines’. What is needed according to Elliott is ‘a procedure for appropriating and applying sociological models and concepts which at each stage of the exegetical analysis could aid our understanding and interpretation of the interrelation of literary, theological and sociological aspects and dimensions of composition’ (p3).

<sup>42</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 8.

<sup>43</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 8.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. Elliott explains that the sociological exegete seeks to transcend the questions of the *Sitz im Leben* of a text and asks what the function of a text was designed to be and what the intended impact of the text on the life of the recipients was (p8).

<sup>45</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 9.

<sup>46</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*; Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta, Ga: John Knox Press, 1981).

class, gender, nationality and education. This entails that my understanding of the text and its context is limited since I include the information that seemed relevant to me specifically.

Another interpreter, perhaps one who has experienced more discrimination than myself, might have chosen to highlight different aspects of the text and its context.

## 2.

### Building the Living Temple

In this second chapter I shall set out by studying the rhetorical situation of 1 Peter. This situation consists of several different aspects. I will look at the situation of the author, the addressees and at the reasons that explain the composition of the letter. In order to examine these aspects of the rhetorical situation I use several different commentaries and secondary literature.<sup>47</sup> Subsequently, I will study the rhetorical strategies that the author uses to argue for an Umwertung in 1 Peter 2:4-10.

Virtually every aspect of 1 Peter has been the topic of fierce debate. There is little scholarly consensus regarding authorship, audience, unity, date and many other dimensions of the text.<sup>48</sup> Stephen Neill even once characterized 1 Peter as the - storm center - of NT studies.<sup>49</sup> However, the situation and strategy I portray on the basis of the proposed methodology seems to provide a plausible solution for numerous of the letter's aspects.

#### The situation of 1 Peter

##### *Authorship and date*

The question of authorship and date of the Epistle are so intertwined that they must be taken together, according to Karen Jobes.<sup>50</sup> This is because pseudonymous authorship seems certain if the letter is given a later date. While Elliott has argued for pseudonymous authorship by someone of the Petrine group in Rome around the 75-95 C.E, Jobes believes that the letter may truly have been written by the Apostle.<sup>51</sup> According to Jobes, three main arguments have been presented to support pseudonymous authorship. 1) The Greek is too eloquent, 2) there is a reference to the situation of the church (i.e., its persecution) present in the epistle that was not yet there at the time of Peter, and 3) Christianity could not have reached Asia Minor so quickly.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Michaels, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 49, 1 Peter*; Jobes, *1 Peter*; Achtemeier and Epp, *1 Peter*; Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*; Malina, *The New Testament World*.

<sup>48</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 22.

<sup>49</sup> Michaels, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 49, 1 Peter*, 1.

<sup>50</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 5.

<sup>51</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 5; John Hall Elliott and Petrus, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, First Yale University Press impression., The Anchor Bible volume 37B (New Haven London: Yale University Press, 2011), 127–30.

<sup>52</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 6.

Against the first argument Jobes argues that there seem to be certain semitic tendencies in the Greek of 1 Peter, leading us to believe the author came from Palestine.<sup>53</sup> Is it possible that the author, if it indeed was Peter, would display the kind of rhetorical eloquence that may be found within 1 Peter? Would a fisherman from Judea really have the sort of knowledge at his disposal to accomplish such a feat? In his work *Conflict and Community in Corinth* Witherington argues extensively that rhetoric was not simply a matter for the wealthy and well educated, it was imitated by all layers of society, also in Jewish contexts.<sup>54</sup> Even as a fisherman Peter would have heard ‘lay- rhetoric’ all around him. This might lead us to suggest that the use of structured argumentation to persuade an audience would not have been altogether alien to the apostle and that he might have imitated what he heard around him.<sup>55</sup> However, many scholars such as Achtemeier, Ehrman and Elliot believe this argument to overestimate the rhetorical prowess that could plausibly be expected of a Judean fisherman.<sup>56</sup>

Against the second argument Jobes posits that the Epistle must be seen as one, unified work.<sup>57</sup> References such as - fiery trial - (4:12) seem to be limited to verbal threat and slander and do not necessarily imply real persecutions of physical nature. This means that the references to persecution does not provide a solid basis for the date of the letter, something that also Paul Achtemeier and Eldon Epp have pointed out.<sup>58</sup> In the wake of Achtemeier, Jobes adds, that the ‘church structure’ described in 1 Peter, led mostly by unofficial elders, reflects the situation of the early Christian movement in the early first century.<sup>59</sup>

The third argument for pseudonymous authorship is the fact that time was needed for Christianity to spread in Asia Minor and to allow for the persecution attested in the epistle.<sup>60</sup> Since we have letters from Asia Minor’s governor, Pliny, around 80 C.E. stating that persecution had been going on for twenty years. 1 Peter is often dated to no earlier than 60 C.E., and thus if persecution is mentioned in 1 Peter it must have taken place well beyond the Apostle’s lifetime. According to Jobes however, Christianity could have spread to Asia Minor much more quickly than normally accepted through the Roman colonization of the province

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<sup>53</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 7.

<sup>54</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 40.

<sup>55</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 7.

<sup>56</sup> Achtemeier and Epp, *1 Peter*, 1–7; Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 84–88; Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 400–401.

<sup>57</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 7–13.

<sup>58</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 9; Achtemeier and Epp, *1 Peter*, 34–36.

<sup>59</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 11.

<sup>60</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 13.

which was a fact, even during the Apostle's life.<sup>61</sup> Jobes argues that Christians from Peter's community in Rome could have been forced to move to Asia Minor and settle there.<sup>62</sup> This could offer an explanation of why they are referred to as *paripedemoi*, or wandering strangers, a term often used to refer to these colonizers. If the audience indeed consisted of these *paripedemoi* colonizers from Rome this may explain why the author of 1 Peter would be in contact with a Christian community so far away.<sup>63</sup>

Jobes concludes that this could have taken place in Peter's life time, which leads her to suggest that the Epistle's claim to have been written by the Apostle Peter could in fact be true.

How must we weigh the arguments of the commentators mentioned above? Jobes' argumentation nuances some of the arguments usually posited in favor of late, pseudonymous authorship. However, there is still very little agreement in Petrine scholarship on the issue of the authorship of 1 Peter. Jobes' argument for early dating and emphasis on genuine Petrine authorship are at times strained. A very plausible alternative could be the use of an amanuensis to whom Peter dictated his work and who altered the message in the process of writing it down. This would also account for the rather eloquent literary and rhetorical style of the epistle. Ehrman believes this to be the most likely scenario and points to the possibility that the Silvanus mentioned at the end of the letter is this amanuensis.<sup>64</sup>

For the argumentation of this essay, it is not crucial whether 1 Peter was written by the Apostle himself or by an amanuensis from his inner circles. In any case I believe that there is a possibility that the author was either the Apostle himself or someone intimately familiar with his thought, in this essay I shall refer to this person as 'Peter'. Furthermore, I suggest that it might be plausible that the letter was written in the second half of the first century.

### *Audience*

I now turn to the issue of the audience. To whom exactly was Peter writing his rhetorical address? Even at a first glance one gets the impression that the author is writing to an audience of maligned Christians. His addressees are *parepidemoi*, or visiting strangers (1:1), and *paroikoi* or resident aliens (2:11). They suffer at the hand from others in society who slander them (2:12; 3:16), revile them (2:23; 3:9), malign them (4:4, 14) and cause them all

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<sup>61</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 13.

<sup>62</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 13.

<sup>63</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 13.

<sup>64</sup> Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 400.



sorts of suffering.<sup>65</sup> What sort of people would cause their neighbors to be stirred to such a frenzy against them?

According to Elliott, the term *paroikos* (2:11) in the letter helps us to gain insight into the sociological situation of the addressees.<sup>66</sup> He defines the term as referring to strangers or alien residents, people who ‘are not at home, or who lack native roots, in the language, customs, culture, or political, social, and religious allegiances of the people among whom they dwell’, it refers to the displaced and suspicious ‘other’.<sup>67</sup>

As such being a *paroikos* could mean that one would be socially separated from one’s environment and alien to its culture.<sup>68</sup> The term also carries a legal meaning and, in this context, refers to a person who is dwelling abroad and as such has no civil or native rights. In this case it may refer to those who were made to dwell permanently in a place that was not their native homeland. *Paroikoi* in Asia Minor often worked in the rural areas as laborers who tilled rather than owned land.<sup>69</sup>

This corresponds to Jobes’ suggestion that the audience of 1 Peter consisted of people who had ‘become Christian elsewhere, had some association with Peter prior to his writing them, and now found themselves foreigners and aliens scattered throughout Asia Minor.’<sup>70</sup> They were likely a group considered disturbers of the peace in Rome, such was often the case with Christians (see my discussion below). Jobes and Ehrman suggest that at least a part of the Christians were perhaps forced to dwell in Asia as part of the Roman colonizing strategy that took place in this area around the time of 1 Peter.<sup>71</sup> They argue that these people were also often designated with the term *parepidemoi*, a term also used by Peter to denote his audience.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Borges, “‘Dignified,’” 84. C.f. (1:6; 2:19-20; 3:14, 17; 4:1, 15, 19; 5:10), this is list of references to the text comes from this page of Borges’ article.

<sup>66</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 23–24.

<sup>67</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 24. The term consists of tow elements par-oikos. The root of the second word ‘oik’ lies at the basis of words such as *oikos*, *oikia*, *oikeo* and refers to one’s home, lineage and given identity. Much more than merely referring to simply a material house the term refers to the very heart of the identity of a person in ancient antiquity (p24.). With the contrasting participle ‘par’ then, the author is trying to show that his audience does not share these identity markers with their surrounding environment.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p25.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 25, 68. Elliott shows that this is the most frequent usage of the term. In the social hierarchy of antiquity, *paroikoi* stood below full citizens and above the *xenos* (*strangers*) or freedmen and slaves. These people constituted their own particular class that levitated between these higher and lower groups. We find several instances of biblical characters belonging to this social group such as Abraham amongst the Hittites and Moses in Midian and the Israelites in Egypt prior to their active enslavement (p26).

<sup>70</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 26.

<sup>71</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 31; Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 397.

<sup>72</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 31.

The *paroikoi* were elevated over the level of the *xenoi* and the slaves but were below citizens and as such constituted a social class that was quite vulnerable, had few legal rights, and was held in low esteem by the citizens of their dwelling place.<sup>73</sup>

The term *diaspora* (1:1) is used in a novel fashion in 1 Peter, according to Elliott.<sup>74</sup> Here it is used for the first time to refer to Christians, most likely a mixture of both Jewish and Gentile converts.<sup>75</sup> Some authors like Francis Beare and Paul Achtemeier have argued that the three terms mentioned above (*paroikoi*, *paripedemioi* and *diaspora*) must be understood in a solely spiritual fashion, meaning that the addressees were resident aliens in the diaspora on earth and that their true home was in heaven.<sup>76</sup>

Jobes and Ehrman provide a synthesis between the social-political meaning (argued for by Elliott) of these terms and their metaphorical/spiritual one (argued for by Achtemeier) which I find convincing.<sup>77</sup> In this synthesis the socio-political dimension of being a *paripedemioi* or *paroikoi* in *diaspora* is enriched by the metaphorical meaning of the words. Peter uses the same words, with their negative connotation, to address his audience that they were used to being called by secular society. However, he now casts these words into a more eschatological, spiritual and metaphorical framework giving new meaning to being called a *paripedemioi* or *paroikoi* thus transforming their self-understanding.<sup>78</sup> The author might be using these legal, socio-political terms to make a more spiritual point. His goal with this could be to achieve his broader agenda of achieving an inversion of values. In this interpretation provided by Jobes the eschatological meaning of the terms refers to the fact that the Christians who are wandering strangers (*paripedemioi*), homeless (*paroikoi*) and in exile (*diaspora*) will be vindicated at the end of times. They shall find their true home in God's coming Kingdom and while they live in this world, the Christians must also to some extent remain exiles to it. Living in a state of spiritual diaspora they are indeed in this world but not of it.<sup>79</sup>

I suggest that Peter was perhaps addressing a group of both Jewish and Gentile Christians who were either temporarily (*parepidemioi*) or permanently (*paroikoi*) residing in a land that was not their native abode, the four provinces of in Asia Minor. Textual clues for the gentile nature of the audience may be found in 1:14 where Peter states that the believers were

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<sup>73</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 38.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 45.

<sup>76</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 42–46; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 25.

<sup>77</sup> Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 399; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 43–49.

<sup>78</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 24–25.

<sup>79</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 26–27.

ignorant before their conversion, and in 1:18 where he speaks of ‘the futile ways inherited from your forefathers’ both indicating a gentile origin. This group of Christians might have been forced to dwell there as part of the Roman colonization program.<sup>80</sup> Before this they could have been in contact with Peter or his followers in Rome. This provides a possible explanation of why they remained in contact with him even after they left.<sup>81</sup>

As Elliott points out, Asia Minor was a rural area and the Christians there probably met in house churches.<sup>82</sup> This area was very diverse in ethnicities so the Christian communities addressed by the author likely would have consisted of a patchwork of several ethnicities, with little else than their faith to bind them together.<sup>83</sup> If this is the case they lived in rather dire conditions as ordinary laborers who dealt with social estrangement, legal vulnerability and religious divergence from their ‘society’. According to Elliott, Peter believes these Christians to be in diaspora and as such both share in the predicament but also in the hope of their Jewish forebearers.<sup>84</sup>

The term ‘Christian’ (*Christianoi*) was likely used as a nickname by outsiders as we read in 1 Pet. 4:14-16. However, Peter argues in v.16 that suffering as a Christian could actually become a badge of pride. Tom Wright has argued that around the 40’s the group of Jesus-followers came to apply the term *Christianoi* to themselves.<sup>85</sup> In this essay I refer to the audience as Christians, though one should keep in mind that this does not mean that this group was an organized movement separated from the Jewish world.<sup>86</sup> The early Jesus movement was perceived as a Jewish sect by both insiders and outsiders in many regards.

#### *A Cause for writing the Epistle*

As mentioned above, the letter of 1 Peter was addressed to the socially, politically and religiously vulnerable community of Jesus followers. Within the text there are multiple references to the hardships that this community had to endure. There are also hints from outside the Epistle that many in society around the time of 1 Peter, had a pessimistic view of their Christian neighbors.

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<sup>80</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 28–41.

<sup>81</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 30.

<sup>82</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 62–64.

<sup>83</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 61.

<sup>84</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 48.

<sup>85</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul: A Biography*, FIRST EDITION. (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2018), 93.

<sup>86</sup> Wright, *Paul*, 93.

Bart Ehrman provides an overview of ancient texts discussing position of Christians in first century society.<sup>87</sup> Christians were regarded with suspicion due to the exclusivist nature of their belief, something strange to the ever inclusivist and polytheistic Romans.<sup>88</sup> Their conversion often caused disruption in the social relations of their former lives. Believing slaves worked the fields with a new sense of worth and importance since there was no longer 'slave nor free' (Gal 3:28, NASB). Christian wives left their pagan husbands at the altar and claimed a more prominent role in the public sphere since 'there is neither male nor female' (Gal 3:28, NASB). Converted children broke ties with their Gentile families in favor of their 'new family' in Christ thus echoing the words of Christ 'I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother' (Matt 10:35).<sup>89</sup> Christians often broke ties with their former relations and refused to display socially desired behavior like participating in the cult of the emperor and the Roman gods.<sup>90</sup>

Ehrman points out that this refusal was as much a political statement as a theological one.<sup>91</sup> These dimensions were not separated as they are now in the West. Refusal to pay homage to the emperor resulted in guaranteed accusations of insurgency. Unsurprisingly, these actions were met with suspicion both from the authorities and broader society. In various texts from the first and second century C.E. this negative image of Christians comes to the fore. Tacitus calls the faith a 'pernicious superstition'. The governor of the very provinces addressed in the letter of 1 Peter refers to the Christians as 'obstinate adherents of a depraved superstition'.<sup>92</sup>

According to Elliott the economical situation of the *paroikoi* was quite similar to that of full citizens from the lower class.<sup>93</sup> This means that in times of turmoil these alien residents, the Christians, would be the first to be regarded with suspicion from higher classes and jealousy from the lower-class.<sup>94</sup> The time of 1 Peter was indeed such a time of turmoil. Elliott sees a connection between the rapid growth of Christianity in the area and the 'territorial confiscation, war indemnities, exorbitant tribute, and taxation, slavery and the reduced

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<sup>87</sup> Ehrman, *The New Testament*.

<sup>88</sup> Key to the Roman strategy of incorporating new peoples into the empire was to allow them to keep practicing their native relations as long as they paid homage to the unifying deity of the emperor. This is one of the reasons that Jews and Christians alike were regarded with suspicion by the authorities, since their exclusivist claims prohibited these believers to participate in the emperor cult.

<sup>89</sup> Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 395; Wright, *Paul*, 91. Bart Ehrman provides a model example of this that may be found in the story Perpetua. A mother who rejects her family and even her own child in favor of her belief in Christ.

<sup>90</sup> Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 395.

<sup>91</sup> Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 395.

<sup>92</sup> Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 396.

<sup>93</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 69.

<sup>94</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 70.

economic level of the free laborers which had been the brutal price which the provinces paid for the *pax romana*'.<sup>95</sup>

These concerns of society with their Christian neighbors are all echoed in 1 Peter, where the author addresses all of the issues mentioned above. He exhorts his audience to live in a manner that seeks to soothe the concern of broader society on these topics while not conforming to their demands (1 Pet 2:13-3:17; 4:7).

*Naming and shaming as a means of stimulating desired behavior*

I argued above that Christians in antiquity were regarded with suspicion by their neighbors, often exhibiting behavior and advocating for values that were considered dangerous, strange and counter-cultural. Malina, Elliot and Achtemeier point out that one of the ways in which socially undesired behavior was combatted in Greco-Roman society was by actively shaming the behavior that was perceived as undesirable.<sup>96</sup> By shaming the Christians' behavior, their peers hoped to provide an incentive to conform to the 'normal' behavior of general society. Honor and shame were directly linked to one's social standing, by shaming a certain person or behavior this social standing would be endangered.<sup>97</sup> Being shamed publicly had a direct effect on that person's ability to marry, work, trade and participate in relationships with his peers.

According to Campbell, the situation of the letter must not be understood as one of persecution but as one of an honor contests.<sup>98</sup> Malina has pointed out that this is a plausible background for the letter since in antiquity most social interaction was based on the contesting of honor.<sup>99</sup> By active shaming and honoring certain behavioral practices one was able to improve or worsen one's own position in society. In this case, attacking Christians, blaming and slandering their anti-social behavior implied that their secular neighbors could improve their own position in society using the Christians as a sort of stepping stool on the social ladder.

One of the causes for writing the Epistle of 1 Peter may have been that, in a time of turmoil in the provinces of Asia Minor, non-Christians in society had started to slander, shame and revile the Christians, perhaps sometimes resorting to actual violence. They did this in order to

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<sup>95</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 71.

<sup>96</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 46; Achtemeier and Epp, *1 Peter*, 35; John H. Elliott, "Disgraced Yet Graced. The Gospel According to 1 Peter in the Key of Honor and Shame," *Biblic. Theol. Bull. J. Bible Cult.* 25.4 (1995): 168-169, <https://doi.org/10.1177/014610799502500404>.

<sup>97</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 28.

<sup>98</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 27.

<sup>99</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 29.

force them to conform to their expectations of socially desirable behavior. The vulnerable Christian community, consisting largely of *paroikoi* and *peripedemoi* were regarded with suspicion by their neighbors in this time of crisis. Their eccentric and abnormal behavior was regarded as the cause for the hardships experienced by secular society.

Peter fears that some of the Christians may have given in to this pressure to conform or at least are at the brink of doing so. He writes a letter in which he inverses the value-system of society, arguing for an *Umwertung*. Peter argues that what society uses to shame them is actually a mark of honor in the eyes of God and vice versa. Malina defines this honor as ‘the value of a person in the eyes of his or own eyes plus that person’s value in the eyes of his or her social group’.<sup>100</sup>

This is precisely what the author seeks to redefine in the eyes of his audience. He redefines what honor and shame are, who is important in attributing this and how they should engage with those who hold opposing views on these matters. He seeks with his letter to argue for a non-conformism that often accompanied arguments for *Umwertung*, as we have seen in the introduction of this essay (the examples of Diogenes, Paul, Jesus and Nietzsche).<sup>101</sup> His purpose in this venture may have been to console his audience and provide them with a new source of hope, in addition to forming the basis for a more positive construction of their self-image.

In the rest of this chapter we will examine the precise argumentation of this *Umwertung* in one specific part of the letter, 1 Pet 2:4-10. I do not presume that the causes for writing laid down above are the only plausible explanations for the writing of the Epistle, rather they must be seen as part of the puzzle.

### **Reversal strategies in 1 Peter 2:4-10**

In what follows I will study the specific passage of 2:4-10 through a rhetorical critical lens and investigate which strategies the author employs to construct his argument. I will do this by investigating each verse and seeing which argument the author is trying to make and how this fits into the broader context of the letter.

From this venture I hope to distil several strategies that the author makes use of in the epistle. In chapter three I then examine how these strategies come to the fore in other parts of the letter. All the translations in this part of the essay are my own. I only discuss the dimensions of the text as they pertain to the dimensions of honor, shame and *Umwertung*.

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<sup>100</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 27.

<sup>101</sup> Elliott, “Disgraced Yet Graced. The Gospel According to 1 Peter in the Key of Honor and Shame,” 170.

*1 Peter 2:4-10 as a whole*

This passage functions as the final part of the opening of the letter. In vv. 4-5 the main themes are addressed which are further worked out in the subsequent verses through the use of scriptures from the Hebrew Bible. There are two main themes that are central to the passage. First, there is the motif of the Christians being described as living stones following the living cornerstone: Christ. Second, there is the theme of the Christians being God's holy, chosen people.

Campbell identifies the rhetorical species of the letter as deliberative due to the exhortatory nature of the argumentation found within the work.<sup>102</sup> Witherington describes it as deliberative rhetoric by stating that 'in deliberative rhetoric one is concerned not only with what is expedient but also with what is honorable'.<sup>103</sup> A common feature of this kind of rhetoric is the utilization of example and comparison and the use of *topoi* (sources of argument) that pay special attention to what is 'advantageous, expedient, honorable, profitable, necessary and their opposites', as pointed out by Campbell.<sup>104</sup> Both of these elements come prominently to the fore in our passage. There is extensive use of example and comparison, often with the Jewish Scriptures. Furthermore, there is a deep focus on *topoi* concerned with honor in the passage. This is reflected in the language of 'praise, honor, stumbling, holy, shame etc' in the passage under scrutiny.

The stasis, the question at issue, is the notion of how the suffering and trial (*peirasmos*) of the Christians (1:6) can serve to purify them.<sup>105</sup> The stasis is one of quality as is often the case in deliberative rhetoric. In this instance the quality discussed is the quality of faith amongst the Christians when tested by the fiery trials of social defamation.<sup>106</sup>

According to Campbell, within this general species and stasis of the letter as a whole our passage functions as an *iudicatio* with at its source the Scriptures from the Tenakh.<sup>107</sup> An *iudicatio*, or judgement, refers to a judgement made by people, individuals or deities who are held in high esteem.<sup>108</sup> In our passage Peter is the one providing this judgement of the audience's situation and was able to do so due to his exalted status of apostle.

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<sup>102</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 31.

<sup>103</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 75.

<sup>104</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 31.

<sup>105</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 31.

<sup>106</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 31.

<sup>107</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 83.

<sup>108</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 79.

When indexing the semantic fields surrounding honor and shame in this passage, Campbell calls our attention to the fact that the words expressing honor mostly refer to Christ as the honorable party.<sup>109</sup> From this we can infer that one of the primary means of gaining honor for the Christians is what Malina has called ‘honor gain through association’.<sup>110</sup> This means that the honor for the Christians lies not in their own merit but rather in their association with someone of great honor, in this instance that is Christ.

*Verse per verse analysis*

**2:4** *to whom you have come, a living stone indeed rejected by men, however in the sight of God chosen and precious.*

The very outset of this verse lays down the foundation of the revaluation of values that the author will seek to accomplish in this final part of his opening remarks. The believers are following the living stone (Christ) which is rejected (*apodedokimasmenon*) by men. The rejection of their leader is a blemish on their honor, a social stench that results in alienation and isolation from their peers. The verb used to describe the ‘rejection’ is in the perfect tense here signifying that the process of rejection is still going on in this time and thus likely referring to the active rejection of the Christians by their society.<sup>111</sup> The term is linked to the other words in the letter that referred to the suffering of the audience which consisted mostly of social, verbal and public slandering of the Christian groups. According to the author this should not discourage his audience for though Christ is rejected by men he is deemed chosen and precious by God.

The terms ‘chosen and precious’ are also a flash forward to v.6 where the same terms are used to refer to Christ also. The verse would serve to comfort the Christians for they too are rejected and slandered by their society. Peter argues that if they share in Christ’s suffering they may also share in his fate of being chosen and precious in the sight of God as is also suggested in v5. The author is trying to revalue the notion of being rejected.

Far from being a cause for disdain and shame their rejection is actually a good thing for it causes them to share in the fate of their savior.<sup>112</sup> And if they share in the first part of his faith, his rejection, they may also hope to share in the glorious part, his election and preciousness in God’s eyes.

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<sup>109</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 85.

<sup>110</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 29.

<sup>111</sup> Achtemeier and Epp, *1 Peter*, 154.

<sup>112</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 179.



We see here already that Peter is arguing for a revaluation of values in the minds of his audience. Through their suffering they partake in the largest Umwertung of all of history: God who became man, was rejected and crucified and then exalted and glorified by the Father to sit at His right hand. It is this notion of Christological Umwertung that Peter taps into with this stone reference that will occur again and again in the coming verses.

**2:5** *And you yourself as living stones are being built up into a spiritual house, into a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

This verse builds on the previous argument that Christ is a living stone. Now the radical and shocking notion is posited by Peter that the Christians themselves are like Christ, living stones.<sup>113</sup> They too are rejected like Christ was but may now hope to share in his glory.

Malina points out that honor was acquired in two ways in antiquity, both actively and by association with an honorable party.<sup>114</sup> Social life was distinguished in separate classes arranged vertically on the basis of hierarchy, with on the bottom the slaves and women and at the very top the ruling class, transcended only by divine figure(s).<sup>115</sup> Malina explains that every class could gain honor by being associated with the class above them in a sort of patron relationship. With this verse Peter shows that the rejection by men (also men of a higher social class) is remedied by their honorable association with the very pinnacle of the social pyramid: Christ himself. Just as Christ is chosen and deemed precious by the Father as a living stone, so are the believers. It would be difficult to think of a preposition that would have transferred more honor to the audience than these very first verses of the passage.

In the opening of the letter we learn that the addressees are *paroikoi* or resident aliens. The term consists of two elements: par-oikos. The root of the second word '*oik*' lies at the basis of words such as *oikos*, *oikia*, *oikeo* and refers to one's home, lineage and given identity.<sup>116</sup> Much more than merely referring to simply a material house the term refers to the very heart of the identity of a person in ancient antiquity according to Elliott.<sup>117</sup>

With the contrasting participle 'par' then, the author is trying to show that his audience does not share these identity markers with their surrounding environment. This verse corresponds to this opening of the letter through its usage of the word *oikos*. The audience's state of being homeless (par-okoi) and alien to their environment is here turned around in a

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<sup>113</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 179.

<sup>114</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 29–30.

<sup>115</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 27.

<sup>116</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 24.

<sup>117</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 24.

move of Petrine Umwertung. As the chosen and precious living stones of God they are in fact forming the ultimate spiritual house. Spiritual (*pneumatikos*) here referring not necessarily to the nature of the house but to the house as a place where the Spirit dwells, according to Achtemeier.<sup>118</sup>

Though their state of ‘social homelessness’ is a source for their public mockery and shame, they are actually at home with God, they are themselves a spiritual house, a place where the very Spirit of God chooses to dwell! Being a *paroikoi* is thus inversed from being a mark of shame to a badge of honor. The Christians are aliens to the world and have found their true home in Christ. The metaphor also speaks to the unity that the believers may find in their shared faith, though rejected by society they all have a place in the same spiritual house.<sup>119</sup>

The purpose of this house is that it may be a temple in which the Christians themselves serve as the holy priests, a position of great honor and one requiring active spiritual agency. This agency would have been largely lacking in the lives of these alienated and mocked Christians in their society. Peter instills the believers here with a sense of their own honorable identity in Christ, so much so that they are capable of making ‘sacrifices acceptable to God’ thus attributing them a position that would have been unthinkable for them in the past. Once again, the source for this honor is not the gender, class or social position of the believers but their relationship with Christ which transfers this honor to them. This sense of agency corresponds to that in v.9 in which the Christians are able to honor God through their public praise of Him.

**2:6** *Therefore, it is contained in Scripture: ‘Behold I lay in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious and the one who believes in Him will not be put to shame.’*

Here Peter quotes Isa 28:16 and uses the passage to declare that God is the ultimate distributor of honor and shame. God is the one who placed the stone in Zion, He is the one perceiving it as chosen and precious and it is due to God that those who believe will not be put to shame.

What is striking about this passage is what it *doesn’t* say. The basis for having honor or, negatively ‘not being put to shame’, is not the social rank of the believers. It is also not determined by the behavior of the believers, nor by the opinion of their neighbors. Instead, Peter anchors shame and honor on something else entirely here, namely having faith in Christ,

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<sup>118</sup> Achtemeier and Epp, *1 Peter*, 156.

<sup>119</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 181.

who like the believers is chosen and precious. It is only upon this cornerstone named Jesus Christ that the believers may be established as a spiritual house made of living stones.<sup>120</sup>

*2:7 Therefore to those who believe is the honor, but to those who do not believe 'the stone which the builders have rejected has become (turned into) the head of the corner.*

Malina points out that some parties in antiquity, such as women or slaves were not active agents in the acquisition of honor.<sup>121</sup> Women were only attributed the negative role of avoiding shame, mostly through sexually modest behavior.<sup>122</sup> By not grounding honor in class, gender or status, Peter provides these groups with a sense of agency when it comes to shame and honor. By having faith they are able to actively influence their own position both by their accustomed role of avoiding shame, as seen in v.6, and in a more active way that is added here. *All* believers, including the women and slaves, are active agents in acquiring honor through this distinctly Christian medium of faith, according to Peter. This sense of agency in the gaining of honor, called 'active honor' by Malina, would have been revolutionary for these groups and might account for the allure that Christianity had precisely to these layers of society.<sup>123</sup>

Again, in this verse a clear instance of Petrine Umwertung may be discerned. Many of the Christians were mocked in antiquity for their claim that their God had died a common criminal's death through his crucifixion. An example of this attitude is the account of ancient graffiti in the catacombs of Rome on which a cross is displayed with a man on it who has the head of a donkey, the subscript reads: Alexamenos worships his God'. This prevailing attitude is communicated here by stating that the stone (Christ) had been rejected by the builders. This is followed by an Umwertung from the author who states that this rejected God has in fact become the most important stone, the cornerstone.

A further revaluation is established by Peter here. Malina argues that in antiquity one looked to surrounding society as the source from which honor and shame were attributed.<sup>124</sup> Honor was not something individually acquired, rather it was something that was attributed by one's peers or superiors. Achtemeier shows that in this verse Peter is naming a novel source for honor and shame, one that does not lie in the opinion of others but in one's own

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<sup>120</sup> Achtemeier and Epp, *1 Peter*, 160.

<sup>121</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 42–45.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 29–30.

<sup>124</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 27–35.

individual response to Christ.<sup>125</sup> Those who chose to accept him will be honored, but those who reject him will stumble and fall over him, tumbling to ultimate shame as we will see in v8.

**2:8** *And 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.' Them stumble over the word, disobeying that to which they were appointed.*

In this verse Peter provides a new allusion to the Hebrew bible, Isa 8:14 This statement is a response of sorts to 'those who do not believe' in v.7. In the previous verse the believers are ensured that they will be honored for their faith. Verse 8 functions as the complimentary part of the Umwertung of v.7 in which the status of Christ is defended.

The believers will be vindicated from their present situation of public mockery while the scoffers will be put to shame when they realize their rejection of the 'stone' was foolish. The crucified God of the Christians, the stone rejected by the gentiles, is in fact the cornerstone (v.7). This divine truth will function as a stumbling block for the unbelievers causing them to fall over their own disobedience. Those who shame the Christians now for their belief, will be shamed by God for their own unbelief and disobedience to the word of God.

Malina points out that Greco-Roman culture may be understood as one large honor contest.<sup>126</sup> Slander and reviling could not go unanswered for this would result in loss of honor for the victims.<sup>127</sup> By stating that it is God who will cause their oppressors to stumble Peter is freeing the believers from the obligation to retaliate. Rather they are instructed to 'keep their conduct among the Gentiles honorable' (2:12). The value of retaliation is here turned about by Peter in favor of a meek obedience and trust in God who will vindicate the Christians in the coming age.

**2:9** *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession. So that you may proclaim the honor of the one who called you out of the darkness into his marvelous light.*

As I have argued above, the audience of the letter consisted for a part of Gentile believers. At the outset of the letter these gentiles are drawn into the predicament of the Jewish people by the author. They are in diaspora (1:1) perhaps both literally and spiritually. Since they share in

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<sup>125</sup> Achtemeier and Epp, *1 Peter*, 160–61.

<sup>126</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 29–46.

<sup>127</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 31.

the dishonor of the Jewish people, their diaspora, they now also share in their honor: the covenantal relationship of YHWH with his people.

The verse employs several metaphors often used in the Hebrew bible to denote YHWH's covenant with his people and is here applied to incorporate the Christian believers. Israel was and is the chosen race (Isa 43:20), the royal priesthood and a holy nation (Ex 19:6), called to holiness amongst their unholy neighbors, a people to be Gods possession. In a similar fashion the believers, who are also surrounded by unholy, unbelieving people are part of this covenant.

As Elliott and Malina have pointed out, honor in antiquity, largely ran along the lines of kinship relationships.<sup>128</sup> Kinspeople were the people who inspired loyalty, obedience and honor, while strangers were associated with shame, threats to honor and opposition.<sup>129</sup> This kinspeople/stranger divide was also connected to the image of belonging to the same household. By the use of household and kinsmen metaphors Peter is including the Christians, transforming these strangers, these *paroikoi* into kinsmen of Gods family, leaving them free to draw from the honor of their fellow kinspeople, the people of Israel and their God.

Malina shows that in antiquity one only entered into a social contract, or covenant in biblical language, with an equal.<sup>130</sup> By stressing that God enters into a covenant with the Christians the author is speaking to the exalted status of the Christians through their belief in Christ. This belief in Christ allows God to enter into a social contract with them as if He considers them to be his equals. This would have been an incredible attribution of honor for the slandered Christians and remains so for Christians today.

Furthermore, the Christians, men and women, slave and free, are once again attributed a sense of agency in the honor-shame dimension by Peter here. Those who usually have very little role to play in the giving of honor, due to their low status, are here exhorted to proclaim the honor of 'the one who has called you into his marvelous light'. In Greco-Roman culture one would have thought very little of the public praise of one who was of a lower class since honor can only be ascribed by an equal or superior, as Malina points out.<sup>131</sup> The public praise of a Christian *paroikoi* would have been like a deaf child complementing the work of a great musician. While endearing it won't ascribe any actual honor. However, Peter claims here that the Christians are actually able to do something they rarely could do before: ascribe honor to

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<sup>128</sup> Elliott, "Disgraced Yet Graced. The Gospel According to 1 Peter in the Key of Honor and Shame," 169. Maar waar malina

<sup>129</sup> Elliott, "Disgraced Yet Graced. The Gospel According to 1 Peter in the Key of Honor and Shame," 169.

<sup>130</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 33.

<sup>131</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 29.

someone. And this someone is the person at the very pinnacle of the social ladder: God Himself.

**2:10** *You who were once not a people but are now Gods people, you who once had not received mercy but now however have received mercy*

The result of this call into the light is the creation of something that did not exist before, the creation of a new people.<sup>132</sup> Once again, Peter alludes to the Hebrew Bible (Hos 2:25) to incorporate his audience into the covenantal relationship between YHWH and his people.

Here the quote is a Petrine conflation of material from Hosea and functions in order to contrast the believers' previous state to their current state in Christ, according to Campbell.<sup>133</sup> Just like the previous verses there is first a positing of the prior negative identity followed by a description of the new, current identity in Christ. First they were not a people, now they are.

### **Strategies distilled**

In what follows I will provide a more condense overview of the strategies of Petrine Umwertung that may be found within 1 Peter. In total I suggest that there are four strategies that the author employs to establish his revaluation of values. It is striking to see that when the strategies are placed alongside each other in a list that there seem to be a natural and logical flow to the strategies.

*Strategy 1: honor is anchored in something divergent from secular society, namely faith in Christ.*

I argued that the relationship with Christ, both that of believers and unbelievers, is one of the main foci of the passage. Jobes has pointed out that the stone metaphor is one that was already widespread in early Christianity and that it always referred to Christ.<sup>134</sup>

According to the argumentation of this passage, one's honor and shame are no longer determined by the traditional markers of wealth, status, name, class and gender, but rather through one's faith in Christ. From this follows that the Christians who were dishonored in the old system will gain honor and that those who shamed them will themselves be shamed. In this strategy of revaluation Peter tries to reverse the very basis and source of honor and shame itself by establishing a Christological foundation for honor and shame.

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<sup>132</sup> Achtemeier and Epp, *1 Peter*, 167.

<sup>133</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 97.

<sup>134</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 178–83.

*Strategy 2: a sense of active agency is instilled.*

The second revaluation strategy is that of attributing active agency to those who previously had none. I have examined Malina's discussion of honor and shame above and from this I concluded that shame and honor were in some sense a thing for the privileged, it was very much a top-down affair. While the lowest classes were certainly not excluded from the ubiquitous nature of honor and shame in their society, they rarely had any active agency in it. Shame was attributed to them from above and given their status they rarely had the chance to attribute or acquire any honor for themselves.

By basing the ebb and flow of honor on faith, Peter provides his readers with a form of agency in the honor-shame spectrum that was previously alien to them. Now through their active life of faith they will be honored, and they are even able to honor God Himself. Those who lack this faith will be brought to shame and stumbling according to Peter. Again the dimension of *Umwertung* is present here, the secular basis for agency is discarded and shamed while the Christian one is appraised.

*Strategy 3: honor through association.*

The third way in which the author establishes an *Umwertung* is by positively instilling the believers with a new sense of identity through their relationship with Christ. This was needed to remedy the negative identity-deconstruction that was attempted by society through their active slander and reviling of the Christians. While in 4:16 one reads that the designation as 'Christian' was one of 'naming and shaming' by their society, the author here establishes the association with Christ as the very highest badge of honor. The Christians are like Christ himself; they are living stones who are chosen and precious in the sight of God.

I pointed out Malina's argument that the very pinnacle of the honor-shame system was God himself and that to be attributed honor by the top of the pyramid was to receive the highest honor possible. This strategy is thus the active establishment of a positive identity in Christ in order to remedy the negative identity imposed on the believers by secular society.

*Strategy 4: incorporation into a bigger story, in this case the history of Israel.*

Identity is for a large part constructed by the stories we tell ourselves and the meaning that we attribute to these stories. Peter is using precisely this premise for his final strategy. Our passage is the most densely packed library of quotations from the Hebrew Bible that may be found within the New Testament. By continually referencing the story of Israel, the author tries to relate the believers to these stories and seeks to have them accept these stories as their

own. In this manner the Jesus followers would see themselves as being part of the covenant between Israel and YHWH, perhaps even being the new, true covenant. Wright has argued that this strategy was employed by other apostles such Paul as well.<sup>135</sup> The believers are part of the hardship of the Jews, they are in diaspora (1:1), and as such they are also part of the blessings that YHWH instills on his people. Or has Elliot has put it ‘they share in the fateful history of the Jews but also their unique honor’.<sup>136</sup>

Borges has argued that God uses covenants to (re-)establish our dignified status.<sup>137</sup> The Covenant of YHWH with Israel is itself an *Umwertung* in which a small, unimportant peoples is chosen to be Gods people, a light to the nations. Peter is here using the Hebrew Bible to turn the situation of diaspora about and once again seeks to establish a positive identity for his people. What was their stain of shame, their diaspora has now become a mark of honor they are a royal priesthood, a chosen nation, a people for God’s own possession who will be blessed with his mercy.

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<sup>135</sup> Wright, *Paul*, 94–100.

<sup>136</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 39.

<sup>137</sup> Borges, “‘Dignified,’” 79.



### 3.

## **Extrapolation to the Letter as a Whole**

In this final chapter I will argue that the four strategies found above may be seen all throughout the letter. I argue that the whole letter may thus be understood as a Petrine argument for an *Umwertung*. In what follows I will provide several examples of instances where the strategies are employed throughout the epistle. Due to the scope of this essay, I am not at liberty to study each of these passages in depth, I merely seek to provide an overview of where they occur.

*Strategy 1: honor is anchored in something divergent from secular society, namely faith in Christ.*

The believers are slandered and persecuted for their belief in Christ. This has caused them to suffer greatly and face social isolation. Though their belief in Christ is cause for this suffering by their secular surrounding, Peter argues all throughout the letter that their relationship with Christ is not a badge of shame but actually a mark of honor. Like the Christians, Christ too suffered unjustly ‘the righteous for the unrighteous’ (3:18), he was crucified and killed. However, Jesus was vindicated in his suffering for he was made ‘alive in the spirit’ (3:18). Peter states that through their faith and baptism in Christ, the believers may too participate in this vindication of their suffering (3:21-4:6). Though they suffer in the flesh like Christ did, they will live in the spirit like God Himself (4:6).

Peter thus revalues their condition of suffering which would have been perceived by the believers and society alike as a source of shame. He reverses this so that now the suffering is a way of partaking in Christ’s vindication and a source of joy and honor (4:13). Their being insulted is actually a blessing (4:14) which brings glory to God. The believers will be honored in their suffering through their faith in Christ while their enemies will be put to shame for their unbelief and gentile conduct. This idea is reminiscent of Jesus’ own words of *Umwertung* in Matthew 5:11-12 where he states ‘Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven’.

*Strategy 2: a sense of active agency is instilled.*

One of the most problematic parts of 1 Peter for the modern, Western reader is that concerning slavery and the behavior of women (2:18-36). These verses are often deemed oppressive, patriarchal and masochistic by modern readers. Slaves are to submit to their masters, women are to be modest and submissive to their husbands. To be sure these verses have often been used at later times to justify patriarchal behavior and legitimize slavery. However, in their original context they may have been more emancipatory. Malina warns us for judging ancient texts by modern standards and views on the role women and slaves play in contemporary society.<sup>138</sup>

As both Witherington and Malina point out, in antiquity women often were not able to contribute positively to the acquisition of honor.<sup>139</sup> Rather, they were merely able to negatively avoid the attribution of shame. By asking the women to behave in a modest and morally upright manner Peter is actually attributing them a sense of agency that would previously have been unavailable to them, to go even further they are capable to actively win their husbands over to faith in Christ (3:1). In taking this active role they themselves become honored agents of mission who are 'precious in the eyes of God' (3:4). This agency of the lowly is also mentioned in 4:11, where Peter states that the maligned and suffering Christians are able to proclaim the glory of God. Their suffering is actually a cause for joy for in their predicament the glory of God is revealed (4:13).

*Strategy 3: honor through association.*

The strategy of positive identity construction by basing it in Christ runs all throughout the Epistle of 1 Peter. In the very first verses we read that they are elect (*eklektos*) due to their obedience to Christ and their being sprinkled by His blood. Their being born again to a living hope (1:3) is due to Christ's resurrection. Their present status of being holy is due to Christ's own status of being holy, as we read in 1:16 'You shall be holy, for I am Holy' (NASB). Their precious and holy status in the eyes of God has led to them being ransomed (1:18-19). This transferred honor to the Christians for a ransom was only paid for someone who was so valuable that their immediate return must be ensured by paying the ransom fine. In this instance the ransom was not gold or silver but rather something infinitely more valuable, the blood of Christ Himself (1:18-19).

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<sup>138</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 28.

<sup>139</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 155; Malina, *The New Testament World*, 45.

This new status as holy and ransomed children of God leads to them fulfilling significant roles in his kingdom as we have read in our passage of 2:4-10. Through their relationship with Christ the Christians are a holy temple made of living stones in which they themselves serve as a royal priesthood. This priesthood is God's new people, his chosen nation that he seeks to call into his marvelous light (2:4-10). Their association with Christ would ultimately heal them of their wounds and suffering for 'by his wounds you have been healed' (1 Pet 2:24; Isa 53:6).

I have briefly shown here that the third strategy of Petrine Umwertung is a recurrent motif that runs throughout the letter. In many instances is honor transferred to the Christians due to their association with Christ.

*Strategy 4: incorporation into a bigger story, in this case the history of Israel.*

1 Pet 2:4-10 is not the only passage in the epistle where the believers are incorporated into a larger story, that of God with his covenant people. All throughout the letter Peter employs Hebrew Bible images and texts and applies them to these gentile Christians thus arguing that they belong to the same covenant family.

By calling the believers *paroikoi* and *parepidemoi* Peter is linking them to the forefather of the Israelites, their arch patriarch Abraham, who himself is described in Genesis 23:4 as a Πάροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος in the LXX. And similar to the Jewish people the believers are also part of the diaspora (1:1). As chosen exiles they are sprinkled by the blood of Christ, the ultimate sacrifice. The sprinkling of the blood is a reference to the practice of cleansing the people by sprinkling them in the blood of the sacrificed animal, thus making the profane holy (c.f. Lev1:5,11; 3:2,8,13).

Just as the Israelites did in Egypt (Ex 12:11) Peter asks the believers to 'gird up the loins' (1:13), to prepare for action. This is their calling since they are now part of the holy people of God (1:15-16) just like the Israelites were told to be holy because they were called to this life by a holy God (lev 11:44). As this holy people, constituted of wanderers and exiles they are now part of the new exodus to the promised land which is inaugurated by the perfect Passover lamb: Jesus Christ (1:17-21, Ex 12-15).

This transformation and incorporation into God's family is not achieved by their own merit but rather by the unfading word of God which is buried deep inside of the new believers just as it has been in the Israelites ( 1 Pet 1:13-25; Isa 40, Jer 31). This transformation has caused them to 'taste and see that the Lord is good' (1 Pet 2:3, Ps 34). Like Israel's affliction of exile was healed by Gods chosen servant, so will the Christians be healed of their own wounds

through Christ's suffering (1 Pet 2:24; Isa 53:6). Not only are the believers positively identified with the covenant people of God, their enemies are also described as being Babylon (5:13), which is also an image often employed to describe Israel's enemies in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Jer 50-51).

I have shown here that the use of Hebrew Bible imagery with the aim to incorporate the Christian into the Jewish story as a strategy of *Umwertung* is not limited to the passage we studied but in fact runs as a motif all throughout the letter.

### *Reason for Umwertung*

One issue yet to be considered is the reason that Peter is arguing for an *Umwertung*. His letter would have done little to better the concrete circumstances of his audience. Their slander likely continued and later Christians would even come to be physically persecuted. What was the author trying to accomplish? I believe that his main agenda was to console and empower his audience.

By showing that, like them, Christ too had suffered and endured slander, Peter may have been trying to console his audience and take away their shame, helping them to see their situation in a new light. Peter tries with his *Umwertung* to establish a more positive identity for his audience by likening their situation to that of Christ. This could have provided the Christians with a new sense of dignity and helped them to embrace their predicament rather than resist it.

Furthermore, perhaps Peter wanted to instill in his audience a sense of agency. He might have wanted to activate them and empower them to take control over their situation. The reason for this may well have been that Peter feared that the Christians would 'give in' and conform to the desires and behavior of secular society.

## Conclusion

In the concluding remarks of this essay I will summarize the work that has been done so far and ask the question of how we may interpret the outcome of the investigation that I have conducted above.

At the outset of this essay I suggested, following the works of many scholars of 1 Peter, that in order to come to a true understanding of the text we needed to both understand the context in which it was written and its rhetorical strategy. I conducted a study of the context and concluded that the letter may well have been written by the apostle Peter in the second half of the first century. He probably wrote the text to encourage a group of Christians whom he had met in Rome and had been forced to move as part of Rome's colonization program. These Christians exhibited behavior that was regarded as anti-social by secular society and publicly slandered them in order force them to conform to their view of what was natural behavior.

Peter wrote a letter to these Christians in which he sought to reinterpret their perilous situation and give a new meaning to it. In doing so he argued for a revaluation of values, an *Umwertung*. This places Peter in a broader tradition of thinkers and critics who had argued for their own kinds of *Umwertung* such as Diogenes, Jesus, Paul, Nietzsche and many other.

However, Peter had his very own way and strategy of establishing this *Umwertung* and employed several strategies to do so. Firstly, he addressed the very heart of where the Christians were being attacked: their honor. In the Greco-Roman world honor was based entirely in the opinion of others around you. By giving honor a radically new source and foundation in Christ Peter was seeking to cut the head right of the snake.

Secondly, he provided the maligned and socially isolated Christians with a very new commodity: the ability to display active agency in the attributing and gaining of honor. Where they had previously been forced to remain passive the Christians were told by Peter that they were in fact able to contribute positively to the acquisition of honor and negatively to the avoiding of shame by participating in God's covenant with his people.

Thirdly, Greco-Roman society was heavily hierarchical in structure. Those in the higher layers were able to attribute honor to those in the lower ranks in a patron relationship. The very pinnacle of the social hierarchy were the divine figures. Peter wants to make clear that by their association with God and his positive view of them the highest possible honor is bestowed upon them.

Finally, Peter argues all throughout his work that, though the Christians are not accepted by their secular surroundings, they are actually part of a new and larger story and a new

family: that of YHWH and his covenant people. Their exclusion by secular society is precisely what includes them in the family of God. Peter posits that if they share in Israel's state of diaspora, they may be sure to share in their final blessing and exaltation.

I have shown in the third chapter that these elements are not only present in the passage that was the focus of our detailed study. They in fact run as red threads throughout the entire Epistle.

How may we interpret this conclusion that the strategies of Petrine Umwertung are present all throughout the work? Borges has suggested that the very core of the reversal of values that Peter is arguing for has to do with honor. He writes 'Jesus' teaching restructured the basis of membership into God's people and disclosed the means of God's long-promised honor (Luke 15:11–32). Honorable behaviors in God's eyes are those most associated with cultural disgrace: the loss of wealth, family and reputation due to loyalty to Jesus'.<sup>140</sup> Campbell believes that this dimension of honor has not been adequately addresses in scholarship of 1 Peter.<sup>141</sup> Rather than honor being *a* dimension of the letter Campbell believes it to be *the* dimension of the work.

I concur with both Borges and Campbell on this matter and suggest that we must understand the strategies of Umwertung in 1 Peter to point towards the construction of a new, Christological honor code. Every society has an honor code, a code based on norms, values and ideas that regulates and prescribes which behavior is regarded as resulting in honor and which causes shame. What Peter is doing with his Umwertung strategies is seeking to shake the foundations of the old code and build again upon a new foundation: faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus is this new foundation because 'Jesus embodies true honor in his being, mediates divine honor in his actions, elaborates God's counter-cultural code of honor in his teaching and procures our honor in his death and resurrection'.<sup>142</sup>

The letter of 1 Peter speaks powerfully to all groups who find themselves surrounded by a society that slanders and discriminates against them. He seeks to asks them to rethink the traditional sources of honor and shame and provides a new, chistological honor code to replace the prior, oppressive system.

Further study could and should be done in order to fully develop this idea of 1 Peter as a Christological honor code. Furthermore, it would be interesting to see how these strategies of Umwertung presented in this essay can be operationalized in order to combat social

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<sup>140</sup> Borges, "'Dignified,'" 81.

<sup>141</sup> Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter*, 28.

<sup>142</sup> Borges, "'Dignified,'" 82.

discrimination of Christians today. There are many Christians in this world who find themselves surrounded by a hostile society and who would be benefitted by academical reflection on how the Petrine *Umwertung* strategies could be employed to emancipate contemporary Christian communities who form a discriminated minority in their society. In the Dutch context, in which many Christians find themselves ostracized by their secular peers, the epistle could be used as a source of hope and encouragement that aims to instill them with a sense of agency and worth.

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