

RECONCILIATION AND HOPE

*New Testament Essays on
Atonement and Eschatology*

presented to

L. L. Morris on his 60th Birthday

edited by

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WILLIAM B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Copyright © 1974, The Paternoster Press Ltd
First American edition, July 1974, published by arrangement with
The Paternoster Press, Exeter, England

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

Reconciliation and hope.

CONTENTS: Hubbard, D. A. Leon Lamb Morris: an appreciation.—Williams, D. Select bibliography of L. L. Morris (p. 15-)—Reconciliation: Gerhards-son, B. Sacrificial service and atonement in the Gospel of Matthew. [etc.]

1. Bible. N. T.—Addresses, essays, lectures.
2. Morris, Leon. 3. Morris, Leon—Bibliography.
I. Banks, Robert J., ed. II. Morris, Leon.

BS2395.R4 234 74-5370
ISBN 0-8028-3349-3

Printed in Great Britain

CHAPTER XVII

“SO THAT YOUR FAITH MAY ALSO BE
YOUR HOPE IN GOD”

(I PETER 1:21)¹

W. J. DALTON

THIS ARTICLE, BY WAY OF GENERAL INTRODUCTION, WILL FIRST discuss more recent scholarly writing on the authorship of I Peter. It will then be concerned with the understanding of one passage in this letter, 1:3-25. The structural analysis of this text will help to bring out its message of hope, which is happily summed up, it would seem, in the title of the article.

I

It is good to see in recent times² a continuing interest in what Selwyn called “a microcosm of Christian faith and duty”.³ In the English language alone, we have the work of Bo Reicke,⁴ A. R. C. Leaney,⁵ J. N. D. Kelly⁶ and E. Best,⁷ while F. W. Beare’s original commentary of 1945 has been represented in its third edition.⁸ A notable addition to the number of French commentaries is that of C. Spicq.⁹ Among the more recent articles of special note, two may be mentioned, one by W. Trilling, “Zum Petrusamt im Neuen Testament: Traditionsgeschichtliche Überlegungen anhand von Matthäus, 1 Petrus und Johannes,”¹⁰ and the other by M.-A. Chevallier, “1 Pierre 1/1 à 2-10: Structure littéraire et conséquences exégétiques.”¹¹

All these writers have something to say about the problem of the authorship of I Peter. Scholarly opinion has moved strongly in favour of

¹ This translation will be justified later in the course of the article.

² Without wishing to be exhaustive and, no doubt, with regrettable omissions, this brief review begins from the time of my own work on I Peter, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits* (Rome, 1965).

³ *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London, 1947), p. 1.

⁴ *The Epistles of James, Peter and Jude* (New York, 1964).

⁵ *The Letters of Peter and Jude* (Cambridge, 1967).

⁶ *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (New York, 1969).

⁷ *I Peter* (London, 1971).

⁸ *The First Epistle of Peter* (Oxford, 1970).

⁹ *Les Épîtres de saint Pierre* (Paris, 1966).

¹⁰ ThQ 151 (1971), pp. 110-33.

¹¹ RHPR 51 (1971), pp. 129-42.

understanding the letter as a pseudepigraphical work. Beare can repeat in the third edition of his commentary in 1970: “Recent Continental writers, except for the Roman Catholics, seldom take the argument for authenticity – with or without the collaboration of Silvanus – at all seriously”.¹ But opinion is also changing among Roman Catholics. As long ago as 1961, in the first edition of Schelkle’s work, the question was left an open one.² In 1971, W. Trilling offers new arguments against authenticity and finds the Silvanus hypothesis unsatisfactory.³ Can we therefore regard the question as closed? At least one strongly dissentient voice is heard in the person of C. Spicq, an exegete of no mean reputation. He maintains that the apostle Peter wrote the letter personally.⁴

Certainly some of the arguments against Petrine authenticity are rather tenuous. A reference to the term ἀγράμματος used of Peter in Acts 4:13 is not decisive. First of all, it is by no means sure that this is an indication that Peter “could neither read nor write his own native tongue (Aramaic).”⁵ Further we may ask whether, in fact, it fits in with the picture of Peter which Luke provides in the early chapters of Acts: Peter is hardly presented as an illiterate fisherman.

One would have to do a lot more work on the Galilean background of Peter, the influence of Greek in this area, on Peter’s social standing, his probable education, the influence of the synagogue, and on the level of education which Jesus, who was called “Rabbi”, shared with his disciples, before one could with confidence dismiss Peter as a possible author of the first letter which goes under his name.

Actually we know more about the linguistic situation in Palestine in the time of the New Testament than would appear in most commentaries on I Peter. Josephus is a good example of what was possible at that time, an example which might well be meditated upon by scholars who are so quick to turn to pseudepigraphy as a solution. Born about A.D. 38 at Jerusalem, he was educated in the Jewish law and actually spent three years in the wilderness as a member of an ascetical group. Only at the age of twenty-six did he go to Rome. It was this Josephus who first wrote *The Jewish War* in Aramaic, and then, with some assistance, translated this work into the Greek version which we now have, a version which is remarkably free from semitisms. Surprising but true! Of course, there is no strict parallel here to a biblical work, and we do have the fact that the writer of I Peter cites from the LXX version of the Old Testament. But can we be so sure that, in the more Hellenized Galilee, the LXX was not in use among moderately educated Jews?⁶

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 216.

² *Die Petrusbriefe. Der Judasbrief* (Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1964), pp. 11–15.

³ *Art. cit.*, pp. 120–125.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 21–26.

⁵ Beare, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁶ See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, X, pp. 251–65. For the use of Greek at Jerusalem in the first

Further, it is clear from the writings of Paul (quite apart from the evidence of Acts) that Paul could "dialogue" with Peter. Despite the angry tone of Galatians, Paul puts Peter side by side with himself: "I had been entrusted with the gospel for Gentiles, as surely as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for Jews" (Gal. 2:8). We know a good deal about the intellectual capacity and education of Paul. It is possible that we could learn something about Peter too from this association.¹

What complicates the issue is that competent scholars do not even agree on the level of 1 Peter's Greek style. C. Spicq, whose earlier work on Hebrews² marks him as one of the finest modern commentators in this area, strongly denies that the Greek of 1 Peter can be compared with that of Hebrews. He agrees with A. Charue: "L'allure générale est plutôt embarrassée et conventionnelle, comme il arrive aux auteurs qui n'ont pas le style coulant ou qui n'ont pas la maîtrise d'une langue."³ On the other hand, Chevallier believes that his investigations into the structure of 1 Peter indicate quite the contrary, thus providing a new argument against the authorship of Peter.⁴

Many scholars point to the heavy dependence of 1 Peter on the writings of Paul (or those associated with Paul) and so conclude that Peter could not have been its author. This is often done by listing ideas and expressions which are common to both. It is likely enough that Paul did not borrow from 1 Peter, but until we can sift out with some confidence what is specifically Pauline in the writings of Paul and what he shared with the Christian world of his time, we have really no clear idea of what the writer of 1 Peter actually borrowed from Paul.

¹ There is ample evidence to show that Galilee was far more influenced by Hellenism than Jerusalem. We know that Peter and Andrew were commercial fishermen associated with Zebedee, who had his "hired men." Since fish provided the main industry of the region, we have every reason to believe that this was a prosperous group with corresponding possibilities of education. We might allow some force to Peter's words: "We here have left everything to become your followers" (Mk. 10:28 par.). Nor should we underrate the organization and education associated with the synagogue in which, we may reasonably suppose, Peter and his companions, as devout Jews, fulfilled their responsibilities (See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, XV, pp. 578-83). For all this, the conclusion of Spicq may be too absolute: "Par conséquent, la pseudo-ignorance du grec par Pierre ne devrait plus figurer dans les discussions sur l'authenticité de *la Petri*" (*op. cit.*, p. 23). It remains to be seen whether, in fact, the work which Chevallier has begun on the literary structure of 1 Peter establishes the fact that the author was a highly sophisticated writer.

² *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, Vols. 1, 2 (Paris, 1952 f.).

³ *Les Épîtres Catholiques* (Paris, 1938), p. 441.

⁴ *Art. cit.*, p. 138.

century B.C., see K. Galling, *RGG*³, V, 24. Further evidence for the use of Greek in the last decades of the first century A.D. has appeared in the findings at Murabba'at. See Spicq, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-23, and also R. H. Gundry, "The Language Milieu of First-Century Palestine", *JBL* 83 (1964), pp. 404-408.

The Letter of James may provide a useful parallel to 1 Peter. F. Mussner, in *Der Jakobusbrief* (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 1-42, has taken up and answered the main arguments against the authorship of James, "the brother of the Lord". Yet the Greek of this letter is generally admitted to be good. James came from the same Palestinian background as Peter.

Best¹ has endeavoured to give a more balanced view of 1 Peter's apparent dependence on Romans and Ephesians, but even here it is difficult to assess such evidence, since criteria for firm conclusions are more easily supposed than established.

Selwyn gave his authority to the view that the Silvanus of Acts, who was also Paul's companion, composed 1 Peter under the authority of Peter himself. This view continues to be proposed with various degrees of approval,² but has been strongly, even sharply attacked by Beare.³ It would still seem to be a hypothesis worth considering. One advantage that Silvanus could have over Peter himself in claiming credit for the composition of 1 Peter is the fact that he was associated with Paul in his evangelizing of Hellenistic towns and that, as delegate of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), he took its decrees to the Gentile churches. Thus one might better account for the Hellenistic style of the letter (if one thought this necessary). The text of 1 Pet. 5:12 is open to this meaning, but by no means imposes it. On the other hand, Silvanus is not associated with Peter at the beginning of the letter (as he is with Paul in 1 and 2 Thess.), and, even in the case of 1 and 2 Thess., it is extremely doubtful if he had any part in their composition.⁴ If Peter did need help in the composition of 1 Peter, then it might be better not to press the claim of Silvanus, but to leave this unknown cooperator in the obscurity of history.

Of course, the whole question is associated with the probable date of the letter. Beare asserts firmly that “the Epistle cannot be attributed to the time of Nero”.⁵ Yet the primitive theology of the letter,⁶ the primitive church order, the impression that the recipients of the letter are first-generation Christians, the unspecified nature of the persecution facing them, all allow and even point to an early date. If indeed the letter does belong to the Neronian period, then it must have come from Peter, whether he personally composed it or not.⁷

So, despite the vigorous efforts to solve this problem once and for all, and despite the fluctuations of exegetical fashion, one is still justified in asking: How cultivated is the Greek of the letter?; How strong is the evidence that it was composed at a later date?; To what degree is it dependent upon other New Testament writings? And behind these questions we have a further one: What was the education and talent of

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 32-36.

² It is interesting to note that Bo Reicke, writing in 1964, defends the view that Silvanus composed the letter under the general direction of Peter (*op. cit.*, pp. 69-71). Kelly in 1969, inclines to an early date and to general Petrine authorship, but requires a more skilled Greek writer than Peter to explain the composition of the letter (*op. cit.*, pp. 30-33).

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 212-216.

⁴ See B. Rigaux, *Saint Paul: Les Épîtres aux Thessaloniens* (Paris, 1956), p. 107.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁶ Note the vast difference between the eschatological attitude of 1 Peter and that of 2 Peter, which can be accepted as a later pseudepigraphical work.

⁷ To my mind, the best and most balanced discussion of this whole question is to be found in the introduction of Kelly's commentary, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-33.

Peter himself? And, in the complications of the arguments for and against, it might be good to remember that the letter does start: "From Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ . . ." In the circumstances, it seems reasonable to accept the authorship of Peter as a working hypothesis until better evidence emerges to prove the contrary.¹

II

Before we consider in some detail the structure of the section 1:3-25, it would be good to situate it in the context of the whole letter. In an earlier work, I have already argued for the literary unity of 1 Peter.² There is no need to discuss once more the various attempts to identify the letter as substantially a baptismal homily or liturgy. Actually, there is only one unmistakable reference to baptism in the whole letter, 3:21-22. Here the picture of baptism is given in terms which are legal in tone: "the pledge to God of a good conscience."³

It does not seem at all evident that, wherever in the letter there is reference to a "new birth" (1:3, 23; 2:2), baptism is directly referred to. The author himself explains this new birth in 1:23: "You have been born anew, not from corruptible seed but from incorruptible, through God's living and abiding word". And this is further explained in 1:24-25: the "word of God" which "abides for ever" brings the believing Christian to share in God's own eternal life (as opposed to the "corruptible seed" of 1:21); and "this word⁴ is the good news which has been preached to you".⁵

If the letter is not primarily concerned with baptism can it be regarded as a message of Christian hope?⁶ This description does justice to the spirit of the letter: it is addressed to Christians facing persecution as a message which exhorts and testifies that "this is the true grace of God" (5:12).

Persecution and hope go together,⁷ and these ideas dominate the whole letter. The tone is set in the opening address: "To God's scattered people who lodge for a while in Pontus . . ." They are God's pilgrim people who are on the way, in hope, to their real homeland. It is in this context

¹ This opinion is not presented from any confessional point of view: there are obviously canonical books of Scripture which are pseudepigraphical. It is a question of critical judgment. It is also a view which is excluded by a whole exegetical school. The representative work of Feine-Behm-Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Heidelberg, 1969), p. 309, provides the simple comment: "I Pt. ist darum zweifellos eine pseudonyme Schrift."

² *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits* (Rome, 1965) pp. 72-83.

³ See Kelly, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-163.

⁴ In the text *ῥῆμα* is used, not *λόγος* in fidelity to the LXX translation.

⁵ See Chevallier, *art. cit.*, pp. 139-140.

⁶ Beare, *op. cit.*, p. 56. "The impression, once widely held, that the writer is pre-eminently the 'Apostle of Hope', as if Hope received a disproportionate attention in this Epistle as compared with the rest of the New Testament, is quite false."

⁷ Note that the rise of apocalyptic in Judaism was the response of hope in the face of severe persecution. We find a similar Christian response in the Book of Revelation.

that we find passages on the Christian vocation (1:3 – 2:10) and on the Christian life (2:11 – 3:12). Here a verse-by-verse exegesis does not do justice to the spirit and purpose of the letter. It is to be read as a living whole.

In this total setting of the letter, let us look at 1:3–25. After the opening verses (which announce the three themes of God’s foreknowledge, the Spirit’s sanctification, and obedience to Jesus Christ together with the sprinkling of his blood), the first large section of the letter is 1:3 – 2:10, which, in the context of persecution and hope, depicts, first of all, the nobility of the Christian vocation (1:3–25) and then its responsibilities in Christian living (2:1–10).¹

Looking further at 1:3–25, we see that it too falls into two parts, 1:3–12, which is a doctrinal affirmation, and 1:13–25, which is an exhortation based on this, the whole passage being bound together by the inclusion: *ἀναγεννήσας* . . . *ζῶσαν* . . . *ἄφθαρτον* (1:3–4), *ἀναγεγεννημένοι* . . . *ἄφθάρτου* . . . *ζώντος* (1:23). In addition, both these sections begin with similar words, *ἐλπίδα* (1:3) and *ἐλπίζατε* (1:13) and end with similar words *ἀνηγγέλη*, *εὐαγγελισαμένων* (1:12) and *εὐαγγελισθέν* (1:25). They are bound together by the link-words *ἀπεκαλύφθη* . . . *ἐπιθυμοῦσιν* (1:12) and *ἀποκαλύψει* . . . *ἐπιθυμίαις* (1:13, 14).

When we consider again the two sections 1:3–12 and 1:13–25, we find, in each case, that there is some form of inclusion indicating the unity of each section. Thus the *οὐρανοῖς* of 1:4 is echoed by the *οὐρανοῦ* of 1:12, while there is at least a verbal correspondence between the passive participles preceded by *ἀνα-* in 1:13 (*ἀναζωσάμενοι*) and in 1:23 (*ἀναγεγεννημένοι*).

In both sections, there is a remarkable community of cognate words: *πίστις-πιστός-πιστεύω* (1:5, 7, 8, 9 and 1:12) twice; *ἔσχατος* (1:5 and 1:20); *τιμή-πολυτίμος-τίμος* (1:7, twice, and 1:19); *χρυσίον* (1:7 and 1:18); *ἀγαπάω* (1:8 and 1:22); *ψυχαί* (1:9 and 1:22).² Note also that the two sections are bound together by the chiasmic use of expressions for time: 1:5 (*καιρὸς ἔσχατος*), 1:11 (*καιρὸς*), 1:17 (*χρόνος*), 1:20 (*ἐπ’ ἔσχατον τῶν χρόνων*).

Let us look now at the development of the first section (1:3–12). We find that it is one long sentence which flows along by the multiplication of relative clauses beginning at 1:6, 8, 10, 12.³ We have a blessing in 1:3–5,

¹ Justification of this division of the text is to be found in the writer’s earlier work, pp. 72–83. This discussion of the plan of 1 Peter was a mere beginning, based largely on the work of A. Vanhoye, *La structure littéraire de l’Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris, 1963). In the article of Chevallier already referred to, this analysis is carried much further. The writer gratefully uses this research in what follows.

² Chevallier (*art. cit.*, p. 133) adds two corresponding groups of words which begin with the following prefixes: *ἀνα-* (1:3, twice, and 1:13, 15, 17, 18, 23); *ἀ-* or *ἀν-* (1:4, three times; 1:8, and 1:14, 17, 19, 22, 23); *προ-* (1:11 and 1:20); *ἐξ-* (1:10, twice and 1:24).

³ Note that the combination *πίστεως* . . . *σωτήριαν* of 1:5 is echoed by exactly the same words (though in different grammatical arrangement) at the end of 1:9.

followed by a statement giving grounds for this blessing (1:6-9). The next sentence (1:10-12) is connected with 1:6-9 by the link-word, *σωτηρία*, and gives further grounds for the blessing with which the whole section begins. It is of interest to note that the three divisions of 1:3-12 have each a word derived from ἀποκαλύπτω: ἀποκαλυφθῆναι (1:5), ἀποκαλύψει (1:7), ἀπεκαλύφθη (1:12).

We come now to the passage which is the second section (1:13-25) of the total text we are considering (1:3-25). This is an exhortation sharply marked off from the preceding passage by *διό*. This exhortation is carried along by the four imperatives, ἐλπίζατε (1:13), γενήθητε (1:15), ἀναστράφητε (1:17), ἀγαπήσατε (1:22); and the section falls naturally into the four divisions indicated by these words. As usual, in keeping with the general style of 1 Peter, there is a considerable repetition of words,¹ but probably nothing specific about the structure of the passage can be derived from this. However the repetition of one word, in its noun and verb forms, stresses, by its meaning, the exhortative nature of the passage: ἀναστροφῆ (1:15), ἀναστράφητε (1:17, where it is one of the key imperatives of the whole section), ἀναστροφῆς (1:18).²

In the above analysis of 1:3-25, it is very difficult indeed to be sure of what is really significant in the over-all pattern of words. It is, above all, the cumulative effect of many different elements of pattern and arrangement which is impressive.

Two conclusions come to mind. First, to be fruitful, such a method should go hand in hand with an examination of the meaning and content of the passage. We have here a sort of control which could prevent the discussion of structure ending up in a sterile and illusory playing with words.³ Secondly, it would seem to this writer to be an extremely difficult task to determine the difference between the structure resulting from conscious art and the structure which emerges spontaneously when a writer of some imagination and intelligence applies himself with feeling to develop some theme. It would be instructive, for example, to see the interplay of inclusions, link-words, announcement of themes, verbal echoes in a passage written spontaneously by an imaginative but untutored writer. In other words, what are the criteria which would establish

¹ 1:15, καλέσαντα, 1:17, ἐπικαλεῖσθε; 1:14, 22, ὑπακοή; 1:15, 16, ἅγιος, 1:22, ἡγνικότες; 1:21, πιστούς-πίστιν; 1:17, 20, χρόνος; 1:18, φθαρτοῖς, 1:23, φθαρτῆς-ἀφθάρτου; 1:21, 24, δόξα.

² Chevallier, *art. cit.*, pp. 136-37, continues his analysis of 2:1-10, which at the moment does not concern us.

³ In the attempt of the present writer to present a plan for 1 Peter (*op. cit.*, pp. 72-83), elements of literary structure as well as other indications of meaning were combined. It is true that in the middle section of the letter there seem to be fewer verbal indications of structure, but these few, taken with other indications, have their own value. Thus, 2:11-3:12, with the emphatic ἀγαπητοί at the beginning and with the concluding τὸ δὲ τέλος of 3:8 followed by an extensive scriptural citation is clearly a unit. The last section, it is admitted, presents some difficulties, particularly the precise place of 4:7-11, but at least it is clear that the doxology of 4:11 marks the end of a section and that 4:12-5:11 is a clearly defined unit.

such conscious art, the sort of “art consommée” which Chevallier finds in 1 Peter 1:1-2:10? Here we move in a very subjective order, where, at least up to the present moment, a great deal of the evidence is tentative and hypothetical.¹

III

Let us now consider the eschatological meaning of our text, 1:3-25. In this treatment we will attempt to take into account not merely the structure of the passage discussed above, but the ideas which appear in the text. Thus we hope to build up some impression of what the author was trying to say.

As we have seen, this passage is a unit, divided into two sections (1:3-12; 1:13-25), the whole being bound together in various ways, and, in particular, by the chiasmic use of expressions for time (1:5, 11, 17, 20), where the play between the time of this earthly life and the last times provides an eschatological setting. This is in keeping with the description of the readers in the opening address: “God’s scattered people settled temporarily in Pontus . . .” We are led to expect the pilgrim themes of persecution and hope.

Nor have we long to wait. In the blessing with which the body of the letter and the first section of our text begin, this note is heard loudly and clearly: *εἰς ἐλπίδα ζῶσαν*. It comes out with the same insistence in the first emphatic imperative of the second section, *ἐλπίζατε* (1:13) and in the eschatological climax at the end of 1:21. As the first section of our text (1:3-12) develops, this theme is taken up in the idea of “an inheritance kept for you in heaven” (1:4), which recalls the promises of the Old Testament: “the land which the Lord will give you for an inheritance” (Deut. 15:4; 19:10). The thought then turns to the readers of the letter themselves. While their inheritance is in heaven, they are on earth, but they, in turn, are being kept safe “for a salvation which is ready to be revealed in the end-time” (1:5).

After the blessing of 1:3-5, the first phrase of the new development is *ἐν ᾧ ἀγαλλιάσθε*, where the exultation is that of eschatological joy.² This little section, 1:6-9, powerfully presents the contrast between the inevitable present distress of Christians, which for a short time will try their faith, and the glory to come at the revelation of Jesus Christ. This is

¹ For this reason, further study of the literary structure of 1 Peter may indeed prove to be an argument against Petrine authorship, but the two ends of the comparison, Peter’s ability and the conscious art of the writer, would seem, as yet, too vaguely discerned to constitute a convincing proof.

² See Kelly, *op. cit.*, p. 53: “The verb ‘exult’ (*agallasthai*) belongs to the vocabulary of the LXX and NT, in both often having a strongly eschatological flavour; it connotes the joy of the created order, and especially of God’s chosen people, when He is revealed as Judge and Saviour.” The verb is repeated in 1:8.

the condition of the pilgrim community: it does not reach its goal *in spite of* suffering, but it is precisely *through* its suffering that it is able to meet and know its crucified Lord and to be recognized by him at his final coming. In the writer's image, pure gold can only be produced and recognized when it emerges from the fire. In 1:8-9, the writer turns to the Christians' present life of faith and love, but the note of hope remains strong. Although they do not see the Lord, they exult with eschatological joy. Already they receive "the end of the faith, the salvation of souls."¹ Here future glory and the present life of faith are bound together. Christian experience is not sheer waiting in a void: it possesses already, in the obscurity of hope, what it will later fully possess in the splendour of the Lord's revelation.

The next small section, 1:10-12, looks back to the searching of the Old Testament prophets² into the coming grace of God. Here, of course, the Old Testament is seen through Christian eyes. "The Spirit of Christ" (understood as the pre-existent Christ) guided the prophets to discover something of his future sufferings and resurrection; but in this they were merely servants of future Christian believers, in whose time these events were to be proclaimed by the ministers of the gospel.³ These mysteries of the Christian faith stand at the very centre of the created universe: "on them the angels look down with rapt attention".³

The theme of hope still runs through 1:10-12, only this time it is transposed into the past. God's plan in Christ is seen as a vast movement, beginning with "the Spirit of Christ" in the Old Testament, realized then in two stages, the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and his final coming. So closely are the two stages bound together that the same terms can be used of both of them: *σωτηρία* (1:5, 9), *ἀποκαλύπτω* (1:5, 12). We have already seen above the structural importance of these two words in the thought of 1:3-12.

The second section (1:13-25) of our text is an exhortation flowing from the statements of the first section (1:3-12). We would naturally expect such an exhortation to be directed to the present needs of the community, yet the emphasis remains firmly on hope.

The section begins: "Gird up therefore the loins of your mind." While the expression is a common one denoting readiness for action, in the context it probably does recall the Exodus event, in which the people of Israel eat the Passover with loins girded at the beginning of their long pilgrim experience. As we have seen, this section is punctuated by emphatic imperatives, the first of which is *ἐλπίσατε*, "take on an attitude of

¹ Note the special anthropology of the writer, so unlike that of Paul. There is, of course, no reference to the Greek soul/body distinction.

² Selwyn (*op. cit.*, p. 134) includes the prophets of the Christian community.

³ See Selwyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-39; Spicq, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58. A more common interpretation of modern commentators sees in this text the failure of the angels to have a glimpse of the realities of Christian faith.

hope” (1:13).¹ What they have to hope for is the grace “that is coming to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ”. Here *χάρις*, normally used of present Christian life,² describes the final fulfilment. The attitude of hope requires that they be sober (*νήφοντες*). This injunction is part of regular New Testament eschatological exhortation.³

The next development centres around the following imperative, *καὶ αὐτοὶ ἅγιοι . . . γενήθητε* (1:15), but this holiness is not presented statically: it is a movement from the passions of their past ignorance in response to the call of a holy God (1:14-15).

In the next small section (1:17-21), the key word is the imperative *ἀναστράφητε* (1:17). Here we see that this holiness belongs to a people who are, at the moment, passing through the time of their “temporary stay”, an expression which recalls the opening description of the letter’s readers and anticipates the emphatic beginning of the next major section: “Beloved, I exhort you as pilgrims and immigrants to abstain from the fleshly lusts that war against the soul” (2:11). Thus, while God’s holiness is eternal, the holiness to which he calls his people must be worked out in the struggle of a pilgrim existence.

The God whom they call “Father” is a God who judges according to each man’s works (1:17). While the participle *κρίνων* is present, here it is used as an attribute of God. The reference is not to God’s judgements in this earthly life, but, as is usual in the New Testament, to his final judgement. So the Christian, in his life of obedience and holiness looks forward with filial fear to the end.

The participle *εἰδότες* (1:18) gives further ground for obedience to this exhortation by recalling traditional catechetical teaching. The thought goes back to the liberation wrought through the blood of Christ, who in God’s eternal plan was made manifest at the crucial stage in human history, *ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν χρόνων*. This important phrase recalls the *καιρῷ ἐσχάτῳ* of 1:5 and with other expressions of time in 1:11 and 1:17 helps to structure the whole text of 1:3-25. It covers in its meaning the whole span, a short one in the thought of 1 Peter, between the earthly life of Jesus and his last coming, and so the mind of the reader is once more turned to the final end.

With the *δι’ ὑμᾶς* at the end of 1:20, the writer moves from the ready-made catechetical section introduced by *εἰδότες* (1:18) to a more personal note. All that God has done in Christ is for them, the readers, who are faithful⁴ to the God who raised Jesus from the dead and gave him glory. The term *δόξα* is a favourite one of 1 Peter, occurring altogether ten times.

¹ The sharpness of these imperatives is lost in most English translations, which, naturally enough, translate the accompanying participles also as imperatives.

² E.g., 1 Pet. 1:2, 10; 2:19; 3:7; 4:10; 5:10, 12.

³ 1 Pet. 4:7; 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:6, 8; 2 Tim. 4:5.

⁴ The reading *πιστούς* is to be preferred to *πιστεύοντας* both as *lectio difficilior* and as better attested.

While it often refers to the resurrection of Christ (1:11, 21; 4:13; 5:1), it refers also to the final glory of the Christian (1:7; 5:4); and, in fact, the two are expressly linked in 5:1, where the writer speaks of himself as "a partaker in the glory which is going to be revealed". Thus the reference to "glory" in 1:21 prepares the reader for the final stage of this section, which sums up all that has gone before: "so that your faith may also be your hope in God".

It is difficult to know whether the *ὥστε* of this clause expresses a consequence or an intention.¹ Much depends on the importance given to the phrase. If it is regarded as an emphatic summing up of the whole earlier section, then it should be seen to share the exhortative nature of the passage and so express an intention. If, on the contrary, it is closely united to and limited by the immediate context, merely a development of the preceding *πιστούς*, then one would more naturally understand it as a consequence.

Structurally, the phrase comes at the end of a development. The next section, 1:22-25, is governed by the imperative *ἀγαπήσατε* and, in any case, is marked off from the preceding section by the absence of any connecting particle. As we have seen, the whole of the passage we are considering (1:3-25) is divided into two larger sections (1:3-12 and 1:13-25). We have already indicated how the text, so far, is dominated by hope and eschatological expectation. But, apart from this, we have the express mention of hope at key points: at the beginning of the whole passage, *εἰς ἐλπίδα ζώσαν* (1:3) and at the beginning of the second section, *τελειῶς ἐλπίζατε* (1:13). We are thus invited to see in the *ἐλπίδα* of 1:21 a recall and a summing up of all that has gone before. In this way, the *ὥστε* can best be understood as introducing an intention: "so that your faith may also be your hope in God".

It must be admitted that there is some tension in the structure. This, to my mind, really presents no difficulty, but provides rather a warning against an understanding of structure which is too mechanical. It is true, as we have seen earlier, that there is good reason for considering 1:13-25 as a unit in the greater whole of 1:3-25. This, however, does not mean that the four small sections which make up 1:3-25 are bound to one another with equal closeness. We have already noted the absence of any connecting particle at the beginning of 1:22. This, of itself, indicates a break in thought. But, in addition, in the small section 1:22-25, the writer is consciously or unconsciously influenced by the already traditional triad of faith, hope and love. He has already shown this at the beginning of the letter, where he has introduced them in the order of hope (1:3), faith (1:5) and love (1:8). Thus, although the thought of hope rather than that of love dominates all that precedes, it is natural that the passage should

¹ For a full treatment, see Selwyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-48.

respect the traditional order and end with love. Hence the dominant imperative *ἀγαπήσατε* in the final sub-section, 1:22-25.¹

It seems reasonable, then, to see in the *ὥστε* clause at the end of 1:21 a sort of climax to the whole passage. We start with a strong reference to hope in 1:3. The section, 1:3-12, develops along eschatological lines, but with references to faith in 1:5, 7, 8, 9. Another strong reference to hope in 1:13 sets the tone for the section, 1:13-21 (with 1:22-25 as a more loosely connected development). Again there is reference to faith, in 1:21. One is justified, then, in attaching great importance to the bringing together of faith and hope at this precise point in the text.

But now the question must be asked *how* we are to bring them together. The translation proposed in the title of this article takes *ἐλπίδα* as a predicate after the infinitive. This is against the more common view of translators and commentators, but is supported, among others, by R. Bultmann,² J. Moffatt,³ R. Leconte.⁴ Beare tends to favour it.⁵

There is no doubt that the sentence itself is grammatically open to both meanings: “so that your faith and your hope may be directed to God” or “so that your faith may also be your hope in God”. The absence of the article before *ἐλπίδα*, together with the insertion of *ὑμῶν* after *πίστιν* would seem to favour slightly the second meaning, but certainly cannot be said to decide the issue. Again, in the third century Bodmer Papyrus VIII (P⁷²), the article is repeated before *ἐλπίδα*, thus indicating that at this early date the former of the two meanings above was followed. But this papyrus shows an inclination to avoid the *lectio difficilior*. In the very same verse it reads *πιστεύοντας* which can best be understood as a faulty reading for the more difficult *πιστούς*. Similarly, the addition of the article before *ἐλπίδα* may well show that the scribe was unhappy with the unusual meaning (the second indicated above) which flowed from the original text and so adapted it to produce an acceptable, if pedestrian, result.

A number of commentators see some sort of climax in 1:21 and put the stress on *εἰς θεόν*. Yet this would be an extremely lame climax, since we find the phrase *πιστοὺς εἰς θεόν* a few words before. As we have seen, in the greater context of 1:13-21, the emphasis falls strongly on *ἐλπίδα*. And even in the more immediate context of 1:21, the thought moves from the faith of the readers to the resurrection and glorification of Jesus, which is associated, as we have seen, with the Christian's own hope of glory. Thus the thought of the writer could be expressed: “Yes, you are faithful to God, but, in the light of all that I have said from the beginning of this letter, in the light of the glory of Jesus which you are to share, this faith

¹ This break in the text is felt by a number of translators, who start a new paragraph at 1:22, e.g., NEB, *JerB*, Beare, *op. cit.*

² *TWNT*, VI, pp. 208-11.

³ *The General Epistles* (London, 1928).

⁴ *Les Épitres catholiques* (Paris, 1953).

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 104.

of yours must pass over into hope." Thus faith in God, implied in *πιστοῦς εἰς θεόν*, is taken up again in *την πίστιν ὑμῶν*, not in a lame repetition but in a new development which worthily sums up the whole passage.

Thus the text can grammatically bear this meaning; the context indicates it. Is it too strange to be adopted? It is true that faith and hope overlap in the thought of 1 Peter and, for that matter, in the New Testament generally; but they are not synonyms. In fact, the thought of our text is not so different from that of Rom. 15:13: "May the God of hope fill you in your believing with all joy and peace, so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may overflow with hope."

I suggest that the author of 1 Peter be credited with a piece of effective writing, which reaches a fine climax in the composition of 1:21. Let us grant him a turn of phrase which is mildly original.¹

We have still to deal with the last small section (1:22-25) of our text. At first sight, it seems to contribute little to its general eschatological theme. After the climax of 1:21, it fills in the traditional picture of Christian life by exhorting the readers to love. The earlier themes of holiness, obedience (1:22) and re-birth (1:23) are recalled, while the "corruptible seed" of 1:23 re-echoes the "corruptible things" of 1:18. The last phrase, *τὸ ῥῆμα τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν εἰς ὑμᾶς*, recalls the *εὐαγγελισαμένων* of 1:12. This concentration of themes previously mentioned, together with the massive scriptural citation, suitably finishes the whole section, 1:3-25.

Yet, if this whole passage is read sensitively, some correspondence will be seen between the re-birth "to a living hope . . . to an inheritance which is incorruptible" (1:3-4) and the re-birth "not from corruptible seed but from incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God" (1:23). In the first case, the inheritance in heaven is incorruptible; in the second case the seed is incorruptible, but the very terms, "re-born" and "seed", imply growth and development. The incorruptible seed, received through the proclamation of the gospel, is a beginning which leads to a full sharing of God's life, which, like his word, is abiding. This idea is expressly formulated at the beginning of the section, 2:1-10, which, as we have seen, is structurally linked with 1:3-25: "As new-born babes, crave the un-deceitful milk of the word, so that by it you may grow up to salvation" (2:2). Thus the love which is commended in 1:22-25 shows itself in a new life which grows from birth towards God. Set in this passing world, which withers away like grass, it is the life of Christian hope.

¹ He can be original; 3:19-21 is certainly a very original text.