

**Christ Preaching to the Spirits
An exegetical Study of 1 Peter 3:18-22**

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Synoptic Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Background and Problem Statement	1
Aim and Objectives	2
Central Theoretical Argument	2
Method of Research	2
Classification of Chapters	3
Schematic Representation of the Dissertation	4
Chapter 2 The Religious and Spiritual Worldview of 1st Century AD Asia Minor	5
Introduction	5
Presuppositions on Authorship and Date	5
Recipients of 1 Peter	6
Purpose of the Letter	8
Religious Make up of the Congregations	9
The Religious Milieu of Asia Minor	11
Astrology	19
Demons in Hellenistic Judaism	20
Angels, Spirits and Demons in Intertestamental Judaism	23
Angels, Demons and Spirits in the New Testament	31
The Religious Background of Asia Minor a Review	36
Conclusion	36
Chapter 3 A History of the Interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22	39
Introduction	39
Major Interpretations of 1 Peter 3:18-22	39
Conclusion	57
Chapter 4 An Exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22	59
Introductory Comments	59
The Literary Structure of 1 Peter 3:18-22	59
Setting 1 Peter 3:18-22 in its Wider Textual Context	61
The Immediate Textual Context of 1 Peter 3:18-22	64
An Exegetical Study of 1 Peter 3:18-22	65
Conclusion	90
Chapter 5 Conclusion	93
Introduction	93
Summary of Conclusions	93
The Socio-Historic Context: Lip Service or Utilisation	94
Application for Today	95
Bibliography	97

Preface

There are a number of individuals I must thank for all their support during the study and writing of this dissertation.

To Julia, my wife and God-given helpmeet, who never complained when her husband disappeared into the study. She lovingly and continually encouraged and cajoled me on to completion. This work is as much yours. Thank you my love.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother Elizabeth Mary Campbell (1939-2000) who sadly died before she embarked on her own Masters degree in Ecclesiastical History at the University of Edinburgh. Mother and midwife of her oldest son's rebirth, she loved with an open hand and supported wholeheartedly the Lord's call of her son and daughter-in-law to serve Him among the amaXhosa.

To Ovayo, Beth and Mari – It's time to hunt Pongalongas!

Soli Deo Gloria.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1. Background and Problem Statement	1
2. Aim and Objectives	2
3. Central Theoretical Argument	2
4. Method of Research	2
5. Classification of Chapters	3
6. Schematic Representation of the Dissertation	4
Chapter 2 Religious and Spiritual Worldview of 1st Century AD Asia Minor	5
1. Introduction	5
2. Presuppositions on Authorship and Date	5
2.1 Author	5
2.2 Date	6
3. Recipients of 1 Peter	6
3.1 Bithynia	7
3.2 Pontus	7
3.3 Galatia	7
3.4 Cappadocia	8
3.5 Asia	8
4. Purpose of the Letter	8
5. Religious Make up of the Congregations	9
6. The Religious Milieu of Asia Minor	11
6.1 Graeco-Roman Religions	12
6.2 Magic and Divination	12
6.2.1 Magical Sources	13
6.2.2 Curse Tablets	14
6.2.3 The View of Bolt Assessed	14
6.3 Magic in the New Testament	15
6.3.1 Simon the Magician, Acts 8:4-13	15
6.3.2 Bar-Jesus/Elymas, The Jewish Magician, Acts 13:4-12	15
6.3.3 Slave girl with a Spirit of Divination, Acts 16:16ff	16
6.3.4 The Burning of the Magical Books, Acts 19:13-20	17
6.3.5 Other New Testament Passages	18
6.4 Jewish Magic	18
7. Astrology	19
8. Demons in Hellenistic Judaism	20
8.1 The Septuagint	20
8.2 Tobit	21
8.3 Philo	21
8.4 Josephus	21
8.5 Qumran	22
8.6 Summary	22
9. Angels, Spirits and Demons in Intertestamental Judaism	23
9.1 Angels	24
9.2 The Angelic Fall	24
9.3 The Evil Progeny	26
9.4 The Judgement of the Fallen Angels and their Progeny	26
9.4.1 The Imprisonment	27
9.4.2 The Judgement and Punishment	27
9.5 The Ongoing Influence of Evil Spirits	27
9.5.1 The Influence of Evil Spirits upon Individuals	27
9.5.2 The Influence of Evil Spirits in Non-Jewish Religions	28
9.5.3 The Influence of Evil Spirits in Matters Concerning State and Warfare	29
9.6 Summary	30
10. Angels, Demons and Spirits in the New Testament	31
10.1 Angels in the New Testament	31

10.1.1	Angels in the Gospels and Acts	31
10.1.2	Jesus' Teaching Mentioning Angels	31
10.1.3	Angels in the Rest of the New Testament	32
10.2	Terminology of Demons and Spirits	33
10.3	Evil Spirits and Demons in the Ministry of Jesus	34
11.	The Religious Background of Asia Minor a Review	36
12.	Conclusion	36
Chapter 3	A History of the Interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22	39
1.	Introduction	39
2.	Major Interpretations of 1 Peter 3:18-22	39
2.1	Christ going to the Souls of Noah's Contemporaries during the <i>Triduum Mortis</i>	39
2.1.1	Christ Preaching for the Conversion of Noah's Contemporaries	40
2.1.2	Christ's Preaching of Release to the Souls of the Converted	43
2.1.3	Christ's Preaching of Condemnation to Noah's Unbelieving Contemporaries	46
2.2	The Preaching of the Pre-Existent Christ through Noah	47
2.3	Christ's Proclamation of Victory to Evil Supernatural Powers	51
2.3.1	Introduction	51
2.3.2	History and Development of the Interpretation	53
2.3.3	Summary	55
2.4	Interpretations Based on Textual Emendations	56
2.4.1	Interpolation	56
2.4.2	Enoch Went and Preached	57
3.	Conclusion	57
Chapter 4	An Exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22	59
1.	Introductory Comments	59
2.	The Literary Structure of 1 Peter 3:18-22	59
3.	Setting 1 Peter 3:18-22 in its Wider Textual Context	61
4.	The Immediate Textual Context of 1 Peter 3:18-22	64
5.	An Exegetical Study of 1 Peter 3:18-22	65
5.1	Verse 18	65
5.1.1	Verse 18a	66
5.1.2	Verse 18b	68
5.1.3	Verse 18c	69
5.1.4	Verse 18d	71
5.1.5	Verse 18e	72
5.1.6	Summary of Verse 18	74
5.2	Verse 19-20a	74
5.2.1	Verse 19a	74
5.2.2	Verse 19b-20a	80
5.3	Verse 20b-21	83
5.4	Verse 22	84
5.4.1	Verse 22a	85
5.4.2	Verse 22b	87
5.4.3	Verse 22c	88
5.4.4	Concluding Thoughts on 3:22	90
6.	Conclusion	90
Chapter 5	Conclusion	93
1.	Introduction	93
2.	Summary of Conclusions	93
3.	The Socio-Historic Context: Lip Service or Utilisation	94
4.	Application for Today	95
Bibliography		97

Chapter 1

Introduction

Table of Contents

1. Background and Problem Statement
2. Aim and Objectives
3. Central Theoretical Argument
4. Method of Research
5. Classification of Chapters
6. Schematic Representation of the Thesis

1. Background and Problem Statement

Background

Having previously studied Genesis 6:1-8 and its relation to 1 Peter 3:18-22 in the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh, this interest was reawakened after being seconded to the Free Church in Southern Africa to minister among the amaXhosa in the Eastern Cape. Coming to a society where the spiritual realm with its ancestors, angels and spirits, both good and bad, plays a significant part in everyday life, the cultural shock was striking. This interest in the realm of the spiritual and the role and workings of the ancestors and the spirits in the prevailing culture raised interesting questions with regard to 1 Peter 3:18-22. How should this passage be understood in a culture where the spirits and ancestors are so prominent? This immediately raises the question of how 1 Peter 3:18-22 was understood when first read in 1st Century AD Asia Minor? What did Peter's original audience believe about spirits, demons and angels?

Problem Statement

The interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 has generated considerable research and deliberation down the centuries (see Elliott, 2000:693-710 and Dalton, 1989:27-50). Scholars have spent considerable time in trying to solve the perennial problems of the passage. These attempts have sought to identify the 'spirits' (3:19) and discover the possible location of their 'prison' (3:19). Furthermore, scholars have endeavoured to pinpoint the period when this preaching to the 'spirits' may have occurred and have speculated as to the actual content of the sermon proclaimed.

Recently a number of studies from evangelical scholars (Feinberg (1986), Grudem (1988) and Skilton (1996)) have appeared reasserting the traditional Augustinian position which views 3:19-20 as referring to the Spirit of Christ preaching through the Patriarch Noah to the people of his own day. This modern presentation of the Augustinian view has proved popular and placed 1 Peter 3:18-22 back into the scholarly domain. In the light of the socio-religious data of first century Asia Minor, do all the traditional interpretations of 1 Peter 3:18-22 pay suitable attention to the significant interest among Peter's original audience in the everyday involvement of supernatural beings.

Arnold (1992:19) states that 'the belief in spirits crossed all religious, ethnic and geographical boundaries. The Jews, Greeks, Romans, Asians and Egyptians all believed in spirits who populated the heavens, the underworld and the earth.' The people of Peter's day would have believed in the presence and existence of spirits both good and evil. Could this worldview have influenced their hearing and understanding of Peter's comments in 3:18-22?

If Arnold is correct about the prominence of the spiritual aspect in 1st Century society, how could such information affect any exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22?

Furthermore, any insight into the possible spiritual background of the readers of 1 Peter and the subsequent exegesis may also help in how this passage should be interpreted for modern day Xhosa society with its spiritual laden worldview.

The questions which arise from this problem are: -

1. What was the general understanding of spirits and the spiritual realm in 1st Century AD Asia Minor?

2. How has 1 Peter 3:18-22 been interpreted down through history and have these interpretations taken suitable cognizance of the socio-historic data?
3. What is a valid interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 in the light of the socio-religious data?
 - Who are the spirits?
 - Where is the prison?
 - When did the preaching take place?
 - What was the possible content of the sermon?
4. How does 1 Peter 3:18-22 fit in with the wider context of 1 Peter?
5. How should any interpretation be used pastorally in a culture that believes in the everyday involvement of supernatural beings?

2. Aim and Objectives

Aim

The main aim of this study is to exegete 1 Peter 3:18-22, evaluate the various interpretations and consider the passage with regard to the general religious and spiritual background of the Epistle's original recipients.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are :

1. To construct the general understanding and religious view of spirits and the spiritual realm in 1st century Asia Minor.
2. To study and evaluate the history of interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22.
3. To establish the identity of the spirits.
4. To establish the location of the prison.
5. To establish the time of the preaching.
6. To establish the content of the preaching.
7. To establish the place of this passage in the wider context of 1 Peter.
8. To see how 1 Peter 3:18-22 be used in pasturing those whose culture believes in the involvement of supernatural beings.

3. Central Theoretical Argument

The central theological argument of this study is that the historic interpretations of 1 Peter 3:18-22 do not take fully into account the spiritual background and context of the original recipients of 1 Peter. A proper understanding of the socio-religious context of Peter's original readers will help in interpreting the main points of 1 Peter 3:18-22 and cast light on the author's inclusion of this particular periscope.

4. Method of Research

This study is undertaken from within the Reformed tradition.

In the answering of the different research questions, the following methods will be used.

- 1 The study of the general understanding and religious view of spirits and the spiritual realm in 1st Century Asia Minor will be done employing the socio-historic method (Garrett, 1992:89-99).
- 2 The review and classification of the various major interpretations of 1 Peter 3:18-22 will be done by consulting the different commentaries and theological dictionaries.
- 3 A valid interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 will be made the following way:
 - a) In the light of the socio-historic data, an exegesis and history of interpretation of πνεύμασιν will be undertaken according to the grammatical-historical method (Poythress, 1988:98-99) utilising lexicons and consulting the different commentaries and theological dictionaries.
 - b) In the light of the socio-historic data, an exegesis and history of interpretation of ἐν φυλακῇ will be undertaken according to the grammatical-historical method (Poythress, 1988:98-99) utilising lexicons and consulting the different commentaries and theological dictionaries.

c) In the light of the socio-historic data, an exegesis and history of interpretation of πορευθεῖς will be undertaken according to the grammatical-historical method (Poythress, 1988:98-99) utilising lexicons and consulting the different commentaries and theological dictionaries.

d) In the light of the socio-historic data, an exegesis and history of interpretation of ἐκάρουξεν will be undertaken according to the grammatical-historical method (Poythress, 1988:98-99) utilising lexicons and consulting the different commentaries and theological dictionaries.

4 The resulting interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 will be considered in the wider context, general purpose and overall message of the Epistle according to the grammatical-historical method (Poythress, 1988:98-99) utilising lexicons and consulting the different commentaries and theological dictionaries.

5 The resulting conclusions will be evaluated and be examined for their usefulness in addressing those who belong to cultures whose worldview concerning supernatural spiritual beings is similar to that as found in first century AD Asia Minor.

5. Classification of Chapters

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The Religious and Spiritual Worldview of 1st Century AD Asia Minor.
- 3 The History of the Interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22
- 4 An Exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22
- 5 Conclusion

<p>1 Introduction</p> <p>2 The Religious and Spiritual Worldview of 1st Century AD Asia Minor.</p> <p>3 The History of the Interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22</p> <p>4 An Exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22</p> <p>5 Conclusion</p>	<p>in the light of the socio-historic data, an exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22, to establish the identity and location of the epistle, the time of the preaching and the content of the sermon.</p>	<p>What is a valid interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 in the light of the socio-religious data?</p>
<p>The resulting interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 will then be considered in the wider context, general purpose and overall message of the Epistle according to the grammatical-historical method (Poythress, 1988:98-99) utilising lexicons and consulting the different commentaries and theological dictionaries.</p>	<p>To establish the place of this passage in the wider context of 1 Peter.</p>	<p>How does 1 Peter 3:18-22 fit in with the wider context of 1 Peter?</p>
<p>The resulting conclusions will be evaluated and be examined for their usefulness in addressing those who belong to cultures whose worldview concerning supernatural spiritual beings is similar to that as found in first century AD Asia Minor.</p>	<p>To see how 1 Peter 3:18-22 be used in pasturing those whose culture believes in the involvement of supernatural beings.</p>	<p>How should any interpretation be used pastorally in a culture that believes in the everyday involvement of supernatural beings?</p>

6. Schematic Representation of the Dissertation

Problem Statement	Aim and Objectives	Methodology
What was the general understanding of spirits and the spiritual realm in 1 st Century AD Asia Minor?	To construct the general understanding and religious view of spirits and the spiritual realm in 1 st Century AD Asia Minor.	The study of the general understanding and religious view of spirits and the spiritual realm in 1 st Century AD Asia Minor will be done employing the socio-historic method (Garrett, 1992:89-99).
How has 1 Peter 3:18-22 been interpreted down through history and have these interpretations taken suitable cognizance of the socio-historic data?	To study and evaluate the history of interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22.	The review and classification of the various major interpretations of 1 Peter 3:18-22, will be done by consulting the different commentaries and theological dictionaries.
What is a valid interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 in the light of the socio-religious data?	In the light of the socio-historic data, an exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22, to establish the identity and location of the 'spirits', the time of the preaching and the content of the sermon.	A valid interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 will be done according to the grammatical-historical method (Poythress, 1988:98-99) utilising lexicons and consulting the different commentaries and theological dictionaries.
How does 1 Peter 3:18-22 fit in with the wider context of 1 Peter?	To establish the place of this passage in the wider context of 1 Peter.	The resulting interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 will then be considered in the wider context, general purpose and overall message of the Epistle according to the grammatical-historical method (Poythress, 1988:98-99) utilising lexicons and consulting the different commentaries and theological dictionaries.
How should any interpretation be used pastorally in a culture that believes in the everyday involvement of supernatural beings?	To see how 1 Peter 3:18-22 be used in pasturing those whose culture believes in the involvement of supernatural beings.	The resulting conclusions will be evaluated and be examined for their usefulness in addressing those who belong to cultures whose worldview concerning supernatural spiritual beings is similar to that as found in first century AD Asia Minor.

Chapter 2

The Religious and Spiritual Worldview of 1st Century AD Asia Minor

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Presuppositions on Authorship and Date
3. Recipients of 1 Peter
4. Purpose of the Letter
5. Religious Make up of the Congregations
6. The Religious Milieu of Asia Minor
7. Astrology
8. Demons in Hellenistic Judaism
9. Angels, Spirits and Demons in Intertestamental Judaism
10. Angels, Demons and Spirits in the New Testament
11. The Religious Background of Asia Minor a Review
12. Conclusion

1. Introduction

In this chapter, the religious and spiritual milieu of first century Asia Minor are examined. In doing so some of the theological and religious worldviews which were prevalent at the time of Peter's first epistle to the believers scattered throughout Asia Minor are appraised. By examining the religious and spiritual setting it may prove valuable in seeing 1 Peter 3:18-22 against a real life *Sitz im Leben*. How could these recipients of 1 Peter generally have reacted to and understood a phrase like ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν (the spirits in prison)? How could their understanding of πνεύμασιν and similar other terms (like ἄγγελος, δαίμων and δαιμόνιον) have affected their understanding of 1 Peter 3:18-22?

After stating some preliminary presuppositions, the attention turns towards the possible religious make up of the groups of believers to which Peter wrote and then look at the religious milieu of first century AD Asia Minor.

This analysis considers some of the major religions found in Asia Minor at the time of 1 Peter and then examines the widespread popularity in Asia Minor of magic and divination as practised by those from both Hellenistic religions and Judaism. The evidence of the New Testament pertaining to magic and divination as encountered by the early Church and recorded in the Acts of the Apostles is also scrutinised.

The study then examines the widespread belief in demons and spirits observed in Hellenistic religions before noting the rise in popularity of demons and other spiritual beings (spirits and angels) in the Jewish Intertestamental literature. This survey shows the development of belief among the Jews concerning spiritual beings and their involvement with individuals and societies.

Finally the study examines the New Testament evidence, from the ministry of Jesus to the early church, for the belief in the existence and activity of angels, demons and spirits upon people and communities.

2. Presuppositions on Authorship and Date

At the outset the underlying working presuppositions of this study must be stated. Matters pertaining to the authorship and date of 1 Peter will naturally affect the thoughts regarding the purpose of the author and the situation of his audience.

2.1 Author

For the purpose of this dissertation the claims of the letter to be written by Πέτρος ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:1, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ) who states to have been καὶ μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων (5:1, a witness of the sufferings of Christ) shall be accepted and presupposed.¹ Naturally

¹ Early Church tradition almost unanimously regarded 1 Peter as having been composed by the Apostle Peter. These include Papias of Hierapolis (mid 2nd Century AD), Irenaeus (late 2nd Century AD), Tertullian,

this means that rather than being the work of a later Petrine group dealing with the issues and interests of their own time, the letter is from the hand of the stated author who is dealing with the issues he deemed relevant and important for these believers in Asia Minor.²

2.2 Date

Furthermore, those who prefer to see the Epistle as a product of a Petrine group argue that the letter reflects a time after Peter has died. This argument is naturally very important when it comes to dating the letter and understanding its overall purpose. These scholars argue that the passages that refer to persecution in 1 Peter (1:6; 3:13-17; 4:12-19 and 5:9) demand a widespread persecution like that of Domitian (95AD) or Trajan (110AD). These persecutions took place many years after the death of Peter who is believed to have been martyred during the localised persecution of Christians in Rome under Emperor Nero between 64-68AD. This supposed evidence pointing to a later date is said to rule out Peter as the author of the Epistle. However, does the Epistle actually reflect a later 'widespread' persecution? As Marshall (1991:23) points out, 'the evidence from the letter points to widespread hostile reactions to Christians but not to organized state-inspired persecution. The attitudes reflect a period before the rise of state persecution.' Although the letter may reflect a time before state sponsored terrorism and persecution of Christians, this does not mean that Christians did not suffer for their faith at a local level. While 1 Peter may view the local authorities favourably (see 2:14-17), making composition during widespread persecution unlikely, there is enough evidence to suggest the existence of local opposition and sporadic outbreaks of violence towards Christians and churches throughout the Empire.³

For the purpose of this dissertation, the assumption is that the Epistle was composed either directly by or under the supervision of the apostle Peter. Peter may well have made use of an amanuensis which might explain the Greek style and the linguistic veneer, but the contents and concerns of the Epistle reflect the interests of the author.⁴ Accepting that Peter was indeed the author and dating his death to being around 64AD during the persecution of Christians in Rome under Nero, the date of composition of the Epistle could have been between 60—64AD. For the purposes of this dissertation 1 Peter will be examined in the light of these presuppositions.

3. Recipients of 1 Peter

The letter is addressed to ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς Πόντου, Γαλατίας, Καππαδοκίας, Ἀσίας καὶ Βιθυνίας (1 Peter 1:1, to God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, RSV). This opening greeting is believed to indicate both the places where the believers to whom Peter is writing are situated and also the proposed route to be taken by the letter bearer, probably Silvanus.⁵ The letter is addressed to believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia which were all located in what was commonly known as Asia Minor. These names may either refer to the traditional ancient districts or to the administrative provinces into which the Romans organised this part of their Empire.⁶ However, the evidence is not sufficient to ascertain the precise geographical and administrative boundaries. Nor can one reconstruct the precise itinerary and route of the letter bearer.

Origen and Clement of Alexandria. Among modern scholars holding Peter as the author see Selwyn (1947), Stibbs (1959), Guthrie (1970), France (1977), Clowney (1988), Grudem (1988) and Dalton (1989). See Selwyn (1947:27-33) who noted that 1 Peter exhibited such marks that are taken as evidence of coming from an actual eyewitness of Jesus: The epistle is also said to exhibit some 'noteworthy resemblances' (Carson et al 1992:422) between this letter and the words of Peter as reported by Luke in the book of Acts. While Carson et al admit that these allusions do not prove Petrine authorship, they do display a consistency and a compatibility between the Peter of Acts and the author of 1 Peter. The letter was certainly received into the canon with no real doubt about its provenance.

² For the most complete modern presentation that 1 Peter is the work of a Petrine group in Rome see Elliott (2000:127-30).

³ Best (1982:39), who supports a late pseudonymous composition of 1 Peter, agrees that violence directed towards Christians was a real and daily danger at any time.

⁴ While Silvanus may have been Peter's amanuensis this conclusion should not be based on Διὰ Σιλβανουῦ (by Silvanus) in 5:12. See Richards (2000:417-432).

⁵ See Hemer (1978:239-43) and Elliott (2000:90-91).

⁶ Those scholars who prefer a later dating of the epistle by the hand of a Petrine School (Best 1971:15 and Elliott 2000:84), prefer to see these names as referring to the Roman Provinces.

While the evidence does not allow one to be specific and to identify the precise geographical boundaries, it is almost certain that the letter was to be taken throughout the northern and central part of Asia Minor through to the West of the territory. Elliott (2000:84) summarises the general geographical area to consist of the Roman Provinces located mainly west of the Halys River and north of the Taurus Mountains covering a territory of approximately 129,000 square miles.

These 5 geographical regions or 4 Roman Provinces (Bithynia and Pontus were united into a single province in 65/63 BC) contained an estimated population of 8,500,000 people.⁷ After a succession of Persian, Greek and Roman rule, the region as a whole was culturally very diverse. Furthermore, the area was also far from being a united political entity or a religious or spiritually homogenous unity. This was due in no small part to the many natural geographical boundaries like rivers and mountains. However, the trade routes and other roads did allow for some degree of movement and travel even into the mountainous interior of the region (for example Galatia and Cappadocia). This naturally gave rise to movement of goods, people and ideas both political and religious.

But what is actually known about the groups of believers in those regions? To whom was Peter writing? The possible congregations, or perhaps more recognisably groups of believers, in these regions shall now be examined in turn.

3.1 Bithynia – The region was situated in the north-eastern corner of Asia Minor. Although Paul, Silas and Timothy had hoped to enter into Bithynia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to travel there with the Gospel (Acts 16:7). However, by the time of 1 Peter a congregation or number of congregations had been established in the region of Bithynia. This reference to Bithynia is the earliest attestation that Christians were present in the region. By 111AD, Pliny the Younger (*Epistulae Epistle* 10.96-97) mentions a well established Church in Bithynia which had experienced a good deal of local opposition (See Judge (1982b:143) and Elliott (2000:316)).

3.2 Pontus – The region was situated along the coastal strip of North Asia Minor and would have proved fairly accessible. Although this is the first reference to believers in the region, it is recorded in Acts that Israelite pilgrims from Pontus were present in Jerusalem and heard Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:9). Perhaps these pilgrims returned to Pontus with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, in Acts 18:2 Aquila is described as a 'native of Pontus'. It is difficult to pinpoint precisely when and how Aquila and Priscilla heard the Gospel and became Christians as the nature of their work and then their labour for the gospel allowed them to travel throughout the Roman Empire. However, as they were both believers before the arrival of Paul in Corinth, perhaps they were among the first believers from Pontus in the north of Asia Minor. Similarly, in 111 AD Pliny the Younger (*Epistulae Epistle* 10.96-97) noted in correspondence to Emperor Trajan that Christians had spread their message successfully throughout the towns and countryside of Pontus.⁸

3.3 Galatia – The reference here to Galatia is almost certainly to the Roman province in the northern part of Asia Minor. While the southern part of Galatia benefited directly from the missionary activities of Paul and his colleagues (Acts 13-14), it is likely that the north Galatia region was not evangelised by Paul and his associates.⁹ This reference to believers in north Galatia is the earliest indication of the establishment of a congregation or assembly of Christians in this predominantly rural part of Asia Minor. The scarcity of urban centres may have leaned against Paul's direct missionary activity in the region. Elliott (2000:90) is probably correct when he notes that 'the predominantly rural feature of the provinces other than Asia and the absence of any mention of cities point to the rural location of the letter's addressees, who formed pockets of households dispersed across the landscape of Asia Minor. This is consistent with the absence of the term *ekklesia*, so basic a concept in Paul's urban mission, and with the prominence given the image of the household in this letter. This marks 1 Peter as a notable exception to the generalization that early Christianity everywhere constituted an urban phenomenon.'

⁷ Elliott (2000:85) demurs from Reicke's (1968:302-312) estimate of the total population as being around 4.25 million.

⁸ See Elliott (2000:316) who notes the letter of Pliny the Younger in highlighting the Christian community in Pontus.

⁹ For further discussion see Marshall (1980:262).

3.4 Cappadocia – The region was situated in the eastern most part of the Anatolian highlands and was generally an inaccessible plateau and mountainous area of great strategic importance to Rome as it formed a barrier against the Parthians to the east. The trade route between the Black Sea ports and Central Asia passed through the area and it was also easily accessible from Tarsus in the south. In Acts 2:9 one reads that Jews from Cappadocia were among the audience of Peter's sermon in Jerusalem during Pentecost. As with the situation in Pontus it is quite possible that these Jewish converts were the first to bring the Christian message to Cappadocia.

3.5 Asia – While Silas' exact itinerary is unknown, it may be a fair assumption that this letter was taken around the congregations in the main centres of Asia like Ephesus, Colossae, Iconium, Pisidia, Antioch and Laodicea. Churches seem to have been first established in the administrative heart of the region. All three metropolitan centres, Pergamum, Smyrna and Ephesus, had congregations while others were established in Sardis in the Hermus Valley and Laodicea on the River Lycus. Jewish pilgrims from Asia were present in Jerusalem during Pentecost and heard Peter's sermon (Acts 2:9). Perhaps these returning pilgrims first brought the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the region of Asia and established congregations there.

But perhaps more significantly is the detail of the importance of Asia to Paul and his colleagues in their missionary work.¹⁰ The region of Asia was the primary site of the Pauline mission to western Asia Minor. Indeed Paul in tells the church in Ephesus that he had spent three years with them (Acts 20:31). While this could be a rounding up of the two years and 3 months specified in Acts 19:8,10, it is clear that his ministry had a considerable impact on the city of Ephesus (Acts 19:17) and in the surrounding region of Asia. If Peter's letter was intended to go as far west as Ephesus and its neighbouring cities it would have been received by some of the strongest churches in Asia Minor as a whole.

In contrast to the other regions and provinces in Asia Minor, Asia was the most Hellenized¹¹ and urbanised of all. Many cities were established and this urbanisation was in part fuelled by its own rich natural resources, trade and commerce and various industries. Having become a Roman province in 133BC, Asia became very important in the Roman Empire because of its power and influence over the rest of Asia Minor.

4. Purpose of the Letter

Why should Peter write to these believers in Asia Minor? While Paul evangelised in some of the towns in south Galatia and Asia there is no evidence of Peter having undertaken church planting or evangelisation in the northern and central parts of Asia Minor. Some have interpreted διὰ τῶν εὐαγγελισαμένων ὑμᾶς (1 Peter 1:12, by those who preached the good news to you, RSV) as a deliberate attempt by Peter to distance himself from those who had evangelised the areas of Asia Minor in question since the author does not identify himself among the εὐαγγελισαμένων.¹²

This letter, written by probably the foremost apostle in the early Church from perhaps the very heart of the Roman Empire,¹³ may well have been a circular epistle designed to be taken around the congregations throughout Asia Minor. Nevertheless, this does not mean that it was not a 'genuine letter' (Best 1981:13) addressing real people with real situations rather than simply a copy of a baptismal liturgy or a sermon.¹⁴ Clowney (1988:15) is probably correct to assert that this is 'a model of a pastoral letter' as 'the apostle seeks to encourage and reassure Christian Churches in Asia Minor as stormy seasons of persecution begin.'

¹⁰ See Acts 19 for a description of Paul's time in Ephesus and his words to the elders of Ephesus in Miletus (Acts 20:17-38; compare 2 Corinthians 1:8).

¹¹ Judge (1982a:96) comments that Asia 'recovered in the NT period to become the most brilliant centres of Hellenism in the world.'

¹² See Carson et al (1992:425) for this view.

¹³ Ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι (5:13, She who is in Babylon,) may be a symbolic way of referring to Rome as the place of origin of the letter. See Carson (1992:424) and Michaels (1988:311).

¹⁴ For those advancing the theory that 1 Peter is an expanded baptismal liturgy or sermon see Cross (1954) and Preisker (1951:152-162). For those opposing this proposed understanding see Guthrie (1970:789-90), Michaels (1988:73), Martin (1978:340-341) and Kelly (1969:18).

While this letter is addressed to a variety of groups of believers in a vast area of Asia Minor made up of people from different social, religious and economic backgrounds, it would be wrong to dismiss the teaching contained within it as merely expressing general Christian truth and baptismal teachings (see Davids 1990:9). The overall impression from the letter itself is that the churches of Asia Minor are facing more than localised displeasure from neighbours and those in authority. The language of the letter presupposes knowledge of serious hostility towards Christians and the problem, or threat, of persecution where martyrdom was a real possibility. Peter, aware of the general situation, deals not only with the problem of suffering, but also reveals his pastoral concern in presenting how persecuted Christians should respond in the face of such antagonism, hostility and evil actions directed against the people of God. It would be unfair to suggest, as Michaels (1997:917) does, that 'the readers' life situation is not a local or specific one but rests on the author's generalisation about the situation of Christians in Roman society at the time the letter was written. In the author's mind his readers represent all Christian believers everywhere.'

The nature of a circular letter, especially one covering such a wide geographical distance as found in Asia Minor, means that Peter, wishing to be accessible, was indeed limited in the topics and subjects about which he could write. However, the letter does give the impression that Peter has someone, or more likely some churches, in his mind as he writes. He begins by referring to the experiences of the recipients (1:6-9) which shows that he is aware of the situation of at least some of his audience. Similarly, his use of ἀγαπητοί (2:11 and 4:12)¹⁵ and the notes to the elders and his final greetings (5:1ff) reveal a sense of familiarity. Peter seems to confine himself to a letter that touches the pulse of events of Asia Minor and is accessible and applicable to the people of Asia Minor whether in urbanised and sophisticated Ephesus or the backwaters of Cappadocia. Peter's letter may have been written before the imperially sanctioned persecutions and general oppression of Christians, but he seems aware that the threats against and opposition towards Christians in Asia Minor were a real and present danger. The tone of the letter seems even to suggest that martyrdom was a real possibility.

5. Religious Make up of the Congregations

Due to the emphasis of Galatians 2:9 where Paul notes the commitment of Peter to work among the Jewish people, it was generally thought by the earliest commentators that this epistle was written to congregations predominantly made up of Jewish converts.¹⁶ However, this theory has fallen out of favour as Galatians 2:9 cannot be used to argue that Peter's ministry was directed exclusively towards members of the Jewish Diaspora.¹⁷

From the internal evidence of 1 Peter there is little indication that the letter was directed to churches made up of predominately Jewish converts. In 1 Peter 1:18 ἐλυτρώθητε ἐκ τῆς ματαίας ὑμῶν ἀναστροφῆς πατροπαράδοτου (you were redeemed from your vain way of life inherited from your forefathers) seems to indicate that Peter is addressing a mainly non-Jewish audience as it would be unlikely that any Jew could describe their forefathers in such a way. Similarly in 2:10, Peter writes that οἱ ποτε οὐ λαὸς νῦν δὲ λαὸς θεοῦ (Once you were no people but now you are God's people, RSV). It is very unlikely that any Jew could ever describe himself or herself as not belonging to the people of God. Furthermore, Peter, talking about their former lives being filled with sins, lists a number of sins which would have been uncharacteristic of any Jew generally following the strict moral standards of the Jewish people whether in 1st Century Palestine or throughout the Diaspora (1 Peter 4:3-4).¹⁸

Peter does feel free to employ Jewish terminology in such a way as to describe the Gentile Christians as being the new covenant people of God. We see this clearly in 1.1 (ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς Πόντου, κτλ; to the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, etc, RSV) and in 2:10 (οἱ ποτε οὐ λαὸς νῦν δὲ

¹⁵ Peter's use of ἀγαπητοί suggests acquaintanceship or a degree of friendship.

¹⁶ Elliott (2000:96) notes that Eusebius writing in the 4th Century AD and following the work of Origen claimed that Peter was writing to 'those of the Hebrew in the Dispersion' (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.4.2-3 and 3.1.2). This view was later adopted by the other scholars including Erasmus and Calvin.

¹⁷ See Bruce (1982:124) for his comments on Galatians 2:9 and the scope of Peter's future work. 1 Peter does not mention this commitment to work solely the Jews and we cannot argue from this epistle that Peter never worked among Gentiles.

¹⁸ See Meeks (1986:66-96), for an analysis of the status, tensions and aspirations of the Jewish people of the 1st Century AD in Palestine and throughout the Roman Empire.

λαὸς θεοῦ, οἱ οὐκ ἤλεημένοι νῦν δὲ ἐλεηθέντες; once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy, RSV). For Peter, the Gentiles, now part of the Church of Jesus Christ throughout Asia Minor, stood in the line of believers in the Lord God and were truly part of the people of God, the true and new Israel. Elliott (1981) has taken the references to Peter's audience as 'strangers', 'aliens' and 'scattered' literally and suggests that the recipients were actual religious and economic refugees in the first century world. However, given Peter's propensity in this epistle for redefining standard Jewish terminology in 'spiritualized' Christian language and given the broad semantic range of the terms themselves, it is doubtful whether these words can be limited to their purely literal interpretations.¹⁹ As Achtemeier et al (2001:518) comment, 'Most importantly, 1 Peter employs as a central motif the identification of Israel and the church, with the result that normal usage of such terms as "Jewish" and "Gentile" cannot be assumed. The new people of God envisioned in this letter is none other than the people of Israel – so this document's "Jewishness" insinuates less a description of the ethnic origins of its implied audience than a clarification of its readers' status before God. This means that Peter's 'exiles' and 'aliens' are foreigners in an important and metaphorical sense. They are not 'Jews' living among 'Gentiles' in the expected sense of these terms, as though the author were concerned with their ethnic or political status. Attempts to find in Peter's descriptive terms a reference to his reader's economic status founders similarly on a problem of category.'²⁰

While the original converts in the Churches of Asia Minor may well have come from a Jewish background, the racial make up of the congregations would have soon shown greater diversity until the majority of Christians in each congregation would have come from a non-Jewish background. Elliott (2000:89), who argues for a late date of composition for the letter, postulates that 'by the time of 1 Peter, however, recruits from among the Gentiles probably had begun to outnumber their Israelite counterparts.' While Peter is probably addressing congregations made up predominantly from Gentiles, this shift in ethnic balance could well have been reached far earlier than Elliott envisages. In Galatians and the Colossians, both written circa 48-65 AD,²¹ Paul seems to be addressing congregations in Asia Minor where Gentiles make up a significant part if not even the majority of members. Furthermore, Paul's arguments appear to be made from a position of strength. Elliott (2000:89), following the figures of Broughton (1938:499-918), reckons the population of Asia Minor as being approximately 8.5 Million of which he believes that the 'Diaspora Israelites were particularly numerous (ca 1 Million) and evidence of their presence in both urban and rural areas is abundant'.²² On the other hand, Reicke (1968:302-4), assuming that the total population of Asia Minor numbered 4.5 million, conservatively estimates the number of Christians within Asia Minor as growing from ca 40,000 before 67AD to more than 80,000 in 100AD.

Whatever the actual figures of Jews in Asia Minor it is possibly safe to conclude that they proved to be the initial mission field in the early days of the Christian faith in this part of the Empire. However, the universal and inclusive nature of the Gospel took Christianity beyond the nationalistic and ethnic boundaries of Israel and the people of the Diaspora. The growth in the church in Asia Minor over the years cannot be satisfactorily explained by seeing this as coming almost exclusively from one sizeable yet still minority ethnic group. The records in Acts of Paul's work in Galatia, Macedonia and Asia show that the gospel impacted people across ethnic, social and economic backgrounds. In 1 Peter it is interesting that servants are addressed which suggests that at this stage the gospel was attracting more people from the lowest classes of society rather than the small elite.²³ This attraction of Jews and non-

¹⁹ Could Peter's use of this incorporating language have been his way in presenting the inclusive nature of the Gospel in response to some eternal problems in the churches by those who stressed the intrinsic Jewishness of the Christian faith?

²⁰ See also Carson et al (1992:425) who note the wholesale application in 1 Peter of Old Testament (Jewish) categories to the church.

²¹ For the dating of Galatians and Colossians see Carson et al (1992:293-4,335).

²² Elliott (2000:89) notes the evidence of Jews in the Diaspora both in rural and urban settings in the following writings, Philo, *De Legatione ad Gaium*, 245, 280-82, 314-15; Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 12.119, 125, 129, 147-53; 14.213-64; 1 Maccabees 15:22-23 and Sibylline Oracles 3.271. See also the book of Acts, the Epistles of Paul and the book of Revelation in their presentation of Diaspora Jews.

²³ For a helpful analysis of the role of household servants in society and the church, see Van Wyk and Van Rensburg (1997).

Jews into the church was one which seems to have started almost immediately in the history of Christendom.

It is feasible, therefore, that the congregations to which Peter wrote were made up predominantly of converts from the various non-Jewish cults and folk religions of Asia Minor. Furthermore, there probably would still have been a Jewish presence in the various congregations. Naturally the numbers of actual Christians from a Jewish background would have differed from place to place due to a number of factors – for example remoteness. However, it is conceivable that at this stage some of the actual eye-witnesses of the events in Jerusalem at Pentecost were still active along with their family members and friends to whom the accounts had been recounted.

Though coming from diverse people groups the letter is addressed to all in the Church in the areas indicated in 1 Peter 1:1-2 and not merely to one special interest group.²⁴ They may have had different origins, ethnic roots, languages, customs, religions and social histories, but they were now together united in the Church of Jesus Christ.

6. The Religious Milieu of Asia Minor

An Introduction

Having concluded that it is probable that the majority of the members of the congregations in Asia Minor to which Peter wrote came from non-Jewish background, it is important to address the question of the spiritual milieu of this part of the Roman Empire in the first century AD. While it is not possible to state definitely the exact ethnic make-up of the churches, so also neither is it possible to state with preciseness the personal religious and spiritual histories and influences of these converts. These people would have been drawn from a variety of religious backgrounds all embracing different emphases and beliefs especially about the spiritual realm and the supernatural. Most probably these spiritual emphases did not cease to entice and prove alluring to some of those new converts to Christianity.

In other words, it is necessary to ask what kind of religious and spiritual practices were operating in first century Asia Minor. What likely histories did these converts have? And how could their thinking have been influenced especially with regard to their understanding of the supernatural and the place of demons and spirits?

Geographically the topography of Asia Minor could well lend itself to the remote areas perpetuating their own local religious variations and worshipping their own local deities. However, Asia Minor did not live in a spiritual vacuum where the local religious practices and worship remained untouched by the new ideas and philosophies from outside. New religious movements, like Christianity, took root in these areas and flourished alongside the local religions, sects and cults. Trade routes travelled even through the centre of one of the most rural and inaccessible parts of Asia Minor (Cappadocia) and those travellers brought more than goods. They brought the new ideas, philosophies and religious movements and missionaries both Christian and non-Christian.

The attention will now turn to examine and attempt to portray a picture, more sketch than fine detail, of some of the major spiritual and religious trends and movements which seem to have played an important part in the everyday life of people in Asia Minor. Looking at these religious movements may prove beneficial in gaining an insight into the religious and spiritual understanding and thinking of Peter's audience. How could these people have been influenced by the surrounding religious and spiritual worldviews? What may they have believed about the role of the supernatural in their society with regard to good and evil?

Survey of Religious Milieu

The goal in this part of the study is to try and uncover the worldviews of the populace of Asia Minor, the very people who were responding to the gospel and becoming Christians. What could the average person have thought when he or she heard mention of 'angel' (ἄγγελος), 'spirit' (πνεῦμα) or 'demon' (δαιμόνιον or δαίμων)?

²⁴ Davids (1990) correctly notes, unlike the letters of Paul, there are no indications in 1 Peter of any apparent tension between believers from a Jewish and a Gentile background.

This task is not an easy one. As Arnold (1992:19) notes: 'Most of the Greek and Roman literature that we have comes from the educated elite and, with the finest rhetorical craftsmanship, presents philosophical understandings of existence that are often quite removed from what common folk believed'. The belief in spirits and other spiritual beings crossed all religious, ethnic and geographical boundaries. The Jews, Greeks, Romans, Asians and Egyptians all believed in spirits who populated the heavens, the underworld and the earth (Arnold 1992:19). This general worldview seems to have pervaded all of society. As these spiritual entities could be either good or evil they were deemed to be the bringers of both blessing and curse. Everyone, however, agreed on one thing: the supernatural realm exercises control over everyday life and eternal destiny (Arnold 1992:19).

The people of Peter's day would have believed in the presence and existence of spirits both good and evil. And this pervading worldview could have influenced their hearing and understanding of 3:18-22, and could also have motivated Peter to include these statements in his letter.

The attention now turns to some of the more prevalent religious and spiritual movements and influences in Asia Minor.

6.1 Graeco-Roman Religions

Many religions existed and flourished in Graeco-Roman society and especially in that religious and spiritual smorgasbord called Asia Minor. One of the most famous was the cult of Artemis whose sanctuary in Ephesus was regarded as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. This temple appears in the account of Paul's ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41). During his time there, Paul was confronted by the silversmiths of the city whose livelihoods were threatened by the success of his mission which accentuated the exclusive nature and claims of the Gospel. However, as Gill (1992:92-3) notes the cult of Artemis was practiced throughout Asia Minor as various artefacts bearing the image of her statue in Ephesus have been found around the entire region. The popularity of this cult may well have even gone beyond the urbanised centres as this deity was believed to have been a fertility goddess.

Gill (1992) also notes that Asia Minor played host to the popular cult of Cybele. Cybele was regarded as mother goddess of all the earth and involved growth, prosperity and fertility. She and Attis her youthful consort were greatly venerated by the people. Gill (1992:100) concludes that these local cults of the Roman Empire, especially in what is now Anatolian Turkey, show the religious background for the gospel. The early church was addressing people who worshipped rocks, believed plants could be deities, had sacred animals, and accepted ritual castration and prostitution. The Christian missionary to Asia Minor thus faced considerable hurdles.

6.2 Magic and Divination

As magical beliefs and practice played a major part in many religious traditions of the 1st Century AD this may provide a useful vantage point to see how people employed magic in an attempt to manipulate good and evil spirits for help or to bring harm to others. Aune's (1986:218) analysis of magic in the Graeco-Roman world has been generally accepted as a fair categorisation.²⁵ He notes four major ways in which magic was used in the Graeco-Roman world. (1) there was protective or apotropaic magic (particularly against dreaded illnesses), (2) aggressive or malevolent magic, (3) love magic and magic aimed at the acquisition of power over others, and (4) magical divination to bring about revelation. Along with erotic magic, magical revelation was one of the more popular and widespread types of magical practice. It is most probable that Elymas (mentioned in Acts 13:6) was a practitioner of this fourth type of magic being regarded as both a magician and a false prophet.

It is possible to differentiate between two types of magic in the Hellenistic world. The first is a natural magic, with no explicit connection to spirits, ghosts, demons, and gods, and the second is a spiritistic type of magic which calls on the spirits of the dead (referred to as δαίμων, *daimon*) to come to the supplicant's assistance. Although regarded suspiciously at official levels, such magic was widespread in the ancient world at more private- or even underground – levels of society. It could be innocuous, or positive (as in desperate attempts to ward off disease), but it could be malevolent (as epitomised by the curse tablets) (Bolt 1996:87).

²⁵ Arnold (1992:27) is one who adopts Aune's (1986:218) classification.

The focus now shifts to look at how spirits/demons were used in the realm of magic. This will be done in order to attempt to identify these malevolent forces (δαίμων, *daimon*) and how they were thought to work. Their identity and their realms of activity may reveal just how popular they were among the people of the Graeco-Roman world.

6.2.1 Magical Sources

The extant magical sources from the Hellenistic Graeco-Roman world illustrate the spiritistic magic at work. Although the magical papyri are mostly later than the New Testament period, they are nevertheless useful for comparative purposes, since it is highly probable that they represent collections of much earlier material, and magical practices were conservative, or even reactionary (see Bolt 1996:87).

Over the years many fragments of papyri containing spells and the attempt to manipulate the spirits/demons of the dead on behalf of the invoker have been found. While many of the papyri have been found in Egypt, dating from after the close of the New Testament period, it does not mean that this particular religious phenomenon was located to only this part of the Empire²⁶ or was a recent event.²⁷ There is enough evidence to suggest that spiritistic magic and calling upon the dead was practiced throughout the Mediterranean. Magic and divination had been practiced in many, if not all, of the cultures of the Ancient Near East from well before the New Testament period.

A compelling case can be made in showing how many of these magical papyri involve the manipulation of *daimons* by human magicians and that these *daimons* were generally identified with spirits of human beings who had died. This calling upon the spirits of the dead was done to undertake and perform a series of tasks either for revenge, for love or for much needed assistance in times of difficulty (see Bolt 1996:89-91).

Although the term *daimon* in the magical papyri is in itself quite neutral and did not necessarily signify an evil or malevolent spirit, the context clearly refers to these spirits who could and would inflict harm and bring about evil. By the time of the New Testament the term *daimon* had shifted from denoting the gods (Apollo, Dionysus and Hermes), to refer to divine powers and also other supernatural beings. Over time popular religion introduced *daimons* as personal intermediary beings who were involved as 'controlling and disposing forces' (Foerster 1962:3) and so provided a basic theodicy. In popular Greek belief the *daimons* are regarded as fundamentally the spirits of the departed endowed with supernatural powers and able to perform capricious acts, but who could also be placated or manipulated by the use of magical incantations or amulets.

In many of these spells found in the magical papyri the popular belief that the *daimons* were connected to the spirits of the dead is reflected. Often these spells were to be affixed or deliberately placed in graves or in other places that the dead were thought to use as a portal from this world to the next. Bolt (1996:88) argues that the corpse was being used as a letter-box in an attempt to gain the power of the underworld god or 'to enlist the ghost itself'. Indeed Bolt (1996: 91) continues to argue that the use of magic to address the ghost of a corpse became a standard practice that in turn coined a special word – νεκύδαιμον. For love or revenge, protection or harm, magic spells as found in the papyri show the popular belief in the existence of *daimons* as the spirits of departed people very often after violent death. These *daimons* were in turn called upon and manipulated to bring about a change in a person's circumstances by the offering up of a suitable and particular incantation.

²⁶ The suitability of the climate and conditions of Egypt may well explain the preservation of these fragments of papyri containing magical invocations (see Arnold (1992:22). Compare also Bruce (1991:6) looking at the preservation of the papyri of the New Testament.

²⁷ See Genesis 41 for an account of magicians during the time of Joseph and Exodus 7-9 for the confrontation between Moses and the court magicians of Pharaoh. In Daniel 1-5 the presence and influence of magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners (5:11) in the court of the Babylonian Kings can be observed.

These texts show how a fear of the spirit realm and the *daimwn/daimon* gripped the consciousness of people especially those at a popular level in Hellenistic society. These evil and good powers were thought to populate all creation including the air, the world and the underworld. There was no escape from their influence and power thus leading to an even greater fear of them. Magic, therefore, provided many people with a way of dealing with their fears of the spirit realm and the malevolent influence of the *daimons* over them and their lives.

6.2.2 Curse Tablets

In addition to the magical papyri, over 1100 curse tablets (*defixiones*), dating from c 330 BC to the 6th Century AD, have been found by archaeologists throughout the Mediterranean lands. These tablets witness to the fact that the widespread use of magic was conducted throughout most of the Roman Empire and that this was a continuous and sustained religious phenomenon throughout the Hellenistic period. The curse tablets consisted of a magical formula generally written on a piece of lead and then attached to the name of the victim to be cursed or positioned in a place with easy access to the underworld and the place of the dead, like a tomb or a grave. The victim would then be affected by the curse by the supernatural spirits or *daimons* which had been invoked. Those tablets especially from around the 4th century BC seem to be directly invoking those who are dead and the term *daimon* began to be assigned to the spirit concerned. Furthermore, the term *νεκύδαϊμον* comes into usage to describe the spirit of the dead being invoked.

6.2.3 The View of Bolt Assessed

Bolt (1996:75-96) is correct in noting those occasions in the Graeco-Roman literature and in the magical practices of the time, where *daimons* seem to be identified as the souls/spirits of recently departed human beings. There is little doubt that at a popular level, the people did indeed believe in the existence and involvement of ghosts in their everyday lives. The amount and nature of the papyri and *defixiones* is clear of the burgeoning interest in the spirit world and the desire of individuals to find help or relief from these *daimons*. However, Bolt overstates his case when he applies his findings to the Jewish Intertestamental Literature and especially the New Testament (1996:96-102).²⁸

As will soon be observed, the existence and role of evil angels, demons and spirits are readily accepted in the Old Testament, the Jewish Intertestamental Literature and even in the Septuagint. However, there appears to be a reticence in this Jewish literature, even in the Septuagint itself, to follow the Hellenistic tendency in identifying these supernatural spiritual beings as simply the ghosts of dead human beings. Furthermore, and perhaps most critical for Bolt's theory, the New Testament authors never categorically identify the demons/spirits as ghosts of the dead, nor do they regularly employ the term *δαίμων* (*daimon*) preferring instead *δαίμονιον*.²⁹ The writers of the New Testament, therefore, seem to be influenced more by the Old Testament and even Jewish Intertestamental literature understanding of angels, spirits and demons. While not entering into speculation concerning these spiritual supernatural beings like the Jewish Intertestamental literature, they accept without reservation the existence of these evil angels, spirits and demons. However, no explicit (or implicit) link is made between these angels, spirits or demons with the departed spirits of dead humans.

Nevertheless, it is entirely possible that some Hellenistic hearers of the Gospel narratives and perhaps even the readers of Peter's letter (and 1 Peter 3:19-22 in particular) did indeed understand the Christian message and Jesus' ministry against this background. Perhaps they did equate the unclean spirits (*τὰ πνεύματα τὰ ἀκάθαρτα*), spirits in prison (*ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν*), demons (*δαίμονιον*) and angels (*ἄγγελοι*) in the New Testament as simply ghosts or spirits of deceased humans still involved in the world. Perhaps they interpreted Jesus' exorcisms as an assault upon the world of the dead and even of death itself.³⁰ However, this would probably have been a misunderstanding of the texts as it does not seem to be warranted by the actual evidence in the New Testament. Nor would it adequately explain

²⁸ Bolt attempts to see Jesus' miracles in Mark 1:20-21; 5:1-20; 7:24-30 and 9:14-29 against the background of the Hellenistic usage and understanding of *δαίμων*. Bolt's (1996:98-99) attempt to identify the demons possessing the Gerasene man as the ghosts or spirits of recently deceased humans lacks any real support or evidence from the actual text.

²⁹ *Δαίμων* appears only in Matthew 8:31 and also in some manuscripts of Mark 5:12, Luke 8:29 and Revelation 16:14; 18:12.

³⁰ See Bolt (1996:101).

the intent of the authors of the Gospels and the New Testament literature. The New Testament is consistent in its presentation that Jesus, the Son of God/Messiah, was during his earthly ministry locked in mortal conflict with Satan and his evil angels, spirits and demons. Moreover, the New Testament presents Jesus finally gaining the ultimate victory over Satan, the powers of evil and even death itself by his death and resurrection. Nowhere is Jesus presented as being in conflict with ghosts and the New Testament is consistent in its portrayal of these spiritual adversaries of Jesus as being unclean/evil demons or spirits.

The main value of Bolt's work, therefore, is in its examination of the extant Hellenistic evidence of the use of the term δαίμων/*daimon* especially in the Magical sources and the literature of the day. Bolt does indeed cast light upon the worldview of the Graeco-Roman audience and their understanding of *daimon*. Bolt is correct in noting how the widespread evidence, as found in the defixiones and magical papyri, indicates how these *daimons* or ghosts were indeed greatly feared by people in society. These desperate people therefore felt it necessary to make every effort to find relief from these evil *daimons* and their evil intentions. Nevertheless, while his theory that this is a key in understanding evil spirits in Mark requires greater substantive evidence, Bolt's work sheds considerable light on the understanding and common fears of many people in the Hellenistic world concerning *daimons*. Bolt provides enough evidence to show conclusively that many in the Graeco-Roman world during the time that Peter writes were obsessed with these spiritual beings and their ongoing earthly activities.

6.3 Magic in the New Testament

Any brief excursus of the probable import of magic in the life of first century people in the Roman Empire would not be complete without looking at the portrayal of magic in the New Testament. In Acts, Luke records four separate incidents involving the use of magic.

6.3.1 Simon the Magician, Acts 8:4-13

In Samaria Luke's report notes that Simon had managed to achieve many amazing things by the use of magic in the city and the country of Samaria (προϋπήρχεν ἐν τῇ πόλει μαγεύων καὶ ἐξιστάνων τὸ ἔθνος τῆς Σαμαρείας 8:9).³¹ His fame and success led Simon to be known by the people as 'The Great Power' whose power was attributed to come from God (οὗτός ἐστιν ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ καλουμένη μεγάλη Acts 8:10).³² However, Simon's miraculous signs were to be overshadowed by the works of Philip who could make evil spirits (πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα) come from people and heal folk of their diseases (Acts 8:7). This led to great joy in that city of Samaria and some degree of professional rivalry on the part of Simon.

It is interesting and worth noting, that Simon exercised his ministry successfully among the Samaritans during the 1st Century AD.³³

6.3.2 Bar-Jesus/Elymas, The Jewish Magician, Acts 13:4-12

As will be noted later, the influence of popular folk religion regarding spirits and demons eventually infiltrated the worldview of even Jewish people. While the more theologically conservative among the Jewish people may have viewed the practice of these magical acts as contrary to believing in a sovereign and omnipotent God, at the popular level many of the Jews of the Diaspora saw nothing intrinsically wrong in combining to their faith a trust in and use of magic. Arnold (1992:74) is probably correct in this analysis of the influence of magic upon 1st century Judaism and is supported by Aune (1986:216-17) who notes that by the 2nd century some proponents of Rabbinic Judaism were able to harmonise the clear biblical prohibitions against magic with the magic practices by redefining both.

Paul encounters a particular magician called Bar-Jesus on the island of Cyprus at the beginning of his first missionary journey (Acts 13). Bar-Jesus, also known as Elymas, is described by Luke as ἄνδρα τινὰ μάγον ψευδοπροφήτην Ἰουδαῖον ᾧ ὄνομα Βαριησοῦ (a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet,

³¹ Luke does not call Simon a magician (μάγος), but does refer to him practicing magic (μαγεύω) and performing magical acts (μαγεία).

³² Witherington III (1998:284) notes that this designation seems close to the inscriptional evidence about a god who is less than the supreme god but nonetheless very powerful (cf PGM 4.1225-29) and called the "Great Power".

³³ See Witherington III (1998:283f) for a brief summary of the opinions of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus concerning Simon and his popularity in Samaria.

named Bar-Jesus, Acts 13:6, RSV). Here is evidence of one working as a magician and also claiming some kind of inside track with God. This description of the alleged powers of Elymas seems to satisfy the fourth classification of magic as offered by Aune (1986:218). While the term μάγος could simply denote a priest, the fact that it appears alongside 'false prophet' shows that the title is being used pejoratively. A μάγος was a diviner who through various rituals claimed to be able to evoke the dead, including the shades or spirits of one's ancestors; and coupled with the word 'prophet' Luke suggests that Bar-Jesus claimed to be able to tell the future, perhaps through necromancy, perhaps through astrology or magical spells and rituals involving both (Witherington III 1998:396).

Furthermore, Bar-Jesus seems to have been successful in becoming a part of the retinue of Sergius Paulus the Roman Governor of the island. Luke records the inevitable confrontation between Bar-Jesus and the followers of Jesus. Luke portrays the events as being more than just examples of professional jealousy or the clash of personalities, but the clash between two opposing and irreconcilable worldviews. It may be deduced that Luke viewed magic and magicians as an ongoing threat to Christianity. For Luke only Christianity could truly be described as a legitimate religion and a true and lasting help to people.

This passage again shows the widespread nature of magic and that proponents of these black arts could often be found in the company of the powerful movers and shakers of society. The subsequent miracle by Paul in blinding the haranguing Bar-Jesus is probably deliberately included by Luke to demonstrate the overall supreme power of Jesus over the magician, the evil spirits and the Devil himself. The account also shows Paul's estimation of Bar-Jesus and the source of his gifts -

ὁ πλήρης παντὸς δόλου καὶ πάσης ῥαδιουργίας, υἱὲ διαβόλου, ἐχθρὲ πάσης δικαιοσύνης, οὐ παύσῃ διαστρέφων τὰς ὁδοὺς [τοῦ] κυρίου τὰς εὐθείας;

"You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10, RSV.)

Paul deliberately reveals to all that Elymas' parentage is not as worthy as he claimed for himself.

6.3.3 Slave girl with a Spirit of Divination – Acts 16:16ff

In Philippi Paul encounters a slave girl with a spirit of divination who it seems was able to predict the future.³⁴ This girl is described as having a python-spirit (πνεῦμα πύθωνα) which was associated with the Dragon that was supposed to guard the oracle at Delphi in Greece and was slain by Apollo. The πνεῦμα πύθωνα later came to designate a spirit of divination and then later was associated with ventriloquism whose practitioners were believed to have a spirit in one's stomach.

After several days of being followed around by the girl proclaiming exactly who they were and why they had come to Philippi, Paul, clearly believing that a demon controlled this slave girl, addressed the spirit directly (τῷ πνεύματι εἶπεν, 16:18) and commanded it to leave her and at once she was delivered. The terminology employed by Paul in confronting the spirit expresses the reality of the clash is actually between Jesus and the powers of evil (παραγγέλλω σοι ἐν ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐξελθεῖν ἀπ' αὐτῆς· καὶ ἐξῆλθεν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ; "I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour, 16:18, RSV). This is not simply a clash between Paul and the evil spirit, but rather is actually a confrontation between the Lord and evil.

This expulsion of the spirit of divination from the girl caused a great deal of anger on the part of her owners who had seen the lucrative source of their livelihood come to an abrupt end. The owners of this slave girl were probably people of considerable social status with considerable financial wherewithal who could risk taking Paul and Silas to court for compensation for loss of earnings (Witherington III 1998:496).

It is interesting that in this more Hellenistic scenario the encounter is with a Gentile slave girl who is possessed by some evil spirit and is being exploited by her owners. The displeasure of the crowd and

³⁴ Μαντεύομαι is translated as 'fortune-telling' NKJV, NRSV, NASB and NIV and as 'soothsaying' – RSV and ASV.

the magistrates (οἱ στρατηγοὶ, 16:22) towards Paul and Silas on having lost this means of communication with the spirit world, suggests that the girl's clients came from a cross section of society.

6.3.4 The Burning of the Magical Books – Acts 19:13-20

Acts 19 is very important in revealing the popular belief in the role of magic in 1st Century AD Asia Minor and grants particular insight into popular Jewish and non-Jewish magical practice. In the immediate context Luke recalls the arrival of a group of travelling Jewish exorcists in Ephesus (Asia) who attempt to perform the exorcism of a group of individuals each one troubled by evil spirits (ἐπὶ τοὺς ἔχοντας τὰ πνεύματα τὰ πονηρὰ). These Jewish exorcists shall be examined in more detail later. However, this passage reveals several things about magic in Ephesus.

6.3.4.1 The passage reinforces the impression that Ephesus was a centre of magical practices during the first century (Arnold 1992:33).³⁵ From the scale of events in Acts 19 and the religious history of the city, with the city being home to a temple to Artemis, it is clear that Ephesus was indeed a centre of magic and divination. Furthermore, it is likely that not only would the city be engrossed in the cult of Artemis but also that the influence of these practices would easily radiate out from the city throughout the region of Asia and then beyond into Asia Minor. Ephesus it seems was a cosmopolitan city attracting both Greeks and Jews and that any proponents could easily have taken their magical practices beyond the city boundaries. Furthermore, if there were itinerant Jewish exorcists selling their abilities, it is even more than likely that Hellenistic non-Jewish travelling magicians would have also been travelling throughout the region making a living.

6.3.4.2 Acts 19:18-19 indicates that those people converted by Paul were either users of, or practitioners of, magic and divination-

Πολλοὶ τε τῶν πεπιστευκότων ἤρχοντο ἐξομολογούμενοι καὶ ἀναγγέλλοντες τὰς πράξεις αὐτῶν ἱκανοὶ δὲ τῶν τὰ περίεργα πραξάντων κτλ,

Many also of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who practiced magic arts brought their books together, etc, Acts 19:18-19, RSV.

The cost of the books burnt, 50,000 pieces of silver (ἀργυρίου μυριάδας πέντε), shows how much money this line of business could generate.³⁶

6.3.4.3 The passage in Acts 19 also shows that this new religion called Christianity stood apart from the syncretistic and competing truth claims of the day. Any Christianity worth its salt will be a challenge to the pocketbook, the flag and the shrine (Larkin 1995:283). Those who became Christians were expected to make a decisive break from their past and their former religious and spiritual practices. The burning of the books was a public display to all in the city (συνενέγκαντες τὰς βίβλους κατέκαιον ἐνώπιον πάντων, 19:18) that these people had turned their back on these magic practices and this particular lifestyle. This attitude to competing religions would eventually lead to opposition. Any group that maintained an exclusive gospel, an unwillingness to compromise with those they regarded as evil and idolatrous and a refusal to even countenance the validity of another person's religion or their religious practices would eventually be the focus of opposition and persecution at the hand of these non-Christian neighbours.

6.3.4.4 This passage also shows that a group of Diaspora Jews (ἦσαν δὲ τινος Σκευᾶ Ἰουδαίου ἀρχιερέως ἑπτὰ υἱοὶ τοῦτο ποιοῦντες; seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing

³⁵ Because Ephesus was the home of all sorts of magic the phrase, 'Ephesian writings' (ἐφεσῖα γράμματα) came to be used for documents containing spells and magical formulas. See Witherington III (1998:582-3).

³⁶ Marshall (1980:312) argues that this figure of the worth of the books may not be too much of an exaggeration. Witherington III (1998:582) notes that 50,000 silver coins (probably drachmas) would be the equivalent of 50,000 day's pay for a labourer. The value of the books burned shows the kinds of money that could be accrued by practitioners of the magic arts in the city. Furthermore, it may also give an insight into their personal wealth and social standing within the community at Ephesus.

this, 19:14, RSV)³⁷ were involved in the practice of magic and divination in some kind of itinerant ministry to those who had evil spirits (τὰ πνεύματα τὰ πονηρὰ, 19:13).

Having been confronted by the extraordinary miracles of God by the hand of Paul by which evil spirits had been cast out (τά τε πνεύματα τὰ πονηρὰ ἐκπορεύεσθαι, 19:11-12), these itinerant exorcists had adopted the name of Jesus and had simply added it to their book of spells and repertoire. Marshall (1980:311) is right in pointing out that even pagans used the various Jewish names of God. These Jewish exorcists (cf Luke 11:19) now proceeded to use the name of Jesus in an endeavour to rival Paul's powers. ὀρκίζω ὑμᾶς τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν Παῦλος κηρύσσει. ("I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." 19:13, RSV). It is worth noting that a magical formula preserved in the Paris magical papyrus reads, 'I adjure thee by the God of the Hebrews, Jesus.'³⁸

The existence of these itinerant Jewish exorcists in Ephesus shows clearly that magic and exorcism were not simply the preserve of the non-Jewish inhabitants of Asia Minor. The attraction of magic extended throughout the general populace to draw followers from a syncretistic Hellenistic background and also those brought up in monotheistic Judaism. Magic's universal appeal may very well have been due to a general belief that it met some perceived need among the people.

6.3.5 Other New Testament Passages

In Revelation (9:21; 21:8; 22:15) and Paul's letter to the Galatians (5:20) there are references to those who practice witchcraft. The term φάρμακος occurs in Revelation (21:8; 22:15) both times in the plural and both times in the context of a vice list. On both occasions the sorcerers belong to a group that is to be excluded. There are naturally echoes here with the lists of those to be excluded from Israel in Deuteronomy 18:9-14 (see also 11QTemple 61:16-19). In Revelation 22:15 sorcery is one of the practices that will lead to one being excluded from the Holy City.³⁹ Similarly in Galatians 5:20 the noun φαρμακεία (sorcery) is found in the list of the 'Works of the Flesh' practitioners of which are warned that they shall not inherit the Kingdom of God (καθὼς προεἶπον ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσι, 5:21).

As both Revelation and Galatians were written to communities in Asia Minor, we see that the Christian believers continued to be faced with the problem of magicians and the magic arts and that this difficulty persisted for quite some time. If we see Galatians as being penned circa 48AD (Carson et al 1992:294) and Revelation in the final years of the reign of Domitian circa 94-96AD (Carson et al 1992:473-76), then it is conceivable that Peter, writing to other parts of Asia Minor, addressed people facing (*inter alia*) the same dilemma over magic and sorcery.

6.4 Jewish Magic

The references in Acts to the Bar-Jesus the Jewish magician (Acts 13) and to the Seven sons of Sceva the High priest (Acts 19) show clearly that at a popular level magic played a part in the life of some Jews. The clientele of these Jewish magicians and exorcists may well have crossed religious and ethnic boundaries. Non-Jews could well have used these Jewish magicians in order to cover all their religious and spiritual bases in order to find relief from their particular ailment or predicament. However, it is extremely likely that these Jewish magicians found work from people from their own religious and ethnic background.

The use of magic and divination were forbidden in the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:26; Deuteronomy 18:9-12). Furthermore, the Old Testament record states clearly that those who disobeyed God's Law and practiced or consulted with evil powers were to be dealt with severely. These practices were regarded as evil and detestable in the eyes of the Lord.

³⁷ The reference to the High Priest (ἀρχιερέως) need not refer to the actual official bearer of the position but an assumed title (see Marshall (1980:311)).

³⁸ See Marshall (1980:311).

³⁹ Aune (1998:1132) notes how one particular religious association in Philadelphia from the 1st Century BC had a written list of exclusion which included those who practised malevolent magic or used malevolent charms.

9 כי אתה בא אל הארץ אשר יהנה אלהיך נתן לך לא תלמד לעשות
 כתועבת הגוים ההם:
 10 לא ימצא בך מעביר בנו ובתו באש קסם קסמים מעוגן
 ומנחש ומכשף:
 11 וחבר חקר ושאל אוב ויודעני ודרש אל המתים:
 12 כי תועבת יהנה כל עשה אלה ובגלל תועבת האלה יהנה אלהיך
 מוריש אותם מפניך:
 Deuteronomy 18:9-12 (BHS)

"When you come into the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. ¹⁰ There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, any one who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, ¹¹ or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. ¹² For whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD; and because of these abominable practices the LORD your God is driving them out before you." (RSV)

Contrary to the Old Testament and official Jewish regulations against the use of magic and involvement with the spirits of the dead, both good and evil, many Jewish people, especially those of the Diaspora, felt free to adopt these practices from their non-Jewish neighbours. Not only did they adopt these practices from their neighbours but they also went further and developed a particularly Jewish form of magic and divination. The New Testament evidence confirms this Jewish interest in magic and divination by identifying, Simon, Bar Jesus/ Elymas and the Seven sons of Sceva.

Arnold (1992:72) notes the work of the Jewish scholar Goodenough (1953) who has reproduced photographs of various magical charms and amulets which contain some kind of Jewish symbol (for example a menorah or a depiction of Solomon⁴⁰) or have Hebrew/Aramaic written on them. These magical charms may have been used for a variety of purposes but they do seem to be utilised commonly for protection from evil spirits. Similarly, the influence of Judaism on magic of surrounding cultures and religious groups can also be seen in the use of Jewish religious names and features that could be invoked by magicians. These magical papyri with spells containing Jewish names and Hellenised names of God to be invoked show how magic was influenced by religions and faiths.

It seems, therefore, that many Jews in the Diaspora were open and receptive to the practices of magic in their desire for protection from evil spirits, and that names of Jews and religious features of Judaism were readily added to the Gentile pantheon of gods, spirits who could be invoked for help.

Arnold (1992:74) is convinced that there is a strong belief among the Jewish people in the powers of darkness throughout their history. This belief intensified before the time of Christ probably due to the perceived continuous silence of God and his prophets, due to the ever deteriorating political status of the Jews in Palestine, and due to an increase in the influence of Hellenism and other religions and philosophies. This would in turn, at a popular level, lead to ignoring those parts of the Old Testament which clearly forbade any participation in magic, spirits and divination.

7. Astrology

In discussing the religious milieu of 1st century AD Asia Minor the influence of astrology on the psyche of people at a popular level cannot be ignored.⁴¹ The common belief existed that the planets and stars truly represented, or were in reality, spirits, gods and supernatural beings. As these astral bodies were believed to be the continuing ethereal presence of the heroes and gods they were consulted, worshipped and invoked to help the worshipper in his or her daily earthly existence. Over time astrology became closely connected with the various mystery cults, magic and religions so that the zodiac and its various constituent signs were incorporated into the statues and monuments of non-Jewish worship.

⁴⁰ The Old Testament account shows Solomon receiving wisdom from God. Later Judaism understood this gift to include the ability to deal with the spiritual realm (Arnold 1992:72-74).

⁴¹ See Arnold's (1992:48-54) brief introduction of Astrology in First Century AD life.

This interest in Astrology was not confined to those from a Hellenistic background. Astrology also played a part in the lives of common Jews in the first century (see Arnold 1992:73-74). This interest is confirmed by evidence gathered from Qumran. Although one scroll containing a zodiac is believed to exist (4Q Zodiac) it has yet to be published (Wise 1992:144). Two fragments have been found, one in Aramaic and the other in Hebrew probably dating from the end of the first century BC, which contain astrological physiognomies and seem to resemble 'horoscopes'.⁴² Vermes (1990:305) is unsure whether these 'horoscope-like' fragments are actual attempts to forecast the future or simply being used as a literary device. Nevertheless, Vermes (1990:305) correctly notes, 'That such texts are found among the Scrolls should not, however, surprise anyone. For if many Jews frowned on astrology, others, such as the Hellenistic Jewish writer Eupolemus, credited its invention to Abraham!'

The evidence from Qumran and the Testament of Solomon indicates just how far astrological terminology and ideas had been assimilated into popular Jewish thinking and had become well entrenched by the time of Jesus. This development arose in spite of the clear connection Astrology had with idolatry in the eyes of the writers of the Hebrew Bible.⁴³

8. Demons in Hellenistic Judaism

8.1 The Septuagint

In the Septuagint there appears a close connection between *daimons* and the dead (Bolt 1996:94-96). Bolt (1996:94) looks at the Septuagint and notes that the δαιμ- word group associates idolatry with the worship of demons and is closely linked with the dead and magic.

In the Septuagint the translation of Isaiah 65:3 and 11 seem to interpret the Hebrew as referring to the practice of necromancy in an attempt to bring about change and influence events in the physical world. Those who are invoked by incense and sacrifice are called daimons.

הָעַם הַמְּקַעֲיִסִים אוֹחִי עַל-פְּנֵי תְּמִיד זִבְחִים בְּגַנּוֹת וּמִקְטָרִים עַל-הַלְבָּנִים:
Isaiah 65:3 (BHS)

a people who continually provoke me to my very face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on altars of brick; (NIV)

ὁ λαὸς οὗτος ὁ παροξύνων με ἐναντίον ἐμοῦ διὰ παντός αὐτοὶ θυσιάζουσιν ἐν τοῖς κήποις καὶ θυμιῶσιν ἐπὶ ταῖς πλίνθοις τοῖς δαιμονίοις ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν (LXX)

This people who continually provoke me in my presence by sacrificing in gardens and burning incense on bricks to the demons who do not exist. (My translation)

וְאַתֶּם עֹזְבֵי יְהוָה הַשְּׂכַחִים אֶת-הַר קְדְשִׁי הַעֲרִכִים לְגַד שְׁלֵתָן
וְהַמְמַלְאִים לְמַגֵּי מִמְסָד׃
Isaiah 65:11 (BHS)

But you who forsake the LORD, who forget my holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny; (NIV)

ὁμεῖς δὲ οἱ ἐγκαταλιπόντες με καὶ ἐπιλανθανόμενοι τὸ ὄρος τὸ ἅγιόν μου καὶ ἐτοιμάζοντες τῷ δαίμονι τράπεζαν καὶ πληροῦντες τῇ τύχῃ κέρασμα (LXX)

But you, who forsake me and forget my holy mountain, who prepare a table to the demon and fill the mixture to be poured out to Fortune. (My translation)

The authors of the Septuagint seem to interpret these passages from Isaiah in a way that reflects more closely their own time with its belief in and common practice of invoking and calling upon demons to come to one's assistance. These passages exhibit the belief that the demons were being invoked by a

⁴² 4Q186 and 4QMessAr. For this possible dating and the English translations of these alleged horoscopes from Qumran, see Vermes (1990:305-307).

⁴³ See Isaiah 47:13-14 and Jeremiah 10:1-3 for examples of the Old Testament's denunciation of astrology and the practitioners of these arts.

series of rituals in order to influence events. The Septuagint certainly seems to read more into the Hebrew than is actually present, but while this interpretation may be open to debate it does reveal or reflect the prevailing interest in the spiritual realm and in the existence and actions of demons.

8.2 Tobit

In the book of Tobit⁴⁴ all the occurrences of *daimon* refer to Asmodeus (Ἀσμοδαῖος) (3:8,17; 6:7,13-17; 8:3) a demon whose sole function it seems is to kill. This is seen in Tobit 3:8 which reads Ἀσμοδαῖος τὸ πονηρὸν δαιμόνιον ἀπέκτεινεν αὐτούς.⁴⁵ It is interesting that Asmodeus can only be removed after a proper exorcism is performed which involves the use of magic and various acts. In the narrative Raphael, God's messenger, reveals how by burning the heart and liver of a fish in the presence of one afflicted one could remove the evil demon.

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ἡ καρδία καὶ τὸ ἥπαρ ἕαν τινα ὀχλῆ δαιμόνιον ἢ πνεῦμα πονηρὸν
ταῦτα δεῖ καπνίσαι ἐνώπιον ἀνθρώπου ἢ γυναικός καὶ οὐκέτι οὐ μὴ ὀχληθῆ.
(Tobit 6:8)

The removal of this particular evil spirit or demon could only be brought about by an exorcism achieved by magical means. It is interesting that the same magical practice was suitable to exorcise either an evil spirit or a demon. It could be, therefore, that these spiritual beings are treated together as there exists some kind of semantic overlap between the terms δαιμόνιον and πνεῦμα πονηρὸν.

8.3 Philo

Philo adopts the Greek terminology and view of demon/*daimon*. Foerster (1962:9) is correct when he comments: 'Philo stands in the Hellenistic tradition, sharing its terminology as opposed to the biblical and equating angels and demons'.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Bolt (1996:95), following the hypothesis of Foerster, sees Philo equating 'the angelic beings of Jewish literature with *daimons* (as intermediate beings) of the Greek literature, the very fact that *daimons* are also placed upon his continuum of souls indicates that they are related (Somn. 1.135-141; Gig. 6-12) if not explicitly equated (Gig. 16) to souls'.

Furthermore, Philo (Legat 65, c39-40 AD) connects *daimons* and the dead. In the passage Philo writes that Gaius had killed his father in law after dismissing the demons of his late wife who had been murdered. Obviously, this connection between the demons and the spirits of those recently departed was one that the Graeco-Roman audience of Philo would have understood without need of explanation.

8.4 Josephus

Foerster (1962:10) argues that in his use of *daimon* Josephus also moves in the world of Hellenistic usage and conception. Josephus uses *daimon* to refer to the spirits of the dead both of the blessed (*Jewish War* 6,47) and of the ghosts of the dead who seek vengeance (ψυχὴν ὀφειλομένην ἀδελφοῦ καὶ μητρὸς....δαίμοσιν. *Antiquities* 13,317).

Josephus also uses *daimon* to refer to the 'spirits of wicked men'. *Jewish War* 7,185 reads,

τὰ γὰρ καλούμενα δαιμόνια, ταῦτα δὲ πονηρῶν ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπων πνεύματα τοῖς ζῶσιν
εἰσδυόμενα καὶ κτείνοντα τοὺς βοηθείας μὴ τυγχάνοντας, αὐτὰ ταχέως ἐξελαύνει, κἄν
προσενεχθῆ μόνον τοῖς νοσοῦσι.

As for the so-called demons, these spirits of evil men which enter into the living and kill them unless aid is attained, are quickly expelled if only it is applied to those who are ill.

⁴⁴ While Tobit may have originated as early as the 4th Century BC, Bruce (1991:157) dates the book from circa 200BC.

⁴⁵ The Revised Standard Version translates Tobit 3:8 as, 'and the evil demon Asmodeus had slain each of them'.

⁴⁶ Foerster (1962:9) recognises that Philo belonged to a small intellectual elite and that he does not seem to refer to popular belief concerning *daimon*.

Here the demons are clearly defined as the ghosts or spirits of wicked men who have died but who still come and inflict harm on those still alive. What is also interesting in this passage is that the evil spirits can be expelled by the use of the root of the rue plant.⁴⁷

In *Antiquities*. 8.45-49 Josephus shows that the destructive work of demons among human beings was combated by the ongoing actions of Solomon and the actions of Eleazer the exorcist.

Παρέσχε δ' αὐτῷ μαθεῖν ὁ θεὸς καὶ τὴν κατὰ τῶν δαιμόνων τέχνην εἰς ὠφέλειαν καὶ θεραπείαν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις· ἔπιδάς τε συνταξάμενος αἷς παρηγορεῖται τὰ νοσήματα καὶ τρόπους ἐξορκώσεων κατέλιπεν, οἷς οἱ ἐνδούμενοι τὰ δαιμόνια ὡς μηκέτ' ἐπανελθεῖν ἐκδιώξουσι.

'And God granted him [Solomon] knowledge of the art used against demons for the benefit and healing of men. He also composed incantations by which illnesses are relieved, and left behind forms of exorcisms with which those possessed by demons drive them out, never to return.'

Josephus thus echoes the calling upon the name of the heroes of the Jewish faith by those Jewish magicians as was indicated earlier (see section 6.4).

Foerster (1962:10) concludes that Josephus is 'strikingly consistent in calling evil spirits δαιμόνια, even though he uses δαίμων in the Hellenistic sense'. As Bolt (1999:95) notes for Josephus these daemonic powers could work on the side of justice (*Jewish War* 1.82, 84; *Antiquities* 13.314, 317, 415-16)); as vengeful ghosts seeking to inflict harm on people (*Jewish War* 1.599, 607) or the spirits of the blessed dead (*Jewish War* 6.47). The connection between those demons and their connection with those who are dead is impossible to deny. Furthermore, Josephus provides more evidence to establish a link between magic and the manipulation of the spirit realm.

8.5 Qumran

It is interesting in 1QapGen col. 20, which corresponds to Genesis 12-15, that the Patriarch Abraham prays and lays hands on Pharaoh in order to remove an evil spirit sent from God to scourge the ruler of Egypt and his house.

'And now pray for me and my house that this evil spirit may be expelled from it. So I prayed [for him]...and I laid my hands on his [head]; and the scourge departed from him and the evil [spirit] was expelled [from him], and he lived' (Vermes 1990:255).

This narrative is striking as it is the earliest known Jewish account of a healing being carried about with the laying on of hands. There are no extant examples in Jewish and Rabbinic sources, or even in the New Testament, of such a phenomenon.

In the Prayer of Nabonidus (4QPrNab) the account notes the involvement of the exorcist attempting to remove the evil ulcer afflicting Nabunai, King of Babylon.

'I was afflicted [with an evil ulcer] for seven years . . . and an exorcist pardoned my sins. He was a Jew from among the [children of the exile of Judah, and he said], 'Recount this in writing to [glorify and exalt] the name of the [Most High God' . . .]' (Vermes 1990:274).

This account contains similar threads including the appearance of a Jewish exorcist and the use of the name of the God of the Jews in order to expel a demon afflicting a non-Jew. While the dating of the Prayer of Nabonidus is disputed from the 2nd and 1st Century BC, the light it casts is clear.

8.6 Summary

What can be detected in Judaism at this time, and which probably stems from a popular level, is a growth in interest and involvement with spirits and demons. This interest mirrored in some way the

⁴⁷ The very action of picking rue was believed to cause harm and danger and so spells existed to be recited by those undertaking such a task to ensure safety. See Bolt (1996:95).

surrounding Hellenistic culture in which these Diaspora Jews were immersed. Perhaps desperate to find something relevant and contemporary in their religious lives they adopted this spiritual awareness and interest so as to make God seem less distant and silent. This study will now turn to look at the role and place of angels, demons and spirits as observed in the Jewish Intertestamental literature.

9 Angels, Spirits and Demons in Intertestamental Judaism

In the Pseudepigraphical Jewish writings (Enoch, Wisdom, Jubilees and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs) the interest in angels, demons and spirits is heightened and they are portrayed as playing an important role in explaining the existence and the problem of evil. In this literature these forces of evil are believed to be the instigators and reason for evil and harm in the world. While God is still acknowledged to be sovereign and punishes sinful men and women by use of his own angels, the evil and harm inflicted upon people are generally ascribed to the actions of angels, demons and evil spirits under the auspices of Satan who are rebelling against the will of God.

An increasing interest in angels, demons and spirits and the spiritual realm is an evident feature in Judaism during the two centuries leading up to the birth of Jesus Christ and indeed for some time after his death (Arnold 1992:64). It has been argued that the beginning of this serious interest and development of demonology and angelology in Jewish literature can even be observed in the later books of the Hebrew Bible, for example Daniel and Zechariah.⁴⁸

This rise of interest in matters pertaining to the supernatural realm can partly be explained as a result of the meeting and interaction between Jews and peoples from other countries and cultures especially during the Persian and Hellenistic eras.⁴⁹ During the Intertestamental period the interest in things spiritual and angelic among the Jewish people seems to accelerate. Judaism during this time was marked by a number of internal battles over such matters concerning the proper personnel of the priesthood especially during the times of Persian, Greek, Egyptian, Seleucid and Roman rule. This in turn gave rise to powerful movements within Judaism that produced their own literature outside the control of the scribes. These historical factors and external religious influences coincided with a growing general preoccupation with matters concerning angels, spirits and demons and this eventually found creative expression in all aspects of Jewish literature of the time (Apocrypha⁵⁰, Qumran and the Pseudepigrapha) especially those writings composed in an apocalyptic genre. A brief examination of the books of 1 and 2 Enoch, Jubilees, Apocalypse of Baruch, Testament of Abraham, Testament of Naphtali and the Testament of Reuben, would testify to the considerable interest of their various authors in the supernatural realm. This interest in angels, spirits and demons was not however limited to the authors only. Their writings proved popular among the people and the ideas and thought forms they contained found ready acceptance and were to prove highly influential and enduring.

This creative process and general interest in the spirit world may well have been generated by a number of theological considerations. The conspicuous absence of God's Word to his people Israel through the prophets, led many to the conclusion that God was no longer interested in them and as a consequence this gave rise to an even greater emphasis on the doctrine of the transcendence of God. Furthermore, as has been noted, this period was punctuated with a series of traumatic political upheavals experienced by the people of Israel. This may well have played some part in the rise in speculation about the necessity of supernatural intermediaries between a transcendent God and his errant people currently experiencing the judgement of God. The Jewish people, especially those in Palestine were also in need of a theological explanation as to the evil they were suffering at the hands of evil spirits through evil men and empires. The provision of angelic and supernatural intermediaries was thus deemed a suitable means in order to gain some limited access to Yahweh and provide a suitable theodicy to explain the litany of evil events that they had endured.

For these Intertestamental Jewish authors and their audiences, angels were an essential part of their religious life as they acted as intermediaries between men and women and an ever increasingly transcendent God. Moreover, these angels were entrusted with the day to day affairs of ruling the earth as God's vice-regents ruling the world.

⁴⁸ For this development see De Villiers (1998:434-5).

⁴⁹ See De Villiers (1998:435).

⁵⁰ Tobit in particular exhibits considerable interest in supernatural beings.

This development of thinking and speculation on matters pertaining to the spiritual realm and supernatural beings can be observed most clearly in the writings commonly known as the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.⁵¹

9.1 Angels

With regard to angels the Pseudepigraphical writings reflect a considerable amount of conjecture as to the actual number of angels (see 1 Enoch 6:7-8 and 8), their names (1 Enoch 6⁵² and 69), their function⁵³ and the location and different types of angelic beings on the angelic hierarchy⁵⁴.

What can be readily observed is that the authors of these Jewish Pseudepigraphical writings go beyond anything found in the Old Testament record when it comes to identifying, naming and elaborating on the nature and function of these supernatural beings. Everywhere in the Old Testament the existence of angels is assumed and although angels appear with some regularity, especially during the Patriarchal Period and in the Apocalyptic passages of Zechariah and Daniel, the amount of detail is particularly sparse thus leaving a great deal of mystery surrounding angels. The reader of the Old Testament is left aware that angels exist, but is provided with virtually little concrete information. This provided an opportunity for later Jewish authors to engage in angelic speculation.⁵⁵

9.2 The Angelic Fall

Of particular interest are the expanded accounts in the Jewish Intertestamental literature of the rebellion against God and the fall of the evil angels. No other account in the Pseudepigraphical writings is expounded so regularly and in such considerable detail than the fall of the angels whereas it receives scant discussion and explanation in the Old Testament.

This cataclysmic event helped those authors of the Pseudepigraphical literature to explain the existence and rise of evil in God's created order. Seen against this rebellion and ultimate invasion of Satan into the realm of God, a theodicy could be constructed by the writers to help explain the present invasion and

⁵¹ All quotations from the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha are taken from Sparks (1994).

⁵² 1 Enoch 6.7-8 names the major leaders of the fallen Angels - 'And these *are* the names of their leaders: Semyaza, who was their leader, Urakiba, Ramiel, Kokabiel, Tamiel, Ramiel, Daniel, Ezeqiel, Baraqiel, Asael, Armaros, Batriel Ananel, Zaqiel, Samsiel, Sartael, Turiel, Yomiel, Arzaiel. These are the leaders, and all of the others with them.' This listing of the names of the angels is particularly revealing as it shows the considerable interest and speculation in angels and also in demons and evil spirits. See also 1 Enoch 9 for the mention of good angels whose number includes Michael, Raphael and Gabriel. In the Apocrypha Raphael, Uriel and Jeremiel are all named (Tobit 12:15).

⁵³ See 2 Enoch 8 and the Anonymous Apocalypse 1-2 for good angels acting as recorders of the deeds of men and women. See 1 Enoch 90 and The Testament of Abraham 12-13 for evidence of the good angels recording the events of the Last Judgement. See the Anonymous Apocalypse 1-2 of the role of the Good Angels in acting as Prosecuting counsel at the Last Judgement.

⁵⁴ For a thorough list of the angelic hierarchy see 1 Enoch 61. Compare also 2 Enoch 8 with its mention of the various angelic beings and their precise location in the cosmology.

⁵⁵ What can be discerned in the Old Testament is that angels were created (Psalm 148:2,5) and were present at the creation (Job 38:7). Furthermore, angels, bearing the outward appearance of humans (Ezekiel 9:2; Genesis 18:2,16), are God's messengers and instruments of the divine will especially in executing divine judgement upon cities (Genesis 19:13), people (2 Samuel 24:16) and armies (2 Kings 19:35). The Old Testament records angels appearing in dreams (Genesis 28:12; 31:11) or through animals (Numbers 22:22ff) in order to instruct the people of God's will (see also Job 33:23) and what man should do. The idea of angels caring for humans also appears in Psalm 91:1f. The Old Testament also refers to the Angelic Host (צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם) Jeremiah 33:22; 2 Kings 21:3; Zephaniah 1:5) which is applied to the company of angels due to their countless numbers (Daniel 7:10) and their glory. They are also represented as standing either side of the Lord (1 Kings 22:19). Hence the God who is over all including angels is frequently called 'the Lord/God of Hosts' (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) throughout the Old Testament. As well as serving on the army of the Lord (Joshua 5:14f) this heavenly host is to continually praise the name of the Lord (Psalm 103:21; 148:1f). Perhaps the most famous angel in the Old Testament record is 'the Angel of the Lord' (מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה). This Angel of the Lord is the most important and characteristic (usually, but not always, ephemerally human) form of revelation in the Patriarchal period. While there is much debate about the identity of the Angel of the Lord, as to whether he is distinct from or to be identified as Yahweh, the revelatory nature of his ministry is clearly evident. See especially Genesis 32:24ff; Exodus 3; Judges 6:11ff).

occupation of Israel by human empires and the righteous suffering of the people of God. This oppression of evil could be explained in part against the background of belief that Satan had gained some kind of victory in the invasion of Israel by the hostile occupying powers.

The books of Enoch and many of the other Pseudepigraphical writings testify to the Intertestamental preoccupation with the events and results of the Fall of the Angels. Using Genesis 6:1-4 as a jumping off point, these narratives explain the existence of evil spirits/demons in the world as the progeny of the unnatural sexual relations between the Sons of God (Angels) and the daughters of men. Genesis 6:1-4 reads:-

וַיְהִי כִּי־הִחַל הָאָדָם לִרְבֹּעַ עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה וּבָנוּת יָלְדוּ לָהֶם:
וַיֵּרְאוּ בְנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם כִּי טֹבֹת הֵנָּה וַיִּקְחוּ
לָהֶם נָשִׁים מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּחָרוּ:
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לֹא־יָדוּן רוּחִי בָאָדָם לְעֹלָם בְּשָׂגֵם הוּא
בָּשָׂר וְהָיוּ יָמָיו מֵאָה וָעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה:
הַנְּפִלִים הָיוּ בְּאֶרֶץ בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם וְגַם אַחֲרֵי־כֵן
אֲשֶׁר יָבִאוּ בְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים
אֶל־בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם וַיֵּלְדוּ לָהֶם הֵמָּה הַגִּבּוֹרִים
אֲשֶׁר מֵעוֹלָם אֲנָשֵׁי הַשָּׁמַיִם:

When men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them,² the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took to wife such of them as they chose.³ Then the LORD said, "My spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for he is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years."⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown. (RSV)

In 1 Enoch the first book (Chapters 1-36) is called the 'Book of Watchers' and is an apocalyptic account elaborating on this 'fall'. According to this account, which covers 1 Enoch 6-36, the beauty of the daughters of men so enticed the Angels that two hundred of them, under the leadership of Semyaza, agreed to forego the divinely appointed restrictions and have sexual relations with those described in Genesis as the 'daughters of men' (בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם).⁵⁶

And it came to pass, when the sons of men had increased, that in those days there were born to them fair and beautiful daughters. And the angels, the sons of heaven, saw them and desired them. And they said to one another, 'Come, let us choose for ourselves wives from the children of men, and let us beget for ourselves children.' And Semyaza, who was their leader, said to them, 'I fear that you may not wish this deed to be done, and *that* I alone will pay for this great sin.' And they all answered him and said, 'Let us all swear an oath, and bind one another with curses not to alter this plan, but to carry it out effectively.' Then they all swore together and all bound one another with curses to it. (1 Enoch 6:1-5)

And they all took wives for themselves, and everyone chose for himself one each. And they began to go in to them and were promiscuous with them. And they taught them charms and spells and showed to them the cutting of roots and trees. And they became pregnant and bore large giants, and their height was three thousand cubits. These devoured all the toil of men until men were unable to sustain them. And the giants turned against them in order to devour men. And they began to sin against birds, and against animals, and against reptiles and against fish, and they devoured one another's flesh and drank the blood from it. Then the earth complained about the lawless ones. (1 Enoch 7)

⁵⁶ See 1 Enoch 6.7.

Whilst they remained on earth these fallen angels taught the people a number of evil arts and practices including warcraft, magic, spells and incantations and astrology (1 Enoch 8). These evil angels appear therefore to embark on a concerted teaching plan thus introducing evil practices thus far absent on earth.

And Azazel taught men to make swords, and daggers, and shields and breastplates. And he showed them the things after these, and the art of making them: bracelets, and ornaments, and the art of making up the eyes and of beautifying the eyelids, and the most precious and choice stones, and all *kinds of* coloured dyes. And the world was changed. And there was great impiety and much fornication, and they went astray, and all their ways became corrupt. Amezarak taught all those who cast spells and cut roots, Armaros the release of spells, and Baraqiel astrologers, and Kokabel portents, and Tamiel taught astrology, and Asradel taught the path of the moon. And at the destruction of men they cried out, and their voices reached heaven. (1 Enoch 8)

9.3 The Evil Progeny

As well as leading the people astray and introducing magic and evil arts, the 'daughters of men' (הַאֲדָמָה בְּנוֹת) with whom these fallen supernatural angels had sexual relations bore giants Nephilim (הַנְּפִלִים) which were three thousand cubits in height. In turn these giants caused great misery on the people who were unable to satisfy the voracious appetites of these freakish giants. It is recorded that these giants committed a number of atrocities and yet their deaths did not prove the end of evil in the world for demons/evil spirits came forth from their bodies into the world to cause even more wickedness.

Many Jewish authors of the Pseudepigraphical literature came to interpret these sons of God (בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים) as 'angels' or 'Watchers', and the Nephilim (הַנְּפִלִים) as the demonic/evil spirit progeny of this unnatural union. These demons/evil spirits were believed to continue to exist and operate even after the demise of the giant Nephilim.

And now the giants who were born from body and flesh will be called evil spirits upon the earth, and on the earth will be their dwelling. And evil spirits came out from their flesh because from above they were created, from the holy Watchers was their origin and first foundation. Evil spirits they will be on the earth, and spirits of the evil ones they will be called. And the dwelling of the spirits of heaven is heaven, but the dwelling of the spirits of earth, who were born on the earth, is on earth. And the spirits of the giants ..the clouds.. which do wrong are corrupt, and attack and fight and break on the earth, and cause sorrow, and they eat no food and do not thirst, and are not observed. And these spirits will rise against the sons of men and against women because they came out from them. In the days of slaughter and destruction. (1 Enoch 15:8-12)

This interpretation which saw the rise of evil in the world due to the progeny of these giants is a repeated refrain throughout the Pseudepigraphical literature and especially in 1 and 2 Enoch. In this apocalyptic Jewish literature, therefore, this rebellion of the Watchers is believed to be the cause of and ongoing presence and activity of demons and evil spirits. See in particular 1 Enoch 16 and Jubilees 10.

The Jewish Intertestamental literature exhibits, therefore, a belief that the evil spirits, which originally issued from the giants, would continue to corrupt humanity until the end of the age when God would put an end to their hostility and judge them.

9.4 The Judgement of the Fallen Angels and their Progeny

However lest it be accused of solely focusing on the Fall and the evil activity of the Watchers, Nephilim and the evil spirits, the Pseudepigraphical literature, and 1 and 2 Enoch in particular, is consistent in presenting a message of hope to a suffering people. The literature clearly emphasises the certainty of God in acting to imprison, judge and punish these evil supernatural beings and their evil spirit progeny.

9.4.1 The Imprisonment

The Pseudepigraphical literature is, as expected, particularly graphic about the nature of the prison and the imprisonment of the progeny of the Watchers. The authors' purpose seems to pictorially reassure their audience of the certainty of God taking action against those who initiate evil in the world.⁵⁷

And from there I went to another place, more terrible than this, and I saw a terrible thing: *there was a great fire there which burnt and blazed, and the place had a cleft reaching to the abyss, full of great pillars of fire which were made to fall; neither its extent nor its size could I see, nor could I see its source.* Then I said, How terrible this place *is*, and *how* painful to look at! Then Uriel, one of the holy angels who was with me, answered me. He answered me and said to me, Enoch why do you have such fear and terror because of this terrible place, and before this pain? And he said to me, This place is the prison of the angels, and there they will be held forever. (1 Enoch 21.7-10)

Interestingly, while 2 Enoch locates the prison containing the angels/spirits in the second heaven while the original Watchers seem to be imprisoned in the fifth heaven, the certainty of their incarceration is clearly emphasised (2 Enoch 4:1-3).⁵⁸

9.4.2 The Judgement and Punishment

The good news in the Pseudepigraphical literature is that these Angels/Watchers and evil spirits are not only imprisoned, but they await judgement and eternal punishment. Those evil spirits who have instigated evil on the earth will be judged and punished severely by the Lord of Spirits (The Lord God). The message of hope for the readership of these Pseudepigraphical writings is that the perpetrators of evil will eventually be punished for their wickedness against the people of God. God will have certainly the final say and any doubts about his interest and care for his people will be removed forever.⁵⁹

And after this in the tenth week, in the seventh part, there will be the eternal judgement which will be executed on the Watchers, and the great eternal heaven which will spring from the midst of the angels. (1 Enoch 91.15)

9.5 The Ongoing Influence of Evil Spirits

However, before the final judgement, the Jewish Intertestamental writers believed that the activity of these evil spirits must continue to be endured by men and women on earth. Therefore, there also exists a considerable amount of discussion in the Pseudepigraphical literature concerning the role of these evil spirits in the everyday lives of ordinary individuals, in the destiny of nations and in the religious life of Israel.

9.5.1 The Influence of Evil Powers upon Individuals

Inimical to the purposes of God, the evil powers were believed to exert their supernatural powers to lead people away from the revealed will of God. It is common to see these powers lead men and women into all kinds of moral impurity. In this way, these powers follow the pattern of the fallen angels who lead the men and women of earth astray at the times prior to Noah as described in 1 Enoch (1 Enoch 6-8). Behind the activity of these powers today looms the shadow of Satan. Indeed in Qumran the directing role of Satan and the activity of the evil powers, also called the 'company of darkness', to lead individuals astray is prominent (1QM 13).⁶⁰

But Satan, the Angel of Malevolence, Thou hast created for the Pit; his [rule] is in Darkness and his purpose is to bring about wickedness and iniquity. All the spirits of his

⁵⁷ For some texts referring to the prison and imprisonment of the Watchers and their progeny see Jubilees 5.10ff; 10.4-6; 1 Enoch 10; 21; 67; 88; The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch 56; 2 Enoch 4 and 7.

⁵⁸ In The Testament of Levi 3, the author gives his readers an insight into who lives in each of the Seven Heavens. This not only reveals the place of imprisonment of the fallen angels and the evil spirits, but it also reflects the general interest and speculation about the heavens and who exactly lived where.

⁵⁹ Among many passages which speak of the judgement and punishment of the Angels and their progeny see 1 Enoch 10; 12; 14; 19; 21; 54; 55; 56; 67; 90; 91 and the Ascension of Isaiah 1.

⁶⁰ For a translation of 1QM 13 see Vermes (1990:118)

company, the Angels of Destruction, walk according to the precepts of Darkness. Towards them is their [inclination] (1QM 13:11-12).⁶¹

In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs the activity of the powers of darkness in leading men astray is elaborated on at some length. These Testaments, dating around the first or second century BC, purportedly record the final utterances of Jacob's twelve sons.⁶² These writings are generally concerned with ethical issues and are written to promote virtuous living among the Jewish readership. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs reveal the prominent Jewish understanding of how evil spirits continue to lead men and women astray in their everyday lives. According to the Testaments every human being must continue to resist these seven spirits of error and deceit which are directed by Satan, also known as Beliar. These spirits use the natural drives and appetites of humans to lead mankind astray and so promote their evil purposes.⁶³ Jealousy, fornication and sexual impropriety, are often singled out as areas of sinful activity instigated by the evil spirits.

A brief examination of the Pseudepigraphical literature clearly reveals the belief within Intertestamental-Judaism in the continuing interest and activity of evil spirits under the direction of Satan/Beliar in the affairs of individuals, especially in regard to personal morality.

9.5.2 The Influence of Evil Spirits in Non-Jewish Religions

Jewish writers during the Intertestamental period were faced with a challenge posed by the other non-Jewish religions which now co-existed in Palestine due to the various occupying empires, and throughout the surrounding regions. Where did these religions come from? What gave rise to idolatry in the world?

The author of Jubilees is one who sees the creation of these religions as resulting from the activity of evil spirits under the authority and direction of Satan or Mastema. Men from Ur of the Chaldees, he reports,

made for themselves images of cast metal, and each man worshipped his own image that he had cast for himself; and they began to make carved images *too*, and unclean figures. And malevolent spirits egged *them* on and seduced them, so that they indulged in *every kind of sin* and uncleanness. And the Prince Mastema exerted himself to do all this, and he sent out as agents the spirits that were under his control to do all kinds of wrong and sin, and all kinds of transgressions, to corrupt and to destroy, and to shed blood on the earth. (Jubilees 11:4-5)

Similarly the apocalyptic book of 1 Enoch also testifies to the belief that the rise of idolatry in the world was due to the influence and activity of evil spirits upon mankind.

And Uriel said to me, The spirits of the angels who were promiscuous with the women will stand here, and they, assuming many forms, made men unclean and will lead men astray so that they sacrifice to demons as gods – that is, until the great judgement day on which they will be judged so that an end will be made of them. (1 Enoch 19.1)

This understanding on the role of spirits to explain the existence and rise of idolatry does indeed go beyond the evidence and explanation offered in the Old Testament. However, in Deuteronomy 32:16-17 the Old Testament does affirm that sacrificing to idols is tantamount to sacrificing to demons.

יִקְנְאוּהוּ בְּזָרִים בְּתוֹעֵבַת יְכַעֲסָהוּ:
יִזְבְּחוּ לִשְׂדִים לֹא אֱלֹהִים לֹא יָדְעוּם חֲרָשִׁים מִקְרָב בָּאוּ לֹא
שְׁעָרוֹם אֲבַחְתִּיכֶם:

⁶¹ Vermes (1990:119).

⁶² For the dating of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, see Arnold (1992:68). For an introduction see De Jonge (1992:505-512).

⁶³ See in particular The Testament of Reuben 2-4, and The Testament of Simeon 2-3.

They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominable practices they provoked him to anger. They sacrificed to demons which were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come in of late, whom your fathers had never dreaded. (RSV)

παρώξουνάν με ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίοις ἐν βδελύγμασιν αὐτῶν ἐξεπίκρανάν με ἔθυσαν δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῶ θεοῖς οἷς οὐκ ᾔδεισαν καινοὶ πρόσφατοι ἤκασιν οὓς οὐκ ᾔδεισαν οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν. (LXX)

From the evidence, it is clear in the Jewish Intertestamental literature that the non-Jewish pagan religions (idolatry) were believed to have come into existence due to the influence of evil spirits and demons upon men and women. It was natural therefore that those subsequently participating in idolatrous practices were believed to be involved in the worship and service of those evil spirits and demons who originated these religions. As has been noted the belief that the origin of pagan religions should be ascribed to the involvement of evil spirits/demons has some support from the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 32:16-17). Furthermore, even the New Testament continues to perpetuate this understanding and link between false religions and demons.⁶⁴ However, in the Jewish literature of the Intertestamental period this link between idolatry and the influence of evil spirits/demons under the guidance of Satan is assumed from the Old Testament and perpetuated and significantly expanded.⁶⁵

9.5.3 The Influence of Evil Spirits in Matters Concerning the State and Warfare

There is evidence that Intertestamental-Judaism also believed in the involvement of evil powers in the realm of the State and international affairs.

In Jubilees 11.5 Prince Mastema, who seems to correspond to Satan, is portrayed as being directly involved in influencing and promulgating violence and murder among humans. By using evil spirits, Mastema seems to create throughout the earth a culture of violence and strife among individuals and between peoples.

And the Prince Mastema exerted himself to do all this, and he sent out as agents spirits that were under his control to do all kinds of wrong and sin, and all kinds of transgressions, to corrupt and destroy, and to shed blood on the earth. (Jubilees 11.5)⁶⁶

The inference to be drawn is that the cause of war and the continued strife between nations are in no small part due to the influence of the evil angels and their subsequent progeny, the evil spirits.

If such passages point to the role of evil powers in initiating and perpetuating murder and warfare, then what did the writers of the Intertestamental-literature believe was the position of these powers in terms of Israel and its international relations with her neighbours? In the book of Jubilees, Egypt's hostility to Israel is interpreted as arising from the supernatural influence of the evil prince Mastema upon Pharaoh and his subjects to challenge Moses and oppress God's people, Israel. This breakdown in relations between Pharaoh and Egypt and Israel is therefore understood by the author of Jubilees as being supernaturally inspired by Mastema. In the narrative only the intervention of God prevented the Mastema inspired Egyptians gaining the victory and insured the vindication of Moses and the liberation of his people Israel.

And the prince Mastema set himself against you and tried to get you [Moses] into Pharaoh's clutches; and he helped the Egyptian sorcerers, and they set themselves up against you and did the best they could... Yet in spite of all *these* signs and marvels the prince Mastema was not put to shame because he encouraged the Egyptians to pursue

⁶⁴ It is interesting that the New Testament continues to see a link between idolatry and the worship of demons (Revelation 9:20). Furthermore, Paul is quite clear in revealing the demonic involvement in other religions (1 Corinthians 10:19,21).

⁶⁵ Some groups within Judaism also believed that the occultic practices were the work of Satan and his evil angels. See 1 Enoch 7-8 where the angels taught men magic, incantations and alchemy, and Jubilees 11:1-8.

⁶⁶ 1 Enoch details that the introduction and initial production of weapons of war was due to the instruction of some of the fallen angels (1 Enoch 8:1).

you with all the might of Egypt, with their chariots and with their horses and with all the forces of the people of Egypt. And I stood between the Egyptians and Israel; and we delivered Israel from him and from his people. (Jubilees 48.9,12-13)

In the literature of Qumran the theory seems to exist that times of national distress for Israel were in part due to the interference of evil supernatural powers. Confronted by human enemies and invading forces occupying the land of Israel, the community in Qumran, standing consistently in the Jewish Intertestamental-literature, interpreted the national predicament in a way which believed that evil forces were ultimately responsible in prompting and influencing the enemy nations of Israel to invade and persecute.

For this shall be a time of distress for Israel, [and of the summons] to war against all the nations. There shall be eternal deliverance for the company of God, but destruction for all the nations of wickedness. All those [who are ready] for battle shall march out and shall pitch their camp before the king of Kittim and before all the host of Satan gathered about him for the Day [of Revenge] by the Sword of God. (1 QM 15:1-3, Vermes 1990:121)⁶⁷

What can be observed therefore is that the evil supernatural powers were indeed regarded by many authors in the Intertestamental-Jewish literature as being highly influential in the affairs of the nation of Israel. These forces were understood as the cause of the evil acts against the people of God down through the ages from Moses to the occupying powers of Greece or Rome. These supernatural powers were led by Satan (or Mastema) and were determined to bring about the destruction of Israel and its leaders. Faced with such a foe the people of God were left with no alternative but to trust in God and long for the Day of Salvation which would see the enemies of God vanquished by the intervention of God.

9.6 Summary

As has been observed the Jewish Intertestamental literature, compared to the Old Testament, shows a marked increase of interest in angels, spirits and demons. This interest in the spirit world and supernatural beings is perhaps most strikingly evident in the Pseudepigraphical literature and the Jewish apocalyptic writings. These authors presented to their readership, a people suffering at the hands of foreign oppressors during a series of occupations, an interpretation of some passages from the Hebrew Bible which would prove helpful in explaining their current situation and provide hope that God would decisively deal with those evildoers under the evil influence of angels, demons and spirits and ultimately Satan. Tapping into the growing interest and curiosity about the spirit realm, the authors by speculating on the role of angels as intermediaries helped to reduce the distance from a transcendent God felt by the people. By these angels God suddenly became closer and truly interested in the daily lives of people. Furthermore, by exposing the role of evil spirits in the everyday lives of people and the nation, a theological explanation was provided that helped the people come to terms with the existence of evil in a world under the Sovereignty of God. This rise of evil in the world is consistently presented in the Jewish Intertestamental literature as the consequences of the Angelic Fall (Genesis 6). Nevertheless the hope remains in the literature that God would eventually act and reverse the situation by dealing with the spirits/demons and Satan himself in judgement and eternal punishment.

The continuing influence of evil spirits/demons is another feature witnessed in the Jewish Intertestamental literature. Evil spirits were believed to play a role in influencing people in their every day lives as they exploit the weaknesses of men and women to promote their evil ends. These evil spirits, against whom men and women must contend, are described as being under the control and directed in their operations by Satan.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Vermes (1990:103-104) notes that the War Scroll (1QM) probably draws its inspiration here from Daniel 9:40-12:3 and was written probably in the middle of the first century BC. No matter when this Scroll was written and regardless of who exactly the Kittim actually were, the point remains that the author interpreted these enemies as being inspired and influenced by evil powers and malevolent supernatural forces.

⁶⁸ Arnold (1992:68-69) argues that this understanding of the function of the spirits is also reflected in the writings of Paul.

Furthermore, the Intertestamental literature explicitly presents the involvement of evil spirits and powers in the inauguration and rise of idolatry and false religions. Going beyond the evidence of the Hebrew Bible, the Intertestamental literature equates the sacrificing to the idols in non-Jewish religions as tantamount to sacrificing to demons. Moreover, even the political situation of Israel is primarily understood as being fundamentally a spiritual problem which could only be resolved by the action of God in overthrowing the spiritual powers of evil who direct the foreign nations occupying Israel and oppressing the people of God.

The Jewish Intertestamental literature is therefore extremely important in understanding the mindset and worldview of the Jewish people both in Palestine and in the Diaspora. These popular writings provided a sense of hope and assurance that, despite the problems in their individual lives and in the life of the nation because of the activities of these spiritual enemies, God would have the final say by overthrowing Satan and his evil angels, spirits and demons. The New Testament authors were probably fully aware of the importance among their fellow Jews of this literature with its speculative theology on angels, demons and evil spirits. To ignore this aspect of contemporary Jewish thought in understanding 1 Peter 3:18-22 would be an unhelpful omission.

10 Angels, Demons and Spirits in the New Testament

10.1 Angels in the New Testament

The New Testament bears a consistent witness with the Old Testament with regard to the existence and function of angels. In stark contrast to the Intertestamental Jewish literature, the New Testament authors do not enter into similar extensive speculation about angels (ἄγγελοι). The New Testament accepts without reservation and with little comment the existence of angels, both good and evil, and records their respective functions and activities with little elaboration.

10.1.1 Angels in the Gospels and Acts

Echoing slightly the Old Testament accounts concerning creation (Job 38:7), the New Testament records the appearances of angels, principally Gabriel, to the principal actors in the announcement and birth narratives of Jesus of Nazareth (See Matthew 1:20; 2:13, 19; Luke 1 and 2:8ff). These angels act as joyful heralds of the newborn king and are also portrayed as worshippers of the Lord explicitly stating the supremacy of Jesus Christ.

During the ministry of Jesus, angels minister to Jesus at times of considerable trial – during the time of temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:11) and in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of his betrayal (Luke 22:43). The immediate availability of angels to come to Jesus' assistance at any time had he so desired is noted (Matthew 26:53), but there are no other recorded instances in the New Testament of angelic facilitation. Angelic appearances in the Gospels are also recorded in their rolling away of the stone from the entrance of the tomb (Matthew 28:25) and in appearing to the women in the garden testifying to Jesus' resurrection. This heralding of Jesus' resurrection by the angels acts as an *inclusio* with their earlier testimony to his birth. (Luke 24:23 and John 20:12)

Angels continue to appear after Jesus' ascension during the time of the Apostles in releasing the apostles from prison (Acts 5:19, 12:7-11), directing Phillip (Acts 8:26), appearing to Cornelius and Peter in dreams (Acts 10:3 and 12:7-11) and in striking down Herod with sickness thus implementing the judgement of God (12:23). The overarching theme is one of angels acting and bringing about the will of God on earth.

10.1.2 Jesus' Teaching Mentioning Angels

The New Testament also records instances in Jesus' teaching where angels are mentioned. Jesus' teaching about angels seems to be biblically based rather than influenced by the teaching and speculation of the Jewish Intertestamental authors even in those passages dealing with future apocalyptic events. Jesus' teaching shows a belief in both good angels ('angels in heaven', ἄγγελοι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, Matthew 22:30) who stand in opposition to the devil and his angels (τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ, Matthew 25:41). It can be deduced from Jesus' teaching that these angels of God are holy (τῶν ἀγγέλων τῶν ἁγίων, Mark 8:38), that they have no sensuous desires (Matthew 22:30), rejoice whenever a sinner repents (Luke 15:10) and will accompany Jesus (Matthew 25:31) even though they do not know the time of the Parousia (Matthew 24:36).

The role of angels at the last judgment is a frequent refrain in the teaching of Jesus. These angels will separate the righteous from the wicked in the last days (Matthew 13:41-49). These angels will also bear witness to the final judgement and especially the verdict of the Son of Man who will confess those who have confessed him and deny those who have denied him (Luke 12:8-9).

10.1.3 Angels in the Rest of New Testament

In the Pauline corpus angels are regularly mentioned. Paul's teaching concerning these supernatural beings generally reflects what is found in the Old Testament. Paul notes the special functions of angels especially with regard to witnessing the incarnation, ministry and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 3:16) and also their role in coming with Christ at the Parousia where they will help relieve the afflicted people of God (2 Thessalonians 1:2). Paul also warns the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 10:10) about God's destroying angel who had acted in judgement in the Old Testament (ὄλοθρευτής) and who witnesses the Christian's actions today (11:10).

Of particular interest is Paul's warning to the Christians in Asia Minor to avoid worshipping angels (Colossians 2:18, θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων). This angel worship seems to go beyond mere interest in or speculation about angels as is reflected in the Jewish Intertestamental literature. This admonition seems to suggest that either an active cult of angels existed, or that some in Colossae were claiming to be able to participate in the heavenly angelic worship and thus receive divine mysteries.⁶⁹ Regardless of what may have motivated Paul's warning his admonition is unambiguous, believers should avoid such things.

Perhaps most important with regard to 1 Peter 3:18-22 is Paul's emphasis on the supremacy of Christ over all spiritual beings, including angels. In Romans 8:38-39

πέπεισμαι γὰρ ὅτι οὔτε θάνατος οὔτε ζωὴ οὔτε ἄγγελοι οὔτε ἀρχαὶ οὔτε ἐνεστώτα οὔτε μέλλοντα οὔτε δυνάμεις 39 οὔτε ὕψωμα οὔτε βάθος οὔτε τις κτίσις ἑτέρα δυνήσεται ἡμᾶς χωρῖσαι ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν.

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (RSV)

Although Paul uses the term ἄγγελοι broadly to denote any spirit being, whether good or evil (1 Corinthians 4:9 and 6:3), he usually employs the word to designate 'good' angels and this may be his intention here. While ἀρχαί may refer to an earthly authority or power (see Titus 3:1), Paul also uses it to express spiritual powers and authorities sometimes of an evil nature (Ephesians 6:12 and Colossians 2:15). The use of the terms together may well refer to the whole spectrum of spiritual beings both good and evil in order to show the extent of Christ's supremacy over all angels, powers and principalities regardless whether they are good or evil, human or supernatural.

The theme of Christ's supremacy over the angels is also present in Hebrews, the Petrine epistles and Jude. Hebrews portrays Christ as supreme over all angels who is the very object of their angelic worship (Hebrews 1:4-6 and 2:2-9). Although important, these angels are simply God's ministering servants for the benefit of God's people (Hebrews 2:16) as humans are presented as being God's main concern (Hebrews 12:22).

In 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6, reference is made of the fall of the angels and their subsequent imprisonment in Hell to await a final judgement. The images employed in these passages do seem to reflect aspects of the speculative writings of the Jewish Pseudepigraphical literature and 1 Enoch 6-11 in particular.

In the book of Revelation the references to angels are numerous and are generally drawn from Old Testament apocalyptic sources (especially Ezekiel, Zechariah and Daniel). In these appearances,

⁶⁹ The interpretation depends on whether the phrase θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων is an example of a subjective or an objective genitive. For further discussion see O'Brien (1982:142-43).

angels are depicted as God's heavenly courtiers and part of the heavenly community who worship Christ (Revelation 4-5). Angels are also described as guardians and guides of God's people (Revelation 8:1-5). Employing themes found in both the Old and New Testaments, angels are also portrayed in Revelation as accompanying Christ at his return and in acting as God's agents in judgement.

While angels are ever present in Revelation they play only an ancillary role in the actual revelation itself. Jesus Christ and the Spirit are unmistakably the actual agents of revelation and even in the end of the book the angel forbids John from worshipping him declaring that he is merely a fellow servant (Revelation 19:10 and 22:8-9). The clear conclusion is that the revelation is from Christ and it is about Christ. The reader of Revelation is left in no doubt about the transcendence of God and the supremacy and superiority of Christ over all, including angels. Christ is supreme and he alone is to be worshipped.

In his initial vision, John sees Christ holding seven stars which represent 'the angels of the seven churches' (Rev 1:12-20). These seven angels are then addressed from the respective letters written to them (Rev 2-3). These angels seem to be spiritual entities that are closely identified with the congregations. These angels need not necessarily be holy, indeed they are called to repent by Christ (Revelation 2:5,16,22; 3:3 and 19). The existence of evil angels is explicit in Revelation 9:11 with the reference to Abaddon ('Αβαδδών) or Apollyon ('Απολλύων). Revelation also presents evidence of a future spiritual war between God's angels and the angels of evil. While the judgement of Babylon is initiated by Michael and his angels in opposition to the evil dragon and its angels, the final destruction of evil will be completed by Christ accompanied with his angels (See Revelation 12:7-17 and 19:11-16). This evidence from Revelation, in contrast to the Qumran War Scroll and the Melchizedek text, assigns to archangel Michael a secondary role and presents Christ as the final deliverer of God's people.

At the climax of Revelation with the Parousia of Christ, angels are reported to accompany him. However, the New Jerusalem, despite having angelic dimensions (21:17) and angels guarding the city gates (21:12), is to be inhabited solely by humans. With the Parousia angels play a less prominent role and the focus in this new age is on the Lamb of God whom the people of God will worship forever.

With regard to angels the New Testament avoids the fanciful speculations of contemporary Jewish literature and the anti-supernaturalism of the Sadducees (Acts 23:8). The New Testament assumes both existence and activity on earth of angels both good and evil, while the supremacy of Christ over all is a repeated refrain.

10.2 Terminology of Demons and Spirits

In the New Testament δαιμόνιον ('demon') is the most common term for demonic figures and appears on sixty-three occasions whereas δαίμων appears only in Matthew 8:31. Most of these occurrences of δαιμόνιον are found in the Gospels and Acts and only nine other references appear in the rest of the New Testament.⁷⁰

In continuity with the Old Testament and Intertestamental Judaism, the writers of the New Testament regard demons as very real and powerful adversaries against God and man. While Greek thought regarded demons (δαίμων and δαιμόνιον) as spiritual beings some of which could be good and some of which could be malevolent, such differentiation is not observed in the New Testament literature. The Christian literature is consistent in portraying demons as evil spirits. While the term πνεύμα is essentially neutral, it is frequently applied in the New Testament to evil spirits⁷¹ or, in the vast majority of instances the term is qualified to refer especially to demons or evil supernatural beings. This is made clear with the frequent use of terms such as 'evil spirits' (πνεύμα πονηρόν)⁷², 'unclean spirits' (πνεύμα ακάθαρτον)⁷³ and 'deceitful spirits' (πνεύματα πλανά)⁷⁴ among others.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Of the nine occurrences, four are found in 1 Corinthians 10:20-22 where Paul, echoing a similar thought of the Intertestamental literature, considers idolatry as the worship and sacrifice of men to demons. Compare also Revelation 9:20, where it reads that a third of mankind will die due to their refusal to repent from the sin of making idols and worshipping demons (προσκυνήσουσιν τὰ δαιμόνια).

⁷¹ Matthew 8:16; 9:33; Luke 9:39; 10:20; Acts 16:18; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 1 John 4:1-3 and 1 Peter 3:19 if this is understood as referring to fallen angels.

⁷² Matthew 12:45 [Luke 11:26]; Luke 7:21; 8:2; Acts 19:12f, 15f.

Indeed, there are several occasions where the New Testament writers use the words demon and spirits interchangeably in a single narrative to describe those supernatural evil forces. For example see Matthew 8:16.⁷⁶

Ἐσπίας δὲ γενομένης προσήνεγκαν αὐτῷ δαιμονιζομένους πολλούς· καὶ ἐξέβαλεν τὰ πνεύματα λόγῳ καὶ πάντας τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας ἐθεράπευσεν

That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick. (RSV)

The New Testament has relatively little to say about spirits and demons and their role. The New Testament writers do not spend any time deliberating or speculating as to the origin of these spirits/demons. Nor are these spirits/demons identified as being the spirits of dead humans (contra Bolt 1996). Following the Old Testament, the New Testament simply assumes the existence of these spirits/demons and presents them as hostile forces against God, Jesus and the people of God. As Jesus and those in the early Church encounter these demons/evil spirits the New Testament writers focus on the actual confrontation between the Lord (and his followers) and Satan and his demons/evil spirits. The purpose of the writers is to portray the reality of the Lord's power and victory over Satan, evil spirits/demons and death and not in providing a speculative cosmology or demonology.

10.3 Evil Spirits and Demons in the Ministry of Jesus

As has been observed the new Christian religion recognised the reality and activity of evil spirits and demons.⁷⁷ This could hardly be surprising as the Gospel accounts record several examples of Jesus, the very object of Christian worship, delivering people possessed by demons/unclean spirits throughout his earthly ministry even from an early stage.

Ἐσπίας δὲ γενομένης, ὅτε ἔδου ὁ ἥλιος, ἔφερον πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντας τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας καὶ τοὺς δαιμονιζομένους· 33 καὶ ἦν ὅλη ἡ πόλις ἐπισυνηγμένη πρὸς τὴν θύραν. 34 καὶ ἐθεράπευσεν πολλοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας ποικίλαις νόσοις καὶ δαιμόνια πολλὰ ἐξέβαλεν καὶ οὐκ ἤφιεν λαλεῖν τὰ δαιμόνια, ὅτι ᾔδεισαν αὐτόν

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered together about the door. ³⁴ And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him (Mark 1:32-34, RSV).⁷⁸

This casting out of demons was, therefore, an integral part of Jesus' ministry as it provided an insight into the true nature of his person and an indication as to the purpose of his ministry and his salvation. It is little wonder that these instances of exorcism were recorded in such detail as they spoke clearly of the power and authority of Jesus Christ.

Twelftree (1993) has provided a much-needed corrective against those who tend to minimise the importance of the exorcisms in the ministry of Jesus.⁷⁹ He has pointed out that in all the gospel

⁷³ Matthew 10:1 [Mark 6:7]; Matthew 12:43; [Luke 11:24]; Mark 1:23, 26f [Luke 4:35]; Mark 3:1, 30; 5:2, 8; [Luke 8:29]; Mark 7:25; 9:25 [Luke 9:42]; Luke 6:18; Acts 5:16; 8:7; Revelation 16:13 and 18:2.

⁷⁴ See 1 Timothy 4:1.

⁷⁵ See Aune (1980a:919) for a list of such instances where πνεῦμα and πνεύματα are similarly qualified to refer especially to demons.

⁷⁶ For other examples where demon and spirit are used interchangeably see Luke 4:33,35-36, 9:42 and 10:17,20

⁷⁷ For an analysis of the New Testament's use of δαίμων see Foerster (1962:16-19).

⁷⁸ It is evident that the ministry of Jesus and the ministries of some of his disciples sent out under his authority (Luke 10:17) involved the casting out of demons.

⁷⁹ For the re-evaluation of magic, exorcisms and healings see the works of Crossan (1991 and 1992). He argues that during a time of occupation where the leadership of the nation is in some way possessed it is not surprising that individuals under great stress and exhibiting a variety of illnesses should also be viewed as being similarly possessed by evil spirits.

traditions the exorcisms of Jesus are well attested. Furthermore, there also appears a consensus among the various extracanonical data and the non-Christian material concerning the exorcisms in Jesus' ministry. The only difference in the non-Christian material is a disagreement about whether or not the source of Jesus' power was from the biblical God.⁸⁰ This debate is reflected in the gospels when Jesus' opponents accuse him of performing these exorcisms by using the power of Beelzebul.⁸¹

Although Jesus could have been regarded as just one among a variety of Jewish exorcists,⁸² Twelftree (1993:157-165) demonstrates that there are unique features in the accounts of Jesus' exorcisms. These include the absence of mechanical devices and no explicit prayers invoking any power or external authority to bind the demon or spirit. Perhaps the most important distinguishing feature concerning Jesus' exorcisms is the link Jesus makes between his actions in liberating those possessed by demons and eschatology. Exorcisms are not merely seen as foreshadows of the coming of the Kingdom of God, but rather they are evidence of the actual inbreaking of God's dominion in Jesus' ministry. These exorcisms of Jesus were the public demonstration of a supernatural battle between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan. This battle saw those held in bondage by evil spirits freed from the spirits who controlled them. Jesus by performing these exorcisms, imbued these events with even deeper meaning that demonstrated that he was inaugurating the much longed for eschatological age.⁸³

As Christ himself had performed exorcisms in a new and more profound way, these events must have been very meaningful to those in the early church living in a society where evil angels, demons and spirits were feared. It is no wonder that the writers of the Synoptic Gospels regarded the exorcisms performed by Jesus as worthy of recording.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the accounts of the early days of the church show how this ministry to deliver people possessed by demons and evil spirits continued (Acts 19:11-12).

The evidence clearly shows that the existence and activity of evil spirits and demons continued to be a part of the everyday worldview of Paul and the New Testament writers even after the earthly ministry of Jesus. The evidence of the inbreaking of the eschatological age took many forms, but one cannot discount the role played by the delivering of the evil spirits/demons from the lives of individuals.

The writers of the Gospels and the early Christian literature, exhibit an outlook similar to those later Jewish writers on some points concerning angels, demons and spirits. The existence of evil spirits and demons intent on wreaking havoc with men and women is accepted by the New Testament writers without debate. However, in contrast with the magicians and exorcists of both Jewish and non-Jewish background, instead of invoking a greater spirit or demon to come to one's assistance Jesus, using his own inherent authority, and the Apostles using the authority of Jesus, command the demons to leave. Indeed the authority of Jesus is remarked on by some of the witnesses of one of his exorcisms (Luke 4:36). Furthermore, the accounts of Jesus' confrontations with the unclean spirits/demons play an important part in the Gospel narratives. Interestingly it is these very demons confronted by Jesus who are among the first to reveal the true identity of the one standing before them who had the power and authority over them.⁸⁵

While these Christian writers, in contrast to the writers of the Jewish Pseudepigraphical literature, comment so rarely about demons and spirits and never about ghosts, this does not mean that the authors doubted the existence and operation of these supernatural beings. The New Testament writers do, however, assume that Christians enjoy a freedom now from these evil spirits and demons because

⁸⁰ B. sanh contains Jewish reflection on the ministry of Jesus and in it concludes that he was killed for practicing sorcery.

⁸¹ See Matthew 12:24; Mark 3:20ff and Luke 11:14-23.

⁸² See Matthew 12:27, the discussion about Eleazar the exorcist (Josephus *Antiquities* 8:46-49), the Sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13-19), 1QapGen col.20, 1 Enoch, Jubilees and Philo.

⁸³ For the link between the exorcisms and the Kingdom of God see Matthew 12:28.

⁸⁴ While the absence of exorcisms in the Fourth Gospel may show that the early church was not in the business of inventing such stories, it may also show a willingness to downplay this aspect of Jesus' ministry lest he be misunderstood as being just another magician or exorcist or a practitioner of sorcery.

⁸⁵ For examples of the supernatural insight of these demons/spirits into Jesus' identity see Mark 5:1-13; (Matthew 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39); Luke 4:31-37 and Luke 4:38-41 (compare Mark 1:29-34).

of Christ's victory over evil and his subjection of these supernatural powers under his feet (see Romans 8, and 1 Peter 3:22).

This particular part of the Gospel message which emphasised the supremacy of Christ over every power and authority must have been liberating to those who were trapped in fear of those evil angels, spirits and demons who came to wreak havoc and bring about catastrophe. The New Testament portrays Jesus as one who is far greater than any magician and whose personal power makes him ultimately master over all demons and spirits. The victory over Satan and over the 'principalities and powers' (ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις)⁸⁶ is emphasised so that the Christian should have no basis to fear the unknown and the supernatural realm. Satan and his spirits/demons have been defeated and are reserved for the final judgment. This position may have proved greatly effective in attracting converts from both a Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds living in a society with an unhealthy predilection to angels, spirits and demons. The New Testament never denies the existence of these evil powers, but it does proclaim the good news that Satan and these powers have been defeated once and for all on the cross and that Christ reigns supreme.

11 The Religious Background of Asia Minor a Review

Years of invasion and Hellenisation had left Asia Minor as an inter-racial and multi-cultural region with a plethora of formal and informal religious movements. As has been argued, some religious movements established in some areas more successfully than others but their contribution to society generally extended beyond their natural centres of strength. However, when it came to the matter of the supernatural, and in particular spirits and demons, both good and evil, there is a considerable amount of common ground among these various religious movements and practices. Even those who belonged to monotheistic Judaism, with its acknowledgement of a personal, sovereign and transcendent God who is omnipotent and good, found it appropriate and non-contradictory to find a place for magic and all its attendant paraphernalia. This was achieved by either disregarding the biblical record or by redefining either the biblical prohibitions or the practices of magic or both (Aune, 1986:216-217).

At a popular level the manipulation of the angels, spirits and demons was the natural consequence of a people desperate to defeat or defer the onset of evil in their lives. It is conceivable, therefore, that Peter, though writing to diverse congregations throughout Asia Minor, would be aware that he was addressing converts from Hellenistic non-Judaism and Hellenistic Judaism whose backgrounds and prevailing worldviews would have readily accepted the existence and prevalence of these evil spiritual beings and their participation in everyday life on earth. This mindset would have persisted even after conversion to Christianity. Conversion to Christianity brought privileges and responsibilities, but it would be no easy matter to make a complete and decisive break from one's non-Christian past or completely separate from one's non-Christian neighbours and community. Furthermore, in the very Gospel narratives of Jesus' ministry these new converts to Christianity, both Jew and Gentile, were confronted by someone who took on the evil spirits and demons and conquered them. So in their new faith, the focus of their worship, Jesus Christ, was the one who had comprehensively defeated Satan and his evil angels, spirits and demons by his work on the cross and his resurrection. Christianity brought liberation from the Evil One, but it also treated seriously the existence and the activity of evil spirits and demons. Hence there existed some points of contact and overlap in the area of spirits and demons between this new faith called Christianity and the other religions, cults and popular faiths of the day, but with significant differences for everyday living.

Hellenised Jews, Christians and non-Christians in the first century probably shared a great deal with regard to a cosmology and demonology and took seriously the existence and work of spirits. However, what distinguished these Christians from their neighbours was their trust in a Lord whose death and resurrection marked the significant defeat of the evil powers and their lordship.

12 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to identify the make up of the original audience of 1 Peter and recognise the possible spiritual and religious influences upon the people in First Century AD Asia Minor. 1 Peter may have been sent to parts of the world Peter had not yet visited, but he was most probably aware of the

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See O'Brien (1984) for his treatment of the 'principalities and powers' in Paul.

general situation of the local believers, their socio-religious backgrounds and the problems they were encountering especially with regard to social ostracism and suffering in general.

1 Peter was written to probably mixed groups of believers made up of converts from Judaism and the non-Jewish religions. These converts came from an area with a rich and varied religious milieu. Since Christianity attracted people from a variety of social backgrounds, it is probable that those converts had played some part in one, or several, of the various religions, cults or faiths which suited their social standing and personal taste.

However, it is clear that at the very popular level, and also among those of the educated elite, there existed a widely held belief in angels, spirits and demons, both good and evil. These supernatural spirits were believed to be the instruments and or cause of the evil in society and in the lives of individuals. The people of Asia Minor, as in almost all of the Roman Empire, concluded that the evil purposes of these spiritual beings needed to be thwarted by magic, divination or by calling on good spirits for assistance.

Peter would most likely have been aware of the general religious trends and religious practices of Asia Minor. Their individual backgrounds and spiritual histories may have differed from his in Palestine, but the Apostle would have almost certainly been aware of the issue of angels, spirits and demons.

The readers of 1 Peter, when they encounter the mention of ἄγγελοι and πνεύματα could well have understood Peter's words against the social and religious background of Asia Minor society. The mention of πνεύματα and ἄγγελοι would have raised in their minds these malevolent forces which caused suffering and evil against individuals, homes, churches and society or to good spirits called upon for assistance and deliverance.

It is imperative that anyone wishing to truly understand the situation of Peter's audience needs to be aware of the cultural and religious backgrounds of these First Century readers. These recipients in Asia Minor, both Jews and non-Jews, had a religious and social history and for many of them the belief in the existence and activity of spirits, demons and angels would have played a part. No matter whether they were seasoned practitioners or merely casual observers in this realm of the supernatural, these individuals would be conscious of the prevalence and importance of demons and spirits in every sphere of society. It is possible, therefore, that on hearing Peter mention 'spirits in prison' (ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν) and the 'angels, authorities and powers' (ἀγγέλων καὶ ἐξουσιῶν καὶ δυνάμεων.) their understanding would have been coloured by their past dealings with the supernatural realm. Perhaps these evil supernatural entities had once dominated their own lives and may have continued to influence their actions as Christians. It is clear, however, that this worldview still dominated the thinking of many of their contemporaries throughout Asia Minor.

Having focussed on the background of Peter's audience, the dissertation will now turn to examine the history of the interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22.

general situation of the local believers, their socio-religious backgrounds and the problems they were encountering especially with regard to social ostracism and suffering in general.

1 Peter was written to probably mixed groups of believers made up of converts from Judaism and the non-Jewish religions. These converts came from an area with a rich and varied religious milieu. Since Christianity attracted people from a variety of social backgrounds, it is probable that those converts had played some part in one, or several, of the various religions, cults or faiths which suited their social standing and personal taste.

However, it is clear that at the very popular level, and also among those of the educated elite, there existed a widely held belief in angels, spirits and demons, both good and evil. These supernatural spirits were believed to be the instruments and/or cause of the evil in society and in the lives of individuals. The people of Asia Minor, as in almost all of the Roman Empire, concluded that the evil purpose of these spiritual beings needed to be thwarted by magic, divination or by calling on good spirits for assistance.

1 Peter would most likely have been aware of the general religious trends and religious practices of Asia Minor. Their individual backgrounds and actual histories may have differed from his in Palestine, but the Apostle would have almost certainly been aware of the issue of angels, spirits and demons.

The readers of 1 Peter, when they encounter the mention of *ἀγγέλων* and *εὐαγγέλιον* could well have understood Peter's words against the social and religious background of Asia Minor society. The mention of *εὐαγγέλιον* and *ἀγγέλων* would have raised in their minds three malevolent forces which caused suffering and evil against individuals, homes, churches and society or to good spirits called upon for assistance and deliverance.

It is imperative that anyone wishing to truly understand the situation of Peter's audience needs to be aware of the cultural and religious backgrounds of these First Century readers. These recipients in Asia Minor, both Jews and non-Jews, had a religious and social history and for many of them the belief in the existence and activity of spirits, demons and angels would have played a part. No matter whether they were seasoned practitioners or merely casual observers in the realm of the supernatural, these individuals would be conscious of the prevalence and importance of demons and spirits in every sphere of society. It is possible, therefore, that on hearing Peter mention 'spirits in prison' (*ἐν φυλακῇ*), their understanding would have been coloured by their past dealings with the supernatural realm. Perhaps these evil supernatural entities had once dominated their own lives and may have continued to influence their actions as Christians. It is clear, however, that this worldview still dominated the thinking of many of their contemporaries throughout Asia Minor.

Having focused on the background of Peter's audience, the dissertation will now turn to examine the history of the interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22.

Chapter 3

A History of the Interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Major Interpretations of 1 Peter 3:18-22
3. Conclusion

1. Introduction

Few passages in the New Testament have caused greater deliberation and debate on the part of scholars and commentators down through the ages than 1 Peter 3:18-22. Even Luther (1967:113) confessed that 'this is a strange text and certainly a more obscure passage than any other passage in the New Testament. I still do not know for sure what the apostle means.' As a consequence of these scholarly deliberations, a number of interpretations have arisen which, in turn, have been subsequently critiqued and even slightly revised by other scholars in an attempt to counter arguments and provide a satisfactory explanation of the passage. Reicke (1946) is one of the few scholars to undertake a thorough historical investigation into the text. His overarching desire was to strive 'to draw into prominence the characteristic and historical lines and the driving logical forces in the process, so that it will not be merely a loose accumulation of different opinions' (1946:10). Not all, however, have been so optimistic in carrying out such a task.¹

The aim of this chapter, however, while recognising a road fraught with pitfalls and many scholarly twists and turns, is to provide a brief general history of the interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22. Space does not permit a full and exhaustive study of the history of the passage as it has proved to be particularly difficult to interpret and has been the source of very many theories and readings.² These difficulties, as shall be noted, arise principally over the various understandings of the main features of the passage. These can be summarised as follows. Who are the spirits in prison (πνεύμασιν τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ)? Where is the prison located (τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ)? What did Christ actually proclaim (ἐκήρυξεν)? And when did this preaching take place (πορευθεῖς)?

The focus of this dissertation shall now turn to examine briefly the major lines of interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 and their more prominent sub divisions.

2. Major Interpretations of 1 Peter 3:18-22

Nearly all the major points of contention concerning this passage are caused by how one understands 1 Peter 3:19 - ἐν ᾧ καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν πορευθεῖς ἐκήρυξεν ('in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison', RSV). The understanding of this verse will naturally impact to some degree how one understands the immediate context, and *vice versa*.

2.1 Christ going to the Souls of Noah's Contemporaries during the *Triduum Mortis*

A major line of interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 sees Christ usually descending to the dwelling place of souls to proclaim a message to the souls of Noah's human contemporaries. This descent and proclamation is generally believed to have occurred in the period after Christ's death and before his resurrection (*triduum mortis*).

As shall be observed, many scholars, both ancient and modern, understood 1 Peter 3:18-22 in this way, but they differ as to nature of the message preached. What did Christ preach and what did he wish to achieve by preaching to these souls of Noah's human contemporaries?

¹ See Dalton (1989:61) who quotes Holzmeister's dismissal of this task as '*arduus enim labor et, ut in tali re, sterilis esset*'.

² For a fuller discussion of the history of the interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 and 1 Peter 4:6 see Reicke (1946) and Dalton (1989).

2.1.1 Christ Preaching for the Conversion of Noah's Contemporaries

The Origins of the Interpretation

The view that Christ descended to the abode of souls in order to preach and bring about the conversion of Noah's contemporaries is by far the most strongly represented among the Church Fathers from the time of Clement of Alexandria³ to Augustine. Before Clement of Alexandria, 1 Peter 3:18-22 is rarely commented upon and indeed Irenaeus, writing about Christ's descent to Hades, never quotes or alludes to this passage for support of this doctrine.⁴ Dalton (1989:28) concludes therefore, 'surely this [failure to cite 1 Peter 3:18-22] is not accidental: they understood the text differently, or at least they had no confidence in this particular interpretation.'

Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromateis* (6.6) clearly interprets 1 Peter 3:18-22 as referring to Christ's descent. In a discussion commenting on the preaching of the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles in Hades, he comments: 'Do not [the Scriptures] show that the Lord preached the Gospel to those that perished in the flood, or rather had been chained, and to those kept "in ward and guard"?' The ensuing discussion makes it clear that Clement believed that the conversion of pre-Christian pagans could only be achieved by the preaching of Christ and his Apostles in the world of the dead. 'And it has been shown also, in the second book of *Stromateis*, that the apostles, following the Lord, preached the Gospel to those in Hades. For it was requisite, in my opinion, that as here, so also there, the best of the disciples should be imitators of the Master; so that He should bring to repentance those belonging to the Hebrews, and they the Gentiles; that is, those who had lived in righteousness according to the Law and Philosophy, who had ended life not perfectly, but sinfully'.

Clement, therefore, employs 1 Peter 3:18-22 to support his theory that Christ descended to Hades in order to hold out the offer of salvation to those sinners still imprisoned.

Origen, a contemporary of Clement,⁵ understands 1 Peter 3:18-22 in a similar manner (*De Principiis* II.V.3). In a discussion on Justice, Goodness and the nature of God, he notes that God's great punishment as inflicted on the people as seen in the Old Testament does not mean that there is no hope for these people. 'They [the heretics] do not read what is written respecting the hope of those who were destroyed in the deluge; of which hope Peter himself thus speaks in his first Epistle'.⁶ Furthermore, Origen seems to allude to 1 Peter 3:19 in his apology against Celsus. It seems Celsus had stated that Christ's descent and preaching was the consequence of the failure of his earthly preaching ministry. Origen counters that, 'not only while Jesus was in the body did He win over not a few persons merely...but also, that when He became a soul, without the covering of the body, He dwelt among those souls which were without bodily covering, converting such of them as were willing to Himself'.⁷ For the purpose of this dissertation it is interesting to note the way 1 Peter 3:19 was interpreted from such an early time as referring to Christ preaching to the souls of dead individuals.

St Cyril of Alexandria also follows this line of interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19 in his commentaries on John and Luke. In the exposition of John 16:16 there is mention of 1 Peter 3:19 and Christ's preaching to those in prison (κηρύξας καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν) and bringing about the liberation (διακηρύξαι τὴν ἄφεσιν) of the dead. Similarly, Cyril mentions the Petrine passage in reference to Luke 4:18 where he again implies the conversion of sinners (καὶ πάντα ἀνῆκε δεσμῶν ἀνάγκης).⁸ Echoing the ideas of

³ Carey (1978:234-235) dates Clement of Alexandria c155-c220 AD.

⁴ Irenaeus certainly knew 1 Peter and quotes from the epistle three times acknowledging the Apostle as the author. Furthermore, it is believed that Irenaeus alludes to 1 Peter on ten other occasions (see Dalton 1989:28).

⁵ Schnucker (1978:373-374) dates Origen from c185-c254 AD.

⁶ Origen then quotes Ezekiel 16:53 as offering a similar hope to the former inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Origen's optimistic attitude towards the sinners of the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah is an aspect of his theology of ἀποκατάστασις, according to which all divine punishment is therapeutic and temporary. See also Ferguson (1988:481-482) for an insight into the theology of Origen.

⁷ The Greek reads, γυμνῆ σώματος ψυχῇ ταῖς γυμναῖς σωμάτων ὠμίλει ψυχαῖς. Dalton (1989:30) is probably correct in stating that Origen's thinking on 1 Peter 3:19, and especially the double use of πνεῦμα (ἐν ᾧ (πνεύματι) ... τοῖς πνεύμασιν), is perhaps influenced by Plato and his strict dualism between body and spirit.

⁸ Dalton (1989:30) provides the original Greek texts of Cyril of Alexandria quoted in this paragraph.

Clement and Origen, Cyril understands 1 Peter 3:19 as referring to Christ, during the *triduum mortis*, preaching to the spirits of the dead in order to bring about their salvation and deliverance from their prison.

This line of interpretation seems to continue in the writings of other Greek Fathers. St. John of Damascus appears to allude to 1 Peter 3:19 in his discussion of the descent of Christ.⁹ In his Christological discussions with Epictetus,¹⁰ Athanasius clearly accepts, without argument, that in 1 Peter 3:19 Peter refers to Christ's body being in the tomb while the Word went to preach to the spirits in prison (ἐπορεύθη ...καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν, ὡς εἶπεν ὁ Πέτρος).

Those extant writings from the pens of the Greek Fathers almost present a single understanding of 1 Peter 3:19. This is true both when direct reference is made to the Petrine passage and also when the authors seem to allude to the passage. These authors share a common belief that Christ, during the *triduum mortis*, preached to the souls of the dead and brought about a release of at least some of these souls from their prison. The mention of Christ preaching to the souls of Noah's contemporaries is generally broadened by the Greek Fathers to reveal a belief in the apostles also preaching to others who are in this prison for dead souls

This interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19 extended also to those from the early Syriac tradition. The doctrine of the descent of Christ to the underworld to preach to the souls of the dead was particularly popular.¹¹ Dalton (1989:31) notes the Peshitta version of 1 Peter 3:19 which reads, 'And he preached to the souls who were shut up in *Sheol*, those who had been disobedient in the days of Noah.' Here the πνεύμασιν are called 'souls' and the φυλακῇ is translated as 'Sheol'.¹² The authors of the early Syriac writings appear to follow the optimistic interpretations of the Greek Fathers concerning the preaching of Christ in Hades. These early Syriac-writings express a belief in the liberation of all souls, both the just and the wicked, from *Sheol* and Satan at the coming of Christ into the realm of the dead.¹³ This interpretation sees a broadening of the scope of 1 Peter 3:19 and understands the doctrine having a wider universal aspect.

What can be concluded from these early interpretations of 1 Peter 3:19?

Before Clement of Alexandria, discussions of the doctrine of the descent of Christ never quoted 1 Peter 3:19 for support. Furthermore, Clement of Alexandria seems to be the first to link 1 Peter 3:19 with the descent of Christ and interpreted it in such a way as to see this preaching of Christ as offering salvation to the souls of Noah's unbelieving contemporaries. This interpretation was often broadened by subsequent authors to see Christ offering salvation to other souls in prison and not just Noah's contemporaries.

Subsequent History of the Interpretation

The discussion shall briefly note the later and more modern proponents of this understanding of 1 Peter 3:19.

Augustine's interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19 proved highly influential among Western scholars for almost one thousand years. With the Reformation, scholars began to doubt the interpretation which saw Christ descending to Hades to convert the unfaithful contemporaries of Noah or even the expanded optimistic interpretations which saw the offer of salvation being offered to all. This movement away from the interpretation first expounded by Clement may have been due to the controversy between Roman Catholics and the Reformers over the doctrine of purgatory.¹⁴ The Protestant scholars, with some Roman Catholic scholars, moved away from any idea which saw 1 Peter 3:19 as offering the possibility

⁹ For a fuller discussion see Reicke (1946:33) and Dalton (1989:31).

¹⁰ See Athanasius and his Letter to Epictetus.

¹¹ For a discussion on the popularity of the Descent of Christ in Syriac-speaking regions see Kelly (1950:380).

¹² Kelly (1950:380) notes that ἐκ νεκρῶν could be interpreted as either 'from the dead' or 'from the place, or house, of the dead'.

¹³ See Dalton (1989:31-32).

¹⁴ See Dalton (1989:32) for an analysis of the historical factors concerning the movement away from the interpretation of Clement.

of salvation in the world to come. Several of these other interpretations¹⁵ which arose during this time of theological controversy, and were embraced by both Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars, shall be examined in due course.

The line of interpretation of Clement of Alexandria became popular again among Protestant scholars in the middle of the 19th Century. These interpreters were less influenced than their predecessors by dogmatic considerations, and thus they found in 1 Peter 3:19 (and 4:6) an example of God's incalculable mercy (Dalton 1989:33). This interpretation, though it eventually fell out of favour with the majority of subsequent New Testament scholars of a Protestant background, still continues to find support among some notable scholars.¹⁶

While some of these modern scholars adopt Clement's interpretation hesitantly and with some degree of circumspection,¹⁷ others are content to adopt this optimistic understanding of 1 Peter 3:19. These scholars generally equate 3:19 and 4:6 as referring to the same event.¹⁸ From this starting position they are led to interpret 1 Peter 3:19 as referring to Christ's preaching of the gospel and offering salvation to those disobedient contemporaries of Noah who subsequently are now languishing as spirits in prison.¹⁹

This interpretation seems to be grounded on the belief that 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 refer to one and the same event.²⁰ These scholars see both references as dealing with the proclamation of salvation to those inhabitants of the abode of the dead. However, this connection between the two passages in 1 Peter has not found universal acceptance. Rather than seeing these references as being co-terminus, the majority of scholars interpret the passages as referring to two different events altogether.²¹ While 3:19 refers to 'spirits', the immediate context of 4:6 seems to refer to Christians who have since died perhaps as a result of persecution.²² As Michaels (1988:237) correctly comments, 'There is little evidence ... for identifying 'the spirits' of 3:19 as the spirits of dead human beings, and it seems unlikely that Peter would introduce another whole dimension to Christ's journey to heaven without further elaboration.' Furthermore, advocates of this position face a further problem in showing how their interpretation fits in with the immediate and greater context of the letter, where there is a sharp division between believers and unbelievers and where the stress is not so much on the conversion of the wicked, as the survival of believers in an unbelieving world destined to final judgement (see Dalton (1989:34)).

In summary, this line of interpretation which proposes that 1 Peter 3:18-22 refers to Christ preaching to the spirits of Noah's unbelieving contemporaries during the *Triduum Mortis* in order to seek their salvation, while still popular among some scholars, has largely fallen out of favour.

¹⁵ These interpretations included the Augustinian approach and the reading which saw Christ descend to proclaim condemnation on the souls of the dead.

¹⁶ For those adopting Clement's understanding of the passage see Bigg (1901), Hart (1903), Cranfield (1960), Beare (1970), Synge (1971) and Hanson (1982). For a fuller list see Reicke (1946:47-49) and Grudem (1986:4).

¹⁷ See Cranfield (1960) for one commentator who hesitantly adopts this interpretation.

¹⁸ See Beare (1970:147), Synge (1971) and Bigg (1901:162).

¹⁹ As for the background to the descent of Christ, Beare (1970:145) sees 1 Peter 3:19 as, 'nothing else than the appropriation, and the application to Christ, of a fragment of the redemption-mythology of the Oriental religions, best known to us in the ancient story of the Descent of Ishtar to the underworld, and reflected also in a number of ancient Greek myths (Orpheus and Eurydice, Heracles and Alcestis, the story of Persephone, etc); it is rooted in old vegetation- and sun-myths.' For other proposals as to the possible background of 1 Peter 3:19 see Dalton (1989:33).

²⁰ Those who advocate the Augustinian position approach 3:19 and 4:6 in a similar way seeing these passages as referring to the one event. Clowney (1988:163) is representative of this approach when he states that, 'This understanding gives the same interpretation to *in prison* that is given to 'dead' in 1 Peter 4:6. In both cases Peter is referring in both instances to people in terms of their present state.' Others who have sought to interpret 4:6 in the light of 3:19 (and 3:19 in the light of 4:6) have included Bigg (1901:171), Cranfield (1958: 369-372 and 1960:110), Beare (1970:173, 182) et al.

²¹ For those who see 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 as referring to two different events see Kelly (1969:173), Best (1971:144-5), Marshall (1991:136-139), Michaels (1988:237), France (1977:269), Davids (1990:153-155), Elliott (2000:731), Dalton (1989:57-60, 149-150, 225-226) et al.

²² See in particular the brief excursus of Marshall (1991:136-139).

2.1.2 Christ's Preaching of Release to the Souls of the Converted

From the very early days of the history of the Church there existed a belief that Christ during the *Triduum Mortis* descended to Hades in order to preach to the souls of Noah's unbelieving contemporaries who had been converted just before their death. While this theory is less well attested in the early Church than the previous line of interpretation, it seems to have numbered Irenaeus, Justin and Hippolytus *et al* among its supporters.²³

By interpreting 1 Peter 3:18-22 in such a way as to eschew any possibility of conversion after death, this interpretation was found to harbour less theological problems than the understanding espoused by Clement, Origen *et al*. Furthermore, this theory also attempted to relocate Christ's pulpit from the realm of the dead and the abode of sinners to the place of the righteous and just dead. For some believers the very notion of Christ going to Gehenna or Hades was quite unthinkable.

Starting from the position that there is no opportunity for salvation after death, and believing that Christ would naturally preach the good news of salvation to these people, the proponents of this theory understandably concluded that these sinful and unbelieving contemporaries of Noah must therefore have been converted before their death in the flood. However, despite the fact that there is no evidence in 1 Peter 3:19, or elsewhere in Scripture, of such a last minute conversion of Noah's contemporaries, this theory has persisted from earliest times to the present day.²⁴

How then did those who believe in this interpretation justify their exegetical and theological findings?

Jeremiah Logion – One of the most intriguing early witnesses is that of the so-called Jeremiah Logion. This is found in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* which is dated circa 160AD. The section (Chapter 72) deals with Justin's contention that passages had allegedly been suppressed from both the books of Esdras and Jeremiah by Jews as they bore direct witness to the coming of Jesus Christ.

Concerning the Text of Jeremiah, Justin concludes,

ἐμνήσθη δὲ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἀπο Ἰσραὴλ τῶν νεκρῶν τῶν κεκοιμημένων εἰς γῆν χώματος καὶ κατέβη πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἀναγγεῖλαισθαι αὐτοῖς τὸ σωτήριον αὐτοῦ.

'The Lord God remembered His dead people of Israel who lay in graves; and He descended to preach to them His own salvation'.²⁵

While the exact origin of this Logion is disputed, the interpretation that Christ descended to preach to his people concerning salvation is evident.²⁶

The Gospel of Peter – Serapion of Antioch knew this apocryphal gospel in 190AD though some believe that it may have been penned sometime between 120-130 AD.²⁷ The gospel, focusing on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, clearly reflects an anti-Jewish bias as well as a docetic Christology. Expanding on the scenario of the soldiers guarding the tomb, Gospel of Peter 38-42 reads:

'When therefore those soldiers saw it, they awakened the centurion and the elders, - for they too were keeping guard; and, as they declared what things they had seen, again they see three men coming forth from the tomb, and two of them supporting one, and a cross following them. And of the two the head reached unto heaven, but the head of him that was led by them overpassed the heavens. And they heard a voice from the heavens,

²³ See Reicke (1946:19-27), Dalton (1989:34-37) and Elliott (2000:649). Among those passages from these early fathers which exhibit a belief that Christ preached to the souls of Noah's unbelieving contemporaries who had been converted just before their death, see Irenaeus *Haereses* 3.204; 4.22.1; 4.33.1; 4.33.12; 5.31.1; *Epid* 78; and Hippolytus' Easter Homily.

²⁴ In fact Dalton (1979:547-555) believes that the very opposite of this interpretation is implied in 2 Peter 2:5,9 and 3:5-7. This opinion is adopted in Dalton's later work (1989:34).

²⁵ The Greek text appears in Dalton (1989:34).

²⁶ See Dalton (1989:34-35) for his understanding of Logion of Jeremiah and his belief that it may have arisen as 'a free development' of Matthew 27:51-52.

²⁷ See Green (1997:927-929) for a discussion on the dating of the Gospel of Peter.

saying, 'Hast thou preached to them that sleep?' And a response was heard from the cross, Yea.'

Certainly this extract does appear to be reminiscent of 1 Peter 3:18-22. However, the evidence is not conclusive that this refers to Christ's descent and preaching to the spirits in prison.²⁸

Hippolytus' Easter Homily – There is some discussion as to whether Hippolytus in his Easter Homily uses 1 Peter 3:19 as a reference to Christ's descent and preaching to the souls of Noah's contemporaries converted before their death in the Flood or to the souls of unbelievers. After depicting the souls of awaiting the visit of Christ to the nether world, Hippolytus continues,

'For it behoved him to go and preach also to those who were in hell, namely those who had once been disobedient'.

Perhaps much more favourably, Hippolytus seems to refer to Christ's descent and his preaching to the righteous. In his *Treatise on Christ and the Antichrist*, Hippolytus notes,

'He [Christ] was also reckoned among the dead, preaching to the souls of the saints, (and) by death overcoming death'

This reference to Christ's preaching seems to allude to 1 Peter 3:18-22 and though it does not refer explicitly to the contemporaries of Noah it does limit the preaching (of presumably good news) to the souls of the saints who, as yet, still reside in the abode of the dead.²⁹

In summary, there may exist evidence in the early Greek Fathers that some believed that Christ's preaching was for the benefit of the souls of the just who had died. How then did 1 Peter 3:18-22 come to be understood as referring to Christ preaching to the souls of Noah's unbelieving contemporaries who had been converted just before their death in the flood?

As has been seen, Clement of Alexandria was perhaps the first to interpret 1 Peter 3:18-22 as referring to Christ's descent to the abode of the dead to proclaim salvation to the inhabitants of hell. Clement's understanding of the possibility of salvation after death to those who were unbelievers seems to have been generally accepted. However, alongside this interpretation evolved another which was a little more reticent concerning the nature and intent of Christ's sermon and the audience to whom it was preached. There developed, therefore, a line of interpretation similar to that of Clement, but which was less optimistic and which saw Christ's preaching in hell, during the *triduum mortis*, as being directed towards the righteous of the Old Testament. These righteous individuals were identified initially as being the souls of Noah's contemporaries who repented just before their deaths. Over time, this interpretation widened the audience to include the souls of the Old Testament saints who had died before the days of Jesus Christ.

Later Developments of the Interpretation

Gradually, however, this general line of interpretation became less acceptable and its popularity declined when alternative theories came to be advanced. The influence of Augustine (354-430AD) brought almost a complete end of those interpretations of 1 Peter 3:19 which saw Christ's descent during the *triduum mortis* to preach to salvation to all Noah's unbelieving contemporaries, or to those who had been converted before their death in the flood, or to those just saints of the Old Testament.³⁰ Augustine's over-riding principle of 'no conversion after death'³¹ influenced his understanding of 1 Peter 3:18-22, and his innovative interpretation was to prove highly influential among western theologians for over a

²⁸ See Dalton (1989:36).

²⁹ For a fuller debate on Hippolytus' *Easter Homily* where Christ is said to enter hell to preach to the spirits as a 'soul among souls', see Dalton (1989:36-37) and Reicke (1946:23-27).

³⁰ Augustine's interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19, which sees the verse refer to Christ's pre-existent preaching in the person of Noah to his contemporaries, shall be examined in due course.

³¹ Augustine regards the view that all the dead were liberated by Christ at his descent as heretical. See *De Haeresibus*, Chapter 79.

thousand years.³² Subsequent scholars, following Augustine's proposal, argued that 1 Peter 3:18-22 ought to be understood apart from the doctrine of Christ's descent.³³ While some scholars readily agreed with Augustine's view that salvation was only possible in this life, they were reluctant to go as far as him and not interpret 1 Peter 3:19 as referring in some way to the doctrine of Christ's descent.³⁴ However, these scholars seem to be among the very few in the western tradition who demur from the interpretation and working hypothesis of Augustine.

Among one of the most prominent Reformers to support the line of interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 which sees Christ as proclaiming to the souls of the believing contemporaries of Noah was John Calvin (1509-1564 AD). Calvin, however, adopted this interpretation with some degree of hesitancy. It is clear that Calvin was concerned to dismiss any notion that understands 1 Peter 3:19 as a reference to a descent of Christ to hell.

Calvin (1963:293) starts from a position that it is 'indubitably the teaching of Scripture that we do not obtain salvation in Christ except by faith; therefore then those who continue unbelieving to death have no hope left'. From this commencement point, he proceeds to observe that the spirit of Christ³⁵ sometime after his resurrection went to preach to the spirits (πνεύμασιν) who are the souls of the faithful of the Old Testament.³⁶ Calvin (1963:293) comments, 'I therefore have no doubt that Peter is speaking generally, to the effect that the manifestation of Christ's grace was made to godly spirits, and that they were endued with the life-giving power of the Spirit'. To explain the matter of why such 'godly spirits' should find themselves ἐν φυλακῇ, Calvin has to downgrade the prison to the level of a 'watch tower' from which the godly spirits anticipated their promised salvation with trepidation and anxiety. It is this very worry that transforms their watch tower into some kind of prison and which allows Calvin to translate ἐν φυλακῇ with the traditional 'in prison'. However, Calvin's line of interpretation necessitates that ἀπειθήσασιν in 3:20 must be taken as referring to some group other than those τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν in 3:19. This group of unbelievers did not hear the gospel as the spirit of Christ preached it. But what are these 'godly spirits' actually saved from? Calvin (1963:294) explains this problem by proposing, 'that at that time the true servants of God were mixed together with the unbelieving, and were almost hidden on account of their number'.³⁷

In 1586, Bellarmine attempted to reconcile the problem of seeing 1 Peter 3:19 as referring to the Descent of Christ and also holding to the view that post-death conversion is heretical.³⁸ For Bellarmine, 1 Peter 3:18-22 reported the events after Christ died when he went to proclaim the release of those souls of Noah's contemporaries who had repented before they had died in the Flood. These souls were thus released from their prison (Purgatory) and led into heaven.

³² For the preeminence of the theory of 'no conversion after death', see Dalton (1989:38-39). This theological presupposition of Augustine influenced the likes of John Chrysostom (1990:416) who interprets Matthew 11:3 in such a way as to refute those who think this passages refers to Christ's descent (Homily in Matthew, PG 57, 416) and Gregory the Great among others.

³³ See Dalton (1989:39) for those who followed Augustine's theory that there is 'no salvation after death', but who understand 1 Peter 3:19 as referring to some descent by Christ to the underworld.

³⁴ See Dalton (1989:38-39) for the views of Ps Oecumenicus (*Comm in 1 Pet*, PG 119, 509-578) and Theophylactus (*Expos in Ep Primam S Petri*, PG 125, 1189-1252) who see 1 Peter 3:19 as referring to the descent of Christ, but who do not interpret the preaching of Christ to the spirits in such a way that advocates the possibility of salvation after death.

³⁵ Calvin (1963:292) differentiates between the person and the spirit of Christ. For Calvin it is the Spirit of Christ that descended and preached and not his soul. 'These are two very different things, that Christ's soul went, and that Christ preached by the power of his Spirit. Peter expressly mentions *the Spirit*, so as to take away the notion of what may be called a real presence'.

³⁶ Calvin (1963:293) dismisses the interpretation that saw Christ as preaching to the souls of Noah's human contemporaries who has been converted just before their deaths in the Flood as being too 'shaky' and 'inconsistent with the context of the passage'.

³⁷ For a critical analysis of Calvin's interpretation at this point, see Davids (1990:138).

³⁸ Bellarmine is being discussed here as he appears to form part of this tradition from Justin in seeing 1 Peter 3:19 as referring to Christ preaching to the souls of those human contemporaries of Noah who had been converted just prior to their death in the Flood. Both Grudem (1989:204) and Elliott (2000:649), however, discuss Bellarmine as belonging to a different tradition altogether.

In his *Controversiae*,³⁹ Bellarmine noted that Augustine was far from dogmatic when it came to separate 1 Peter 3:19 from the doctrine of the Christ's descent. Furthermore, Bellarmine pointed to the Patristic evidence supporting the doctrine of Christ's descent to Hades. Bellarmine then proceeded to presuppose that 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 refer to the same event so that the 'dead' (*mortuis*) of 4:6 naturally refers to the 'spirits' (*spiritibus*) of 3:19. In this interpretation, therefore, Christ descends to the place in the abode of the dead reserved for the righteous in order to proclaim liberation to those righteous souls who were converted before their death in the flood.

From an early stage Bellarmine's interpretation came to be adopted by many exegetes in the Roman Catholic Church so that it soon became accepted as the 'traditional view'⁴⁰ of 1 Peter 3:19. Because the interpretation was found to provide Scriptural proof concerning the doctrine of purgatory as a place of imprisonment reserved for the righteous, this hypothesis of Bellarmine soon found general favour within the Roman Catholic Church. Down through the centuries this interpretation received much support by generations of Roman Catholic scholars who found no reason to deny, or call into question, either Bellarmine's exegesis or the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine of purgatory.⁴¹ However, other modern Roman Catholic exegetes have felt less inclined to adopt the position of Bellarmine preferring to adopt interpretations which are not influenced by doctrinal considerations.⁴²

2.1.3 Christ's Preaching of Condemnation to Noah's Unbelieving Contemporaries

This particular interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19 also sees Christ's descent to the abode of the souls as occurring during the *triduum mortis*. However, this mission was undertaken not to bring good news or liberation to the τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν ('the spirits in prison'), but in order for Christ to proclaim judgment and ultimate condemnation upon these unbelieving contemporaries of Noah. According to Reicke (1946:44-45), this view came to be adopted by many Lutheran scholars who were not prepared to countenance any idea of Christ preaching good news and offering the possibility of salvation to the souls of those who had already died.⁴³ It is quite understandable how this theory may have arisen. These 17th century AD Lutheran interpreters were confronted with two major interpretations of 1 Peter 3:19. The first adopted an optimistic interpretation that saw the possibility of salvation after death, while the second, the Augustinian approach, adopted a very spiritualised reading of the text. Wishing to grapple with the reality of the descent of Christ and his sermon, these Lutheran interpreters preferred to see the preaching, or perhaps better proclamation, of Christ as one whereby these unbelieving spirits were confronted with their final condemnation.

Though this interpretation waned in the Lutheran Church with the rise in the optimistic interpretations during the higher critical movements,⁴⁴ the view persists even to this day. Perhaps the best modern presentation of this understanding of 1 Peter 3:19 is that of Lenski (1966:160-169). He writes, 'Let us note that Peter's interest does not lie in the *contents* of Christ's proclamation. The *fact* that Christ went to hell and made it, went there in the instant of his vivification after his death and made proclamation to *the damned* in hell – this is the point that Peter impresses. The fact that the proclamation was not evangelical but damnatory goes without saying' (Lenski 1966:167-168 emphasis his). Concerning the identity of the people to whom Christ preached, Lenski (1966:164) categorically limits it to only those

³⁹ The full title of Robert Bellarmine's work is, *Disputationes Robertii Bellarmini de contriversionibus christianae fidei, adversus huius temporis haereticos*. The relevant section on 1 Peter 3:19 is found in *Tom I, Cont 2, Lib 4*, ch. 13. For details see Reicke (1946:42-44), Dalton (1989:39-40) and Elliott (2000:649).

⁴⁰ Dalton (1998:40), a Roman Catholic scholar, comments, 'It is a pity that the word 'traditional' could be used so lightly, to support something which was no more than an exegetical fashion'.

⁴¹ See Reicke (1946:42-44) and Dalton (1989:32-34, 39-41) for a brief excursus through the Roman Catholic scholars who have adopted the interpretation of Bellarmine and those who have been more circumspect. For a modern Roman Catholic scholar's presentation in support of Bellarmine's interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19 see Willmering (1953:1179).

⁴² Dalton (1989) is one modern Jesuit scholar whose interpretation differs from Bellarmine.

⁴³ Luther himself was quite hesitant when it came to adopting a definitive interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19. Indeed it could be argued that Luther adopted a more spiritualised interpretation by understanding Christ's 'going' and 'preaching' in a spiritual sense. See Luther (1967:113-114). On this basic spiritual understanding, Luther (1967:115) then proceeded to summarise 1 Peter 3:19 thus, 'Christ ascended into heaven and preached to the spirits, that is, to human souls, and among these souls there were unbelievers in the days of Noah'.

⁴⁴ See Reicke's (1946: 44-46) historical analysis on the rise of the optimistic interpretation among 18th Century Lutheran exegetes. Dalton (1989:41) agrees with Reicke's historical reconstruction.

unbelieving contemporaries of Noah who had perished in their sin and who are now unable to be saved. For Lenski, their opportunity to repent was during the 120 years of Noah when they were warned of the coming judgment. This period was the time of God's mercy and patience. However, 'the Scriptures teach no probation after death, no missionary work in hell, and none in a Totenreich, for none exists' (Lenski 1966:167). It is clear therefore, that Lenski adopts the 'traditional' interpretation of his Lutheran forefathers and there he stands for it seems he can do no other.

This rather severe 'Lutheran' understanding, while not completely lapsing into 'oblivion' (Dalton 1989:41), has generally fallen out of favour among scholars from all backgrounds as they struggle to interpret 1 Peter 3:19.

2.2 The Preaching of the Pre-Existent Christ through Noah

In 414AD Bishop Evodius sent a letter to his fellow bishop Augustine.⁴⁵ In his epistle, Evodius asked Augustine for his thoughts regarding the identity of the 'spirits in prison' in 1 Peter 3:19 to whom Christ had descended, and the nature and success, or otherwise, of the sermon that was preached during this supposed trip to the abode of the dead. Evodius expresses his concerns thus, 'giving us to understand that they were in hell, and that Christ descending into hell, preached the gospel to them all, and by grace delivered them all from darkness and punishment, so that from the time of the resurrection of the Lord judgement is expected, hell having been completely emptied.'

It is evident that Evodius was wrestling with the problem of how to reconcile this preaching of Christ in hell in such a way that does not imply the possibility of salvation after death. What is clear is that Evodius' natural reading of the passage presupposes a real descent to hell and a preaching by Christ to spirits. Augustine's reply, however, was to mark a major sea change in the interpretation of this difficult passage.⁴⁶ In short, Augustine came to the interpretation that Christ, in his pre-existent nature, preached to the sinful and unbelieving contemporaries of Noah during their own lifetime through the person of Noah. These contemporaries of Noah, though they were on the earth when confronted by the preaching of Christ through Noah, are currently now spirits in prison (τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν). Augustine's hermeneutical methodology could be summarised as follows. The principle that the eternal destiny of men must be decided in their own natural lifetime is presupposed and is not up for debate. Starting at this point Augustine proceeds to interpret 1 Peter 3:19 in such a way that does not lead him to reject or modify his starting presupposition.⁴⁷

This interpretation though novel was not quite a flight of fancy on the part of Augustine. The New Testament does seem to refer to Christ's active involvement with his people in the Old Testament. For example 1 Corinthians 10:4 reads,

ἔπινον γὰρ ἐκ πνευματικῆς ἀκολουθούσης πέτρας, ἡ πέτρα δὲ ἦν ὁ Χριστός

'for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ',
NIV.

It is worth noting that modern commentators have interpreted this Pauline passage in such a way as to infer the presence of the pre-existent Christ with his people Israel in the Old Testament.⁴⁸ It must be confessed, therefore, that Augustine's interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19, whereby he sees Christ in his pre-existent presence preaching through Noah to the unbelieving people of his time, is not without biblical parallel.

⁴⁵ Augustine (1994:515). See Letter CLXIII for an English translation of Evodius' missive to Augustine.

⁴⁶ See Letter CLXIV (Augustine 1994:515-521) for Augustine's reply to Evodius.

⁴⁷ See Dalton (1989:43) for his understanding of Augustine's methodology.

⁴⁸ Bruce (1971:91), commenting on 1 Corinthians 10:4, notes that, 'Paul...affirms that Christ accompanied his people as a spiritual source of refreshment throughout this period.' Similarly, Witherington III (1995:218) looks at Paul's interpretative framework of 1 Corinthians 10:4 and notes that, 'He [Paul] will interpret the OT christologically, in part because he believes that Christ was pre-existent in OT times helping God's OT people along. This is the most natural way to interpret the difficult 'the rock was Christ' (v4). 'Was' indicates that the divine Christ was really a part of Israel's history, providing them life-giving water.'

Furthermore, supporters of Augustine's theory also point out that there exists internal evidence in 1 Peter which may reveal a similar belief in the involvement of the pre-existent Christ in the life of his people to that found in Paul. This idea, it is alleged, is found in 1 Peter 1:10-11.⁴⁹ It reads,

¹⁰ περὶ ἧς σωτηρίας ἐξεζήτησαν καὶ ἐξηραύνησαν προφῆται οἱ περὶ τῆς εἰς ὑμᾶς χάριτος προφητεύσαντες, ¹¹ ἐραυνῶντες εἰς τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρὸν ἐδήλου τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ προμαρτυρούμενον τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα καὶ τὰς μετὰ ταῦτα δόξας.

The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation ¹¹ they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory.
RSV.

It is clear that Peter also seems to believe that Christ, in some form or other, had been at work in and through the prophets of the Old Testament.⁵⁰ The text explains that this working of Christ before the incarnation was achieved by involvement of the 'Spirit of Christ' (πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ).⁵¹ This πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ is understood by some modern commentators as being the divine nature of Christ.⁵² If, therefore, Peter believed in the involvement of the pre-existent Christ with his people and his prophets, then it gives added biblical support to Augustine's interpretation. This biblical support basis is given greater credence if the Second Epistle of Peter is from the hand of the same author.⁵³ In 2 Peter 2:5, Noah is described as a herald, or preacher, of righteousness (Νῶε δικαιοσύνης κήρυκα).⁵⁴ Could it be then, that Augustine's interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19 has sound biblical support? Did the pre-existent Christ preach through Noah the 'Herald of Righteousness' to the unbelieving contemporaries of the Patriarch? These questions and others concerning the validity of this interpretation as held by Augustine and those who stand in this tradition shall be examined in greater detail during the exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22 in Chapter 4.

Subsequent Developments

As has already been mentioned, Augustine's hesitantly provided interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19 to his friend Evodius proved to very influential with scholars for a considerable period in time. Indeed, Dalton (1989:44) notes that 'this reign of a thousand years is a good example of a prevailing interpretation accepted at one time as a genuine Christian tradition and later proved to be mistaken. This exegetical fashion even influenced the readings of the Vulgate mss'.⁵⁵ At the time of the Reformation, those struggling to interpret 1 Peter 3:19 were confronted with major theological and dogmatological considerations. It seemed to many scholars at the time that there were only two ways of understanding 1 Peter 3:19. One could either follow those like Bellarmine who interpreted the passage against a framework which presupposed a belief in the recently proposed Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory;

⁴⁹ It is interesting that Augustine (1994:515-521) himself does not seem to refer to 1 Peter 1:10-11 in his letter to Evodius to support his theory.

⁵⁰ Selwyn (1947:134, 259-268) used this unique association between the 'Spirit of Christ' with these 'prophets' as evidence that the 'prophets' refers not to Old Testament prophets but rather to Christian prophets. Elliott (2000:346) has demonstrated how the immediate context with its reference to the 'prior witness' of these prophets and the contrast between them and the believers (1 Peter 1:12) make Selwyn's hypothesis unlikely.

⁵¹ 'Spirit' is capitalised in the following English translations – AV, RSV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, NLT, ESV et al.
⁵² Kelly (1969:60-61) argues that this pre-existent Spirit is not the Holy Spirit, but the pre-existent Christ, presupposing a 'spirit-Christology.' He comments that, 'it was Christ in His pre-existent Spirit being (the Spirit of Christ within them) who inspired, or rather spoke through, the OT prophets'. Michaels (1988:43-44), Davids (1990:62-63) and Marshall (1991:44-45) are among some of the scholars who are less convinced that Peter is adopting 'a Spirit-Christology', but rather that he is equating the Holy Spirit with the Spirit of Christ.

⁵³ For a brief survey concerning the authorship of 2 Peter and its relationship with 1 Peter, see Carson et al (1992:433-437). For a modern presentation that 1 and 2 Peter are from the hands of two different authors and a defence of pseudonymity with regard to 2 Peter, see Bauckham (1983:158-162).

⁵⁴ See Bauckham (1983:249-251) for an exegesis of 2 Peter 2:5 and the possible background to Νῶε δικαιοσύνης κήρυκα.

⁵⁵ Dalton (1989) writes just before a renaissance in the Augustinian interpretation among some Protestant evangelical scholars.

or one could reaffirm the Augustinian interpretation with its removal altogether of any mention of the descent and the preaching of Christ to the spirits in hell. The position one adopted in such turbulent times was more often than not based on ecclesiastical orthodoxy rather than on the basis of exegesis. To make a decision was to take sides. This may in part explain why both interpretations remained dominant within each ecclesiastical tradition for so long.

The Augustinian position, therefore, generally held sway among Protestant scholars until the adoption of the optimistic Clementine position (see earlier) by late 17th Century scholars. From then on the Augustinian position left centre stage, from within Protestant scholarship as least, and the view generally fell out of favour.⁵⁶ More recently, however, the Augustinian position has undergone a degree of revival. In 1923, Wohlenberg (1923:106-115) suggested a modification of Augustine's interpretation. In his subtle reworking, Wohlenberg interprets 1 Peter 3:19 as referring to Christ preaching to the Noah's contemporaries who are *now*, at the time of writing the epistle, souls being punished in the abode of the dead. To support his case he claims a parallel in the statement – 'Christ appeared to the apostle Paul'. It is clear to all that the appearance of Christ occurred at a time before the Paul became an apostle. So therefore, he adduces that when Christ preached to the spirits in prison this sermon occurred at a time prior to their incarceration.⁵⁷ Wohlenberg's resuscitation of the Augustinian interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19 did not immediately bring much response, let alone support.⁵⁸

A Small Revival of Interest

Although Wohlenberg's work made little immediate impact, his subtle reworking of the Augustinian interpretation was yet to prove influential among some British and American evangelical scholars. Among those British scholars was Guthrie (1981). Guthrie, attempting to compile a New Testament theology, was perhaps even more influenced by Salmond's (1897) work on the doctrine of immortality than by Wohlenberg. In his section on doctrine of the afterlife, Guthrie (1981:818-848) looked at the passage in 1 Peter 3:18-22 in detail. He came to the conclusion that, 'No interpretation, however, which does not relate it in some ways to Noah's time and that does not have some relevance to Peter's readers is satisfactory. No final answer can be given. It would, however, seem most reasonable to suppose that the preacher was Christ (not specifying the form in which he preached), but that the preaching was done in Noah's generation' (1981:842). Though nailing his colours to the mast, the purpose of Guthrie's volume was to prepare a thematically organised New Testament theology. Because of the nature and the constraints of the volume it perhaps was not conducive in persuading a wider acceptance of the strengths of the Augustinian interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22.

The Renaissance of the Augustinian Interpretation

However, it was with the works of Grudem (1986 and 1988⁵⁹), and in particular his commentary which was directed at a pastor/student level, that the Augustinian interpretation was to be brought back to the fore in studies of 1 Peter 3:18-22. Grudem's commentary was to include a substantial appendix⁶⁰ which, along with the exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22, would make up over 20% of his commentary. Indeed Carson (1993:82) comments that, 'scholars and preachers alike will find the lengthy appendix on the "spirit in prison" passage to warrant the price of the book'.

In his treatment of the passage, Grudem represents the Augustinian interpretation while taking issue with what he regards are the apparent problems of the other major interpretations. At the outset Grudem (1989:205) wishes to distance himself from what some critics of Augustine believed was a weakness in his original argument, namely his inference that the 'prison' ought to be interpreted

⁵⁶ As has been observed Roman Catholic scholarship at this time, influenced by the doctrine of purgatory, had generally adopted the view of Bellarmine.

⁵⁷ The same argument, but with a modern illustration, has been put forward by Grudem (1988:209) who notes, 'It is quite natural to speak in terms of a person's present status even when describing a past action which occurred when the person did not have that status. For example, it would be perfectly correct to say, 'Queen Elizabeth was born in 1926,' even though she did not become Queen until long after 1926.'

⁵⁸ For example Reicke (1946:40-41) mentions the theory, but Selwyn (1947) fails even to mention the work of Wohlenberg in his monumental commentary. Selwyn, (1947:317) does however mention the work of Salmond (1897, republished in 1984) in passing.

⁵⁹ Grudem's commentary on 1 Peter was originally produced in 1988. The second printing by IVP in the United Kingdom was published in May 1989.

⁶⁰ The appendix (Grudem 1988:203-239) is essentially the republication of his earlier article (1986:3-31).

'metaphorically' as referring to the 'prison of ignorance' of unbelievers. By disagreeing with Augustine on this point of his interpretation and by adopting the subtle change as proposed by Wohlenberg, Grudem believes that the overall position of this line of interpretation remains strong and worthy of consideration.

Furthermore, Grudem also desires to refute the objection raised by some who argue that the Augustinian interpretation fails to satisfactorily connect with the overall context of 1 Peter and the purpose of the author. In short, the opponents of the Augustinian approach could see no practical or pastoral reason why Peter should refer here to Christ in the Spirit preaching through Noah to his human contemporaries who now happen to be in prison. Grudem (189:205), however, believes 'that on closer inspection the context lends more support to this view than perhaps to any of the others'. On this point Grudem (1989:239) concludes that the passage functions, '(1) to encourage the readers to bear witness boldly in the midst of hostile unbelievers, just as Noah did; (2) to assure them that though they are few, God will surely save them; (3) to remind them of the certainty of final judgment and Christ's ultimate triumph over the all the forces of evil which oppose them. This passage, similarly understood, can provide similar encouragement to Peter's readers today.'

However, what makes Grudem's presentation so fresh is that by adopting the Augustinian hypothesis after its years in relative academic obscurity, he breaks from the prevailing consensus of modern scholars. Interacting with the dominant interpretation of Selwyn and others, Grudem questions their general assumption of accepting 1 Enoch and the other examples in the Jewish Pseudepigraphical literature as providing the hermeneutical key for interpreting 1 Peter 3:18-22. For example, Grudem (1989:206-209) analyses the use of πνεῦμα in 1 Enoch and concludes that it could be used almost equally to refer to both the spirits of humans as well as for angelic or demonic beings. This he believes reduces the force of those who argue that 1 Peter 3:18-22 must refer to supernatural entities. Concerning the passage in Genesis 6:2-4 with its reference to the Sons of God (בְּנֵי-הָאֱלֹהִים) marrying the 'daughters of men', Grudem (1989:211-215) attempts to show that this need not refer to sinful angelic spirits marrying human beings as is often supposed by many commentators. Grudem, therefore, demonstrates that alternative interpretations of Genesis 6:2, 4 existed in extra-biblical Jewish literature which believed not in angelic disobedience, but rather in the disobedience of humans. By showing possible alternative understandings Grudem is able to raise doubts on the interpretation which sees the τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν ('the spirits in prison') in 1 Peter 3:18-22 as referring to disobedient supernatural spirits who disobeyed at the time of Noah. Indeed, Grudem (1989:220) can conclude quite boldly that, 'there is no evidence in biblical or extra-biblical literature which suggests that disobedient angels fit these characteristics'.⁶¹ For him the key to interpreting 1 Peter 3:18-22 is not to be found in a supernatural identification of the בְּנֵי-הָאֱלֹהִים of Genesis 6 or in those later expansions of this passage in the Pseudepigraphical Jewish extra-biblical literature.

By preferring a human interpretation of the τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν ('the spirits in prison'), Grudem thus identifies the recipients of the preaching of Christ as being those human contemporaries of Noah who perished in the Flood because of their disobedience and who are now confined in prison. These human spirits never responded to the preaching of Christ in his pre-existent state (in the Spirit) through the faithful witness of Noah, the Herald of Righteousness.

Meanwhile, Feinberg (1986), working independently of Grudem,⁶² came to very similar conclusions concerning the exegesis and interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19. Adopting a different angle of approach,⁶³

⁶¹ It is interesting that Grudem (1989:220-223) questions whether Peter's readers actually knew 1 Enoch at all. He wonders whether these Christians in Asia Minor could actually recognise that Peter was alluding to 1 Enoch and automatically understand that the τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν were actually supernatural spirits (or a combination of human and supernatural spirits) awaiting judgment? Grudem (1989:221) concludes that, 'It seems that we must entertain serious doubts about whether 1 Enoch was that widely known, and whether Peter would have been justified in making such an allusion'. It seems, however, that the authors of 2 Peter and Jude almost certainly knew and used the writings of Enoch. This fact that contemporaries of Peter knew the writings of Enoch considerably weakens Grudem's argument at this point.

⁶² Grudem (1988:239) acknowledges the work of Feinberg (1986) and the fact that though 'working entirely independently and with widely differing methods of approaching the text, have reached very similar conclusions'.

Feinberg (1986:303-304) reveals his purpose by stating his hope to exegete 1 Peter 3:18-20 'in an attempt to discern whether it teaches anything about an underworld, anything about Christ's preaching in hell for any reason, or anything about his transferring OT saints to heaven. In this study I shall attempt to demonstrate that the passage in question has nothing to do with any of those ideas, but should be understood as a reference to Christ's preaching by the Holy Spirit through Noah to the people of Noah's day'.⁶⁴ After a brief historical survey of the various interpretations of 1 Peter 3:18-22, Feinberg proceeds to examine the passage in order to discover which interpretative model contains a higher degree of probability than the other lines of interpretation. Although he openly admits the difficulty in finding one interpretation whose probability far exceeds that of the others, Feinberg, after exegeting the passage and interacting with the various models, comes to accept the Augustinian interpretation as being the 'most probable' (1986:306).

These works of Grudem (1986 and 1988) and Feinberg (1986) were closely followed by a commentary on 1 Peter by Clowney in 1988. Although not discussing in as much detail all the problems of 1 Peter 3:18-22, it is clear that Clowney's thinking on the issue had been influenced by the works of both Grudem and Feinberg.⁶⁵ While admitting the strengths of the argument for understanding the 'spirits in prison' as being those supernatural angelic beings of Genesis 6 and as found developed in the accounts in 1 Enoch and the extra-biblical Jewish literature, Clowney (1988:162-163) is not completely satisfied. By preferring to interpret 'the Sons of God' (בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים) in Genesis 6 as referring to human kings,⁶⁶ he distances himself from those who would adopt the interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 which sees the audience of Christ's preaching as being disobedient evil supernatural spirits. For Clowney, therefore, the preaching of Christ's Spirit through Noah was accomplished long ago during the days prior to the Flood, and those disobedient human contemporaries of the Patriarch are now imprisoned because of their sinfulness and rejection of this 'preacher of righteousness'.⁶⁷

This resurgence of the Augustinian interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 in the late 20th Century, particularly among scholars of an evangelical persuasion, has proved that the reports of its terminal demise were unfounded. With the publication of the works of Feinberg and Grudem, the long dormant Augustinian approach was given a fresh presentation and much-needed rejuvenation. This interpretation which follows in the tradition of Augustine and understands 1 Peter 3:18-22 as referring to Christ preaching through Noah to the unbelieving contemporaries of Noah's day (who are now in prison) continues to find support.⁶⁸ Indeed the popular nature and ready availability of these works have ensured a wide readership and more than likely a wide adoption of this interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22.

However, as shall be observed, the most popular interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22 among scholars from a variety of theological backgrounds continues to lie elsewhere.

2.3 Christ's Proclamation of Victory to Evil Supernatural Powers

2.3.1 Introduction

Perhaps the most popular line of interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19-22 today understands Christ himself, as opposed to his Spirit, as proclaiming his ultimate victory to evil spirits in prison sometime between his death and his ascension.⁶⁹ Proponents of this view generally identify these spirits as being the hostile

⁶³ See Feinberg's (1986:304-305) description of his underlying procedure which he calls 'a methodology of analytic philosophy'.

⁶⁴ Feinberg (1986:304) acknowledges that while he does not believe that the Scriptures teach anything about an underworld preferring to see subsequent interpretations as a vestige of Graeco-Roman or Jewish mythology, any belief that an underworld exists in Scripture must appeal to other texts than 1 Peter 3:18-20.

⁶⁵ Clowney (1988:157, 159, 162-163) mentions favourably the works of Feinberg (1986) and Grudem (1988).

⁶⁶ Clowney's (1988:160) understanding of Sons of God (בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים) seems to be influenced by the work of Kline (1962).

⁶⁷ Clowney (1988:163) does not adopt Augustine's explanation that these human contemporaries of Noah were spiritually imprisoned.

⁶⁸ Skilton (1996) is another scholar who adopts the traditional Augustinian approach as advocated by Feinberg (1986), Grudem (1986 and 1988) and Clowney (1989).

⁶⁹ This view is often sub-divided into two views differing over the time of the sermon and the location of Christ's audience. Some advocate a position that sees Christ, between his death and resurrection,

angelic and supernatural powers who were associated with those called the Sons of God (בְּנֵי־הַאֱלֹהִים) and/or their evil progeny the Nephilim (הַנְּפִלִים) who appear in Genesis 6-8 during the time of great evil prior to the Flood. The precise location of the prison varies depending on the particular interpreter, but it is usually regarded as a place of punishment in the lower reaches of the underworld or in the lower heavens.⁷⁰

In subsequent Jewish tradition⁷¹ the narrative of Genesis 6-8 proved to very influential. Even a cursory examination of some of the Intertestamental extra-biblical Jewish literature and traditions reveals that many of the writers (and one supposes their audience) were very interested in the Genesis Flood account and the salvation of Noah. Perhaps surrounded in a world of ever-increasing evil and powerlessness the account of God's salvation of the righteous minority in the face of hostility was a source of comfort. Whatever the original reason for their being composed, the authors of these extra-biblical Jewish works focussed on the events of Genesis 6-8 and used them as a point of departure in providing their readership with an expanded account of the Old Testament narrative.

1 Enoch 1-36 is a case in point, as the author goes beyond the Old Testament account in describing in detail the fall of the angels (Sons of God), their lusting after the daughters of men and their resultant evil progeny (the Nephilim) because of their sinful actions. 1 Enoch also describes the rise of evil in the land that resulted eventually in the Flood and God's judgment on the evil and the salvation of the righteous man Noah and his family. Furthermore, the account in 1 Enoch describes the special commissioning of Enoch and his subsequent travels as he proceeds to the residence of these evil spirits, witnesses their punishment and expounds the message of condemnation upon them.

There are several recurring features in this amplified Jewish extra-biblical literature based on Genesis 6-8 which are believed by some scholars to cast considerable insight in the study and interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22. These features touch on matters of the identity of the spirits⁷², the defiance and sin of these spirits⁷³, the punishment meted out upon them⁷⁴, the location of their punishment⁷⁵ and the announcement of their condemnation.⁷⁶

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- preaching after a descent to the underworld, whereas others hold that Christ, sometime during his ascension, proclaimed to the spirits who were located in the lower heavens.
- ⁷⁰ Dalton (1989:159-163) locates the prison in the lower reaches of the heavens. He reaches this conclusion in part due to his understanding of contemporary cosmology and also on his understanding of *πορευθεὶς* (3:19) as a reference to Christ's great going, that is his ascension.
- ⁷¹ For examples of this Jewish tradition see Genesis 6:1-8, The Books of 1 and 2 Enoch, Jubilees, Apocalypse of Baruch, Testament of Naphtali and the Testament of Reuben.
- ⁷² The 'Sons of God' (בְּנֵי־הַאֱלֹהִים) of Genesis 6:1-4 are described in the Pseudepigraphical Jewish literature as being - 'evil angels', 'demons' (Jubilees 10:2), 'Watchers' (1 Enoch 10:16; Jubilees 7:21; 10:5; and Testament of Naphtali 3:5), 'stars', 'spirits' (*πνεύματα*, see 1 Enoch 15:4-10, 16:1 and Jubilees 10:3, 7) and 'spirits of the angels' (1 Enoch 19:1). Their illegitimate offspring, the Nephilim (הַנְּפִלִים) are also described as '(evil) spirits' (1 Enoch 15:8-12; 16:1 and Jubilees 10:3-5) or 'demons' (Jubilees 7:22; 10:1f).
- ⁷³ The sin of these 'sons of God' seems to have entailed the violation of God's commands through their abandonment of their heavenly abode and their subsequent violation of the daughters of men in illegitimate sexual intercourse. These evil spirits and their progeny are both held accountable for the 'great sin' (1 Enoch 6:3; 21:4) which was to result in God's judgment in the Flood. In short, these spiritual beings were regarded as being 'disobedient'.
- ⁷⁴ These sinful spiritual beings were punished for their rebellion by being bound and put in chains (1 Enoch 69:28 and 2 Baruch 56:13) or put in prison forever (1 Enoch 10:4-14; 14:5; 18:13-16; 21:1-10; 54:4-6; 67:4; 88:1-3 and 90:23-24. See also 2 Enoch 7:1-3; 18:3; Jubilees 5:6-11 and 10:4-11).
- ⁷⁵ The location of the imprisonment of the angel/spirits and the demonic offspring, is variously described in the tradition. 1 Enoch describes it as being a prison house (18:14-16) located at a place 'where the heavens come together' (17:1). 2 Enoch in his description of Enoch's journey through the seven heavens locates the place of imprisonment as being in the second heaven (2 Enoch 7:1-3; see also Testament of Levi 3:3).
- ⁷⁶ To these imprisoned 'angelic spirits' or 'Watchers', Enoch announces the condemnation and judgment of God (1 Enoch 12:4-6; 13:10; 14:1-7 and 15:1-16:3).

2.3.2 History and Development of the Interpretation

Inauspicious Origins

How then did this particular line of interpretation originate and develop? This particular interpretation seems to have first originated in the work of Spitta (1890)⁷⁷ who noted the close proximity of thought in 1 Peter 3:18-22 with the early extra-biblical Jewish traditions concerning the Flood narrative. Thus the τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν ('the spirits in prison') were identified by Spitta as those supernatural spirits whose disobedience and sinfulness instigated the evil which led to the Flood. While identifying the 'spirits' as supernatural/angelic beings, Spitta, however, continued to follow the interpretation of Augustine in seeing the proclamation in 1 Peter 3:18-22 as being the activity of the pre-existent Christ in the preaching of Noah.⁷⁸ However, the work of Spitta was to prove very influential in providing the springboard towards the formation of an altogether new and distinct interpretation. Following the article of Spitta, a number of scholars came to agree with his emphasis on the importance of the Jewish traditional material, especially 1 Enoch, and in identifying the 'spirits' as those supernatural angelic beings whose disobedience was to prove the cause of God's judgement in the Flood. Where these scholars demurred with Spitta was in their identification of Christ himself as the preacher and the time of the preaching as having occurred sometime after Jesus' death on the cross and his ascension.

The Momentum Increases

The rise in popularity of this particular interpretation, to such an extent that it is probably now the dominant explanation of the passage, has been identified by some scholars (Grudem 1986:5) as the result of the influence of the works of Reicke (1946), Selwyn (1947)⁷⁹ and Dalton (1989).⁸⁰ Selwyn was among the first English-speaking interpreters to recognise the value of studying 1 Peter 3:18-22 against the background of contemporary extant Jewish thought and literature.⁸¹ This particular approach was embraced in an attempt to find some way through the linguistic and grammatical impasse and to see if fresh light and insight could be brought to the text.

Selwyn (1947:198-200) perceived the phrase τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν ('the spirits in prison') as being the most crucial in one's understanding of 1 Peter 3:18-22. Taking into consideration the wider Jewish tradition, particularly from the Book of Enoch and Jubilees, he understood the 'spirits' (πνεύμασιν), to whom Christ made proclamation, as being the wicked angels associated in this Jewish tradition with the flood and presented as the real instigators of human sin.⁸² For Selwyn, the account in 1 and 2 Enoch of the travelling and subsequent proclamation of condemnation by Enoch to the those disobedient angels now in prison, is perhaps the most influential hermeneutical key in helping to come to a proper understanding of the phrase τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν. Furthermore, for Selwyn (1947:319-322) the New Testament emphasis on the descent of Christ and the importance of his victory over the evil spirits provides further support in interpreting this passage in 1 Peter in such a way. Selwyn is still confronted, however, with the perennial problem, namely, why did this preaching take place. Avoiding the conclusion that the sermon was preached in order to offer salvation to these inhabitants of prison, Selwyn (1947:200) sees this proclamation as being one of judgement on these fallen angels.⁸³

⁷⁷ See Elliott (2000:649) who ascribes the genesis of this model of interpretation to the work of Spitta.

⁷⁸ According to Elliott (2000:649-70), 'Spitta himself followed Augustine in seeing in 1 Peter 3:19 a reference to the activity of the pre-existent Christ prior to his incarnation.'

⁷⁹ This thesis interacts with the 1947 reprint of Selwyn's commentary on 1 Peter. The first printing was published in 1946, the same year as Reicke's contribution.

⁸⁰ Dalton's first edition, which was published in 1965, proved to be one of the major influences on Petrine scholarship with regard to 1 Peter 3:18-22. His second fully revised edition was published in 1989. This study interacts mainly with Dalton's second edition.

⁸¹ Dating the extra-biblical Jewish literature is very difficult, but Selwyn (1947:328) dates the Book of Enoch and Jubilees in the second century BC. Elliott (2000:698) dates the composition of 1 Enoch as some time between the 2nd Century BC and the 1st Century AD.

⁸² As well as his section of commentary, Selwyn comments in greater detail on the issue of the possible background to 1 Peter 3:19-22 in his Essay 1 (1947:314-362). See particularly his discussion of the prominence of Noah in the thought of Peter (1947:328-333).

⁸³ Selwyn (1947:200) finds in 1 Peter 3:19, with its proclamation of judgment on these fallen supernatural beings, an echo with John 12:31 and 16:11 with the mention of the judgment pronounced on 'the prince of this world' (ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου).

Working independently of Selwyn, Reicke (1946) came to a similar set of conclusions especially in seeing the importance of Jewish extra-biblical literature in the interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22.⁸⁴ Perhaps the major point of departure came with Reicke's adoption of an interpretation proposed by Windisch (1930:52-59), who saw the phrase τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν as referring to both the fallen angels and also the human souls of the wicked men of Noah's day (1946:52-59).⁸⁵ Reicke's theory was influenced, in no considerable part, by his assumption that 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 refer to one and the same event. If the Gospel was preached to the souls of the dead (see 1 Peter 4:6) then these souls must be included in the preaching in 1 Peter 3:19. Despite the associated theological problems, other scholars have accepted Reicke's analysis that these passages relate to the same event. Christ preached to the same audience in order to bring about, not judgment, but to offer the possibility of salvation.⁸⁶

The Interpretation's General Acceptance

No survey of the rise of this interpretation, which discerns and recognises the influence of the extra-biblical Jewish literature, especially the works of 1 Enoch, on the author of 1 Peter, would be complete without reference to the work of the Jesuit scholar Dalton (1989). Dalton (1989:19), despite being influenced by the approach of Selwyn⁸⁷ and the conclusions he adopted, believed that 'a fundamental problem remained'. Struggling with the belief that sees 1 Peter 3:19 as being the activity of Christ's soul, Dalton (1989:135-142) adopts an approach that sees ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι (3:18) as a clear reference to Christ's resurrection. Beginning at this point, the subsequent 'going' (3:19 πορευθεὶς) and 'preaching' (3:19 ἐκήρυξεν) must, for Dalton (1989:19), refer to a time after his resurrection. Dalton concludes, therefore, that the easiest explanation is that this must refer to Christ's only other known significant 'going', his ascension to heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father. For Dalton, therefore, this preaching of Christ occurred during his ascension⁸⁸ through the lower heavens on his return to the Father when he arrived at the abode of the hostile spirit powers which is located in the lower heavens. Dalton (1989:48) readily admits that his thinking on this point has been influenced to some degree the works of Bultmann (1947), Schweizer (1949) and Schlier (1962), in seeing the passage here as naturally referring to Christ's ascension.

Dalton, however, is thoroughly convinced that ultimately the ancient cosmology as found in extra-biblical Jewish thought, and in particular 1 Enoch and 2 Enoch, provides an important key to understanding 1 Peter 3:18-22. In both of these books the fallen angels are described as being incarcerated 'in prison' or in equivalent terms. In 1 Enoch, however, these same angels are said to be condemned by God and residing 'in prison' to await their final judgment (see 1 Enoch 14:5 cf. 18:14). In 2 Enoch these wicked spirits are said to be located in the second and fifth heavens and are expressly said to be 'bound' (see 2 Enoch 7:1,3 and Testament of Levi 3:2).⁸⁹ Confronted with two possible directions of Christ's going (the

⁸⁴ The work of Reicke (1946) was published in the same year as the first edition of Selwyn's commentary. It is interesting to note that though working independently these scholars arrived at largely similar conclusions regarding the interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-22.

⁸⁵ Selwyn (1947:199-200) notes the contribution of Windisch (1930) and believes the interpretation 'has something to commend it' (1947:199). However, Selwyn prefers to see 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 as referring to two distinct groups of individuals and to two different occasions.

⁸⁶ Beare (1970:146-147) is one who stands in the tradition of Reicke. Dalton (1989:49) suggests that the works of Vogels (1976:148-152) and Goppelt (1978:276) also show a dependence on Reicke's work at these points.

⁸⁷ Dalton (1989:20) notes that his original research had been greatly influenced by the much neglected work of Gschwind (1911) whom he believes was 'the first to propose that Christ made his proclamation to the spirits on the occasion of his ascension'. He also claims that the works of Bultmann and Schweizer support his theory that this 'going' refers to Christ's ascension (Dalton 1989:47-48).

⁸⁸ Dalton (1989:182-184) acknowledges that the 'ascension' of Christ seems to be understood in a number of ways. Attempting to arrange the chronology of this journey, he concludes that the preaching of Christ to the hostile supernatural spirits must have taken place after Christ's resurrection and before his sitting down at the right hand of the Father. 'In keeping with our examination of ζωοποιηθεὶς πνεύματι and ἐν ᾧ (3:18-19), the activity of Christ in 3:19 is seen to be post-resurrectional. Now the only journey from this earth to the abode of the spirits which fits in with the New Testament picture of the risen Christ is his ascension' (Dalton 1989:181).

⁸⁹ See Dalton (1989:159-161) for his understanding of ἐν φυλακῇ and its possible location. Dalton (1989:165-176) also dedicates a whole chapter looking at the influence of 1 Enoch and other early extra-biblical literature on 1 Peter.

underworld or heaven), Dalton chooses to see 1 Peter 3:18-22, against the light of 2 Enoch, as a reference to Christ's ascension through the lower heavens on his journey to the right hand of God the Father in heaven. Christ preaches therefore to these evil supernatural spirits in their abode situated in the lower heavens sometime during his ascension.

Dalton is left with the question concerning the purpose of Christ's preaching and its message. What did Christ intend to achieve during this preaching? As for the nature of Christ's preaching to these spirits, Dalton in his later edition (1989) comes to modify his original hypothesis at this point. In his earlier work, Dalton (1965) adopts the theory that Christ proclaimed the condemnation of the fallen angels just like Enoch. However, in his second edition (1989), Dalton confesses to having been influenced by the commentary of Brox (1986). He notes, 'the writer is interested in the victory of Christ and the subjugation of the spirits as part of the story of the salvation of human beings. The idea of a proclamation aimed at converting the rebellious spirits is far from his mind' (Dalton 1989:48-49).

Though Dalton's time of Christ's preaching and the location of the τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν differs from that of both Selwyn and Reicke, his interpretation still shows some considerable similarities with these earlier works. Despite differences in emphases, especially in his timing of the preaching and his cosmology, Dalton stands within the tradition first promulgated by Selwyn and Reicke in seeing Christ addressing a supernatural angelic audience.

Van Rensburg (1996, 1997) has adopted an approach to 1 Peter 3:18-22, which, though similar to that of Dalton, is slightly different. With an eye on Peter's audience, Janse van Rensburg is more interested in Peter's purpose in including such a section in his epistle. He concludes that the reason for this pericope's inclusion is to reemphasise the sovereignty of Christ over every spirit, angel, authority and power. This was an important message for a people suffering for their faith. Peter deliberately refuses to indulge in the popular contemporary speculation over the identity of the spirits in prison, the location of their cell or even the nature of the sermon itself. Rather, by deliberately, if obliquely, alluding to the Jewish Intertestamental literature, Peter is immediately provided with a rhetorical device to allow him to address more pressing pastoral matters. These pressing pastoral issues concerning the suffering Christian community are, for Janse van Rensburg, paramount in coming to a proper understanding of this passage.⁹⁰

2.3.3 Summary

While this interpretation which saw the main hermeneutical key in understanding 1 Peter 3:18-22, as coming from Jewish extra-biblical thought and thus referring to disobedient supernatural spirits was not entirely new⁹¹, the works of Selwyn (1947), Reicke (1946) and Dalton (1989) probably proved to be the definitive turning-point especially among English speaking New Testament scholars.

Others following the path first prepared by Selwyn, Reicke and Dalton have been quick to adopt their conclusions regarding the importance of the Jewish background.

⁹⁰ Both works by Janse van Rensburg (1996, 1997) are non-technical in nature. The rhetorical usage of the passage was mentioned in private conversation. While Peter is making a point by referring to these 'spirits in prison' and the 'angels', authorities and powers, it is not likely that he did not believe in the existence and activity of these supernatural beings. The mention of these spiritual beings is not simply employed as an appropriate rhetorical device in order to engage his spiritually-preoccupied readers. First, Peter does not disparage the belief in the existence of spirits or even the continued existence and activity of other spiritual beings (demons, angels, authorities and powers). Secondly, it would be incongruous, if the Apostle Peter was the author of 1 Peter, that the one who witnessed Jesus healing people of demons and evil spirits and who perhaps even healed sufferers himself, were to deny the existence of these spiritual beings. Thirdly, Peter seems to accept the existence and activity of the Devil (1 Peter 5:8-9) who seeks the downfall of the Christian believers. If he should believe in Satan, is it not also conceivable that he should also believe in the existence and activity of evil spirits and angels? Finally, to advocate a view that Peter did not really believe in these spiritual entities would remove Peter from the cultures and worldviews of his day and transpose him into a later post-enlightenment western culture.

⁹¹ See Dalton (1989:46) for a list of essays and commentaries by continental scholars who support the theory that the 'spirits in prison' were the disobedient angels associated with the time of the flood. These scholars generally set the time of the preaching during the *triduum mortis* thus abandoning further the interpretation of Augustine.

Scholars such as Stibbs (1959) and Best (1971) have followed the interpretation first proposed by Selwyn (1947) in seeing 1 Peter 3:18-22 as being heavily influenced by the extra-biblical Jewish writings. They prefer to understand 3:19 as referring to Christ's descent during the period between his death and his resurrection to Hades in order to preach to the disobedient supernatural powers. Other modern scholars have more sympathy with the work of Dalton and see Christ's preaching as having taken place during his ascent to heaven. Kelly (1969), France (1977), , (1981),⁹² Michaels (1988),⁹³ Davids (1990), Marshall (1991) and Elliott (2000)⁹⁴ all follow this line of interpretation.

This line of interpretation rests upon the belief that themes found in the Pseudepigraphical Jewish literature especially concerning Enoch and his dealings with the 'Watchers' provide the major hermeneutical key to understanding 1 Peter 3:19. Indeed France (1977:265) goes as far to comment, 'In fact, if you are not prepared to dirty your hands in the muddy waters of apocalyptic and rabbinic speculations, much of the New Testament must necessarily remain obscure. To try to understand 1 Peter 3:19-20 without a copy of the Book of Enoch at your elbow is to condemn yourself to failure.' Elliott (2000:697-705) is certainly one who follows the advice of France and deals thoroughly with these themes in his section on 'Traces of Noahic Flood (and Enochic) Tradition in 1 Peter 3:19-20'.

2.4 Interpretations Based on Textual Emendations

There have been other interpretations of 1 Peter 3:18-22 using different combinations of the details of the views mentioned above. However, the following interpretations, though more recognizably different, need not be examined in too much depth as they have never been highly regarded by scholars. The common denominator of these interpretations is that those proposing them entertain a general dissatisfaction with the actual Greek text underlying 1 Peter 3:18-22. This starting presupposition has led to two main hypotheses.

2.4.1 Interpolation

In his study Reicke (1946:49-50) lists those scholars who believe that the passage in 1 Peter 3:18-22 is in fact an interpolation and who proceed to present what they believe to be the original Greek text.

Others have seen the section as little more than a digression with little or no connection with the surrounding context. Beare (1970:144) is one who argues that the 'passage is in some degree a digression, moving away from the subject immediately at hand, the exposition of the meaning of undeserved suffering. It may be said that the thought is not closely sustained and connected. By a violent *tour de force* the writer seeks to relate the Christian doctrine of suffering to the saving experience of baptism'. However, Dalton (1989:122) is correct when he warns that this is 'a counsel of despair, particularly since the author of 1 Peter normally shows himself quite practical in his pastoral method.'

These attempts to explain at least the origin of 1 Peter 3:18-22 sadly find no support from the passage itself or even from textual criticism. Moreover, these proposals do not help in understanding the passage itself and explaining what the interpolators' purpose in appending these words to the people in the congregations of Asia Minor. Having been found unsatisfactory by scholars 'this view has rightly disappeared from further discussion' (Dalton 1989:50).

⁹² Blum (1981:242), though he admits that we the place of angelic confinement cannot be located spatially, goes on to state that 'there does not seem to be good evidence for seeing here a 'descent into hell'.

⁹³ Michaels, who similarly accepts the ascension hypothesis, identifies the 'sprints' of 1 Peter 3:19 with the demonic progeny of the angels of Genesis 6:4. Michaels (1988:207-208) writes, 'Although neither the original text [1 Enoch 15:8-10] nor the meaning of the passage are entirely clear, its apparent aim is to identify certain demonic powers (or "evil spirits") as the indirect offspring of the ancient illicit union between originally holy and 'spiritual' angels, and women of the generation before the flood. That union produced 'giants' (cf. Genesis 6:4 LXX), and from these giants came the 'evil spirits' or demons, that continue to harass humankind.'

⁹⁴ Elliott (2000:650) confesses that 'Dalton...has presented the most convincing interpretation of this material. The Notes that follow expand on his research and conclusions, with only minor points of disagreement'.

2.4.2 Enoch went and Preached

In 1763, long before the Book of Enoch was discovered⁹⁵, Bowyer published a Greek New Testament in which he conjectured that the phrase ἐν ᾧ καὶ originally read Ἐνώχ καί ('Enoch also'). If this reading were to be adopted it would make Enoch as the one proclaiming to the spirits in prison. This would naturally be in accordance with the Jewish Pseudepigraphical literature which presents Enoch as the one proclaiming to the supernatural spirits locked in prison.

In 1901 and 1902, Harris refined this conjecture by hypothesizing that due to haplography on the part of later scribes 1 Peter 3:19 originally read ἐν ᾧ καὶ Ἐνώχ ('in which also Enoch'). This proposal also saw the original text as having been corrupted and that the preacher to the spirits in prison was none other than Enoch himself. Adopting this hypothesis of Harris, the translations of the New Testament by both Goodspeed (1923) and Moffatt (1928) reflect this understanding of 1 Peter 3:19. Later in defence of this conjecture, Goodspeed (1954) appealed to the similarity of 1 Peter 3:19 with the Enoch legend as found in 1 Enoch 12-16.

Despite the arguments and the translations of Moffatt and Goodspeed, this line of interpreting 1 Peter 3:19 has generally found little favour for several reasons. First, the proposal has no support from the extant Greek manuscripts of 1 Peter. Second, 'the sudden transference of attention to Enoch does not suit the stream of thought' of 1 Peter (Best 1971:139-140).⁹⁶ Finally, while admitting that the proposed emendation is attractive palaeographically,⁹⁷ Metzger (1992:185) concludes that 'an emendation that introduces fresh difficulties stands self-condemned'.

Perhaps the most enduring quality of this line of interpretation as proposed by Harris and Goodspeed, and one worth further investigation, is how it explicitly presents Christ in 1 Peter fulfilling a role similar to Enoch in the Pseudepigraphical literature especially 1 and 2 Enoch.⁹⁸

3. Conclusion

This historical survey has provided a brief excursus into only a small fraction of the numerous understandings of 1 Peter 3:18-22. Simply due to the quantity of interpretations, this study has focussed mainly on the recognized major lines of interpretation and mentioned only some of their main proponents and supporters. What has been discerned is how this complex passage has given rise to a number of reasonable models of interpretation. These models on the whole are a serious attempt by New Testament scholars to wrestle with 1 Peter 3:18-22 in order to understand what Peter was trying to say to the members of the congregations scattered throughout Asia Minor. These questions can be summarized thus - Who are the spirits in prison? Where is the location of the prison? Who actually preached? And what purpose was there in the preaching? These questions remain valid.

Nevertheless, what is interesting is that the models and lines of interpretation generally do not examine the religious and spiritual milieu of first century Asia Minor. While some commentators have attempted to unearth the Jewish Pseudepigraphical background of Peter's thought and most try to show the relevance of the passage to a suffering people, virtually no attempt is made to show how Peter's readership lived in an age where the supernatural played such a prominent role. How may Peter's audience, believing to be surrounded by demons, spirits and angels in their daily lives, have understood his references to 'spirits in prison' and 'angels'?⁹⁹ What did these people, both Jews and Gentiles, from the cultured elite in Ephesus to the poor uneducated member in rural Cappadocia, understand by Peter's references to spirits and angels? What did they understand about Christ in relation to these supernatural beings?

It is imperative in arriving at a fuller understanding of 1 Peter 3:18-22 that both its immediate textual and wider socio-historic contexts are taken into consideration. While scholars have achieved the former, it

⁹⁵ For a brief history of the discovery and publishing of the Enoch literature see Sparks (1984:169-179).

⁹⁶ Metzger (1975:693) comments on this proposal that 'the word Ἐνώχ breaks the continuity of the argument by introducing an abrupt and unexpected change of subject from that of verse 18'.

⁹⁷ Metzger (1992:185) notes that ἐν ᾧ καὶ and Ἐνώχ in uncial script are 'remarkably similar' (*ENΩKAI [EνωX]*).

⁹⁸ See Michaels (1988:195), Marshall (1991:123) and Elliott (2000:652) who note the closeness of this conjecture with the Enoch tradition.

⁹⁹ See the conclusions reached in Chapter 2.

would be fair to say that the religious and spiritual life of the people in Asia Minor that has generally been overlooked. This must be examined and taken into consideration. How did these readers understand 1 Peter 3:19 and its reference to the 'spirits in prison', living as they were in a society where the dominant worldviews saw the world, and more importantly individuals, as suffering under the power of malevolent spiritual beings? If spiritual beings played a major role in the lives of Peter's audience then is it not possible that this may have coloured their understanding of τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν?

This study will now look at the pericope 1 Peter 3:18-22 to see if Peter wrote aware of the prevalent worldview with its emphasis on all things 'spiritual' and see what point Peter is making in this passage. The lack of scholarly consensus concerning the passage down through history ought to warn everyone to begin with more than a degree of trepidation.

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It is imperative in striving at a fuller understanding of 1 Peter 3:18-22 that both its immediate textual and wider socio-historic contexts are taken into consideration. While scholars have achieved the former, it

For a brief history of the discovery and publishing of the Enoch literature see Sparks (1984:159-178).
Metzger (1975:622) comments on this proposal that the word 'Evy' breaks the continuity of the argument by introducing an abrupt and unexpected change of subject from that of verse 18.
Metzger (1982:182) notes that 'Ev' and 'Evy' in uncial script are remarkably similar (EWA&A [Ev&Y]).
See Michaels (1988:126), Marshall (1991:123) and Elliott (2000:822) who note the closeness of this conjecture with the Enoch tradition.
See the conclusions reached in Chapter 2.

Chapter 4

An Exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22

Table of Contents

1. Introductory Comments
2. The Literary Structure of 1 Peter 3:18-22
3. Setting 1 Peter 3:18-22 in its Wider Textual Context
4. The Immediate Textual Context of 1 Peter 3:18-22
5. An Exegetical Study of 1 Peter 3:18-22
6. Conclusion

1. Introductory Comments

In this chapter an exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22 will be undertaken. This exegesis will be performed according to the grammatical-historical method (Poythress 1988:98-99) and will utilise the appropriate lexicons and consult a wide selection of commentaries on 1 Peter and scholarly studies on the passage under consideration.

In studying the different interpretations of 1 Peter 3:18-22 down through the ages, it was concluded that the socio-religious background had generally been overlooked by interpreters of all persuasions.¹ Consequently, this exegesis will spend some time considering the text in relation to the prevailing mindset found in First Century AD Asia Minor with its interest in and preoccupation with spirits, demons and angels. The socio-religious background will be shown to be an important factor in coming to an understanding of this exceedingly difficult passage which simultaneously reveals Peter's pastoral concern for his audience suffering at the hands of human agents of these spiritual entities. Nevertheless, it is imperative that the exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22 is guided, first and foremost, by proper grammatical and linguistic controls.

As well as other pertinent issues found in 1 Peter 3:18-22, the major problems of the passage shall also be considered. These difficulties have been summarised as follows. Who are the spirits in prison (πνεύμασιν τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ)? Where is the prison located (τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ)? What did Christ actually proclaim (ἐκήρυξεν)? And when did this preaching take place (πορευθεῖς)?

2. The Literary Structure of 1 Peter 3:18-22

Christian Formula Tradition

As well as giving rise to various interpretations, 1 Peter 3:18-22 has seen a number of studies attempt to identify possible Christian sources underlying the passage. In these studies two theories have been advanced. One view is that the author has made use of independent Christian kerygmatic formulas affirming Christ's passion, death, resurrection, ascension, enthronement at God's right hand, and the subjection of all spiritual powers. The alternative view, which was popular in the mid-twentieth century, is that the source underlying 1 Peter 3:18-22 was a single unified creed or hymn similar to those in Philippians 2:6-11, Colossians 1:15-20 and 1 Timothy 3:16.² These scholars, generally regarded 1 Peter 3:18-22 as an interpolation of some kind of baptismal liturgy or confessional hymn that had simply been adopted by the author of 1 Peter to express some Gnostic, anti-Jewish, or anti-Jewish-Christian ideologies.³

These various hypotheses that Peter simply incorporated a unified creedal or hymnic source have generally been found wanting. In contrast to 1 Timothy 3:16, as a clear example of a hymn or creed,⁴ the verses in 1 Peter 3:18-22 require much hypothetical reconstruction in order to develop the metrical

¹ See Chapter 3.

² Both theories reckon with various degrees of authorial redaction.

³ Dalton (1989:109-119) and Elliott (2000:693-697) analyse the various hypotheses presented by Windisch, Cullmann, Bultmann and Boismard with regard to baptismal hymnic or creedal sources underlying 1 Peter 3:18-22, and correctly find these proposals unconvincing and inconclusive.

⁴ See Knight III (1992:182-186) for his discussion on 1 Timothy 3:16 and its structure.

consistency and consistent parallelism that would be expected in a hymn or creed. The reconstruction of the alleged unified source has seen no scholarly consensus regarding the genre of the suspected source, its original content or strophic arrangement, the nature and extent of Peter's redaction, and the manner and motive of its use in 1 Peter. Furthermore, they fail to deal with the complex nature of the text itself. They fail to grapple with why Peter should combine both poetic and prosaic elements in this section or why he combines elements from Jewish Intertestamental with Christian traditions.

It is preferable, therefore, to see 1 Peter 3:18-22 as echoing traditional Christian formulas focussing on Jesus Christ and his vicarious suffering, death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, and his presence at the right hand of God with the cosmic spiritual subordinated to him. These common characteristics, as found in 3:18 and 3:22, suggest that they have been derived from early Christian Christological and kerygmatic traditional material and used by Peter to further his purpose in addressing suffering Christians in Asia Minor.

The common Christian kerygmatic material concerning Christ's death, resurrection and ascension to heaven provided the general literary framework of 1 Peter 3:18d-22. Into this framework Peter incorporated the material of verses 19-21, which presents a different, though related, set of ideas, the background of which have echoes and affinity with Genesis 6-8 and the amplified tradition of the Intertestamental literature. Thus 3:18-22 in its entirety, represents the bringing together of traditional material in a way to substantiate the preceding exhortation (3:8-17).⁵ The identification of these literary structures and traditions and their combination not only helps to clarify the general thrust of the passage as a whole, but also assists in clarifying some of the syntactical and semantic problems.

The Noahic Flood and Enochic Traditions in 1 Peter 3:19-20

3:19-20 differs from 3:18 and 3:22 in terms of its form (a series of subordinate clauses including parenthetical comments), as well as its focus and content (the Noahic Flood and related elements). The details concerning Noah and the Flood show that the author was at least familiar with the Old Testament narrative and probably conversant with the amplified traditions of the Genesis 6-8 passage in contemporary Jewish literature.

As has been observed, the Genesis Flood account, the evil events leading to the Flood and the salvation of Noah and his family were the focus of intense interest in Intertestamental Judaism and found creative expression in much contemporary Jewish literature.⁶

Several features of this Jewish tradition on Genesis 6-8 are relevant to 1 Peter 3:19-20 and its interpretation.

1. In the tradition the 'sons of God' in Genesis 6:1-4 are identified in the literature not only as 'angels' or 'evil angels' or 'demons' or 'Watchers' or 'stars', but also as 'spirits' or 'spirits of the angels'.
2. The tradition also details the defiance and rebellion of these spirits against God and his laws. These spirits abandoned their heavenly abode and violated the boundaries between angelic and human beings in having illicit intercourse with human women. The offspring of these illicit relations, the Nephilim, are also identified as '(evil) spirits' or 'demons', who, together with the angelic spirits who spawned them, were responsible for the evil which overrun the world and brought about the Flood. This event is consistently condemned as the great sin and transgression against the Lord and his commandments.
3. The Intertestamental Jewish literature also focuses on the punishment meted out to angelic spirits and their evil progeny. These evil spirits/angels are described as 'bound', put in 'chains', or cast into 'prison' in which they were incarcerated forever.
4. The precise location of these bound or imprisoned angel-spirits and their demonic progeny is also speculated upon and variously situated in the tradition. Most interestingly, Enoch, in the course of his

⁵ 1 Peter 3:18-22 performs a similar function as 1 Peter 2:21-25 which also uses traditional kerygmatic material in order to substantiate the preceding exhortation (1 Peter 2:18-20).

⁶ See Chapter 3 for a fuller analysis of the amplification of the Flood narrative in Jewish Intertestamental literature. In particular see the use of the Flood narrative in 1 Enoch and 2 Enoch.

journey through the seven heavens, encountered these evil spirits in their realm of darkness situated in the second heaven (2 Enoch 7:1-3).

5. The tradition also records the announcement of God's condemnation and judgement of the evil angel-spirits by Enoch, or by one or more righteous angels. This prominent feature in the Intertestamental literature seems to be carried over into the Christian appropriations of these writings.

Peter's Combination and Use of these Traditions

In 1 Peter 3:18-22 it would appear that the author has combined familiar concepts from early Christian kerygmatic traditions (3:18,22) with motifs of the Flood tradition (3:19b-20) combined with material from Christian baptismal tradition (3:21).⁷ It is likely that the Christian kerygmatic material concerning Christ's suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven provided the basis and literary framework for the whole statement (3:18d-22) including the material which has affinities with the Genesis 6-8 and the amplified Flood tradition. Instead of simply being a passage hanging in the air with little connection to its surrounding context, 1 Peter 3:18-22 is a carefully crafted passage which brings out the reasons why the suffering Christian community in Asia Minor should continue to suffer for righteousness sake being assured of Christ's victory over every cosmic power, and their ultimate vindication.

3. Setting 1 Peter 3:18-22 in its Wider Textual Context

This study will now attempt to set 3:18-22 against the backdrop of 1 Peter as a whole. By looking at its wider context, the conclusion will be reached that 3:18-22 is no tangential digression on the part of the author, but rather shares several points of contact, both thematic and linguistic, with the rest of the epistle.

In the first major section (1:3-2:10) Peter affirms to Christians, suffering unjustly and experiencing social estrangement, the dignity and favoured status of the believing community before God. Believers are reborn by the mercy of God; and by faith in Christ, their rejected yet elect Lord, they are now incorporated into the family of God.

After a transitional section (2:11-12), the focus moves to the conduct expected by God from members of the Christian community living in an antagonistic society (2:13-3:12). Peter encourages these suffering believers to behave in a manner that will disprove and silence slanderous accusation, demonstrate their innocence and faithfulness to God, and show their honourable character. Common to these calls⁸ in the household codes is the idea of subordination which is used as an illustration of right behaviour in contrast to wrong behaviour.⁹ The first exhortation in the series (2:13-17) is directed towards free people in their relation to civil realm. Christians are called to respect the social order and to honour the civil authorities. Proper respect for and subordination to the civil authority, in its function of rewarding good and punishing evil and doing what is right, demonstrates their ultimate subordination and faithfulness to God and is a means for silencing those opponents of Christians.

In the second (2:18-25) and third (3:1-7) exhortations the scene shifts from the civic arena to the realm of the household and the proper responsibilities to be shown by household servants (2:18-25), wives (3:1-6) and husbands (3:7).

The exhortation to household servants (2:18-25) is linked to the preceding section by several repeated themes and similar terms (for a list see Elliott 2000:512). By fusing biblical themes and motifs, kerygmatic themes and extensive use of the Suffering Servant figure of Isaiah 52-53, Peter exhorts and encourages the household servants (οἰκέται).¹⁰ Again the thrust of the exhortation is not simply the subordination of household servants, but also their doing what is right (2:20) and their endurance of unjust suffering (2:19-20).¹¹ A double motivation supports the exhortation. First, there is an appeal to

⁷ In contrast Dalton (1989:109-119) talks about of the combination of 'two sources' (verses 18 and 22 which derive from a hymn or a creed and verses 19-21 coming from a 'baptismal catechesis').

⁸ See 2:13-17; 2:18-25 and 3:1-6/7.

⁹ The idea of subordination can be observed in 2:13,18; 3:1,5.

¹⁰ This identification of οἰκέται as 'household servants' is made by Van Wyk and Van Rensburg (1997:229-249).

¹¹ Elliott (2000:542-543) suggests that these οἰκέται are presented as paradigmatic representatives of the condition and vocation of the entire suffering Christian community.

act in a way that reverences God and is mindful of his will and their calling. Secondly, there is an appeal to the solidarity between the innocent suffering servants and the innocent Christ as servant of God who suffered on their behalf and provided them an example to follow (2:21-25).

Proper Christian behaviour is also to be exhibited by wives and husbands concerning their spousal responsibilities (3:1-7). After an initial principle of behaviour involving subordination (3:1ab) there follow two motivations (3:1c-4 – winning husbands and receiving the approval of God) and an example from the Old Testament (3:5-6 – Sarah who obeyed her husband, Abraham). While attention to marital order and harmony was typical in contemporary Hellenistic household codes, this appeal in 1 Peter is driven by particularly Christian goals (Elliott 2000:582).

It is possible that this exhortation for proper marital relations was prompted by a concern to avoid unnecessary suspicion and slander from outsiders. The spouses of the Christian homes must not act in a way that provides further ammunition to those opponents of the church. Furthermore, their actions in the home should also be consistent and be a suitable model for the entire household of God.

In 3:8-12 Peter brings to a close the exhortations concerning public and domestic conduct begun in 2:13.¹² In this section (3:8-12) the whole community is addressed regarding both relations within the community (3:8) and relations with outsiders who abuse and insult Christian believers (3:9). Peter urges the people to cultivate those internal characteristics that foster unity among the fellowship (3:8) and practice those qualities in love in their dealings with hostile outsiders who revile and insult Christ's people (3:9). Mistreatment at the hands of hostile unbelievers is not to be paid back in kind. By responding in humility and love, the believer may see a positive effect with regard to their opponents which might lead to winning them for Christ or bringing a halt to the opposition and suffering. However, most importantly, by following Peter's advice they are following the non-retaliatory example of Christ, and thus acting in accord with their divine calling. The people of God are to do what is right and behave honourably in the face of opposition. This focus on Christian behaviour and the importance of doing what is right and behaving honourably toward hostile unbelievers are underlined throughout 3:13-4:19.

Closing Thoughts of 1 Peter (4:7-5:11)

As 1 Peter draws to a close the emphasis moves initially (1 Peter 4:7-11) to the internal life of the Christian community and the proper behaviour that ought to be exhibited to one another in the light of the coming of the eternally glorious and powerful Christ (4:7,11). The family of faith are encouraged to exhibit reciprocal conduct which embraces love, ungrudging hospitality, mutual service and communication. The believers are exhorted to exercise these gifts as 'good stewards of God's varied grace' (4:10).

In 4:12-5:11 Peter does not introduce new subjects but reprises, recapitulates and expands on ideas and themes central to 1 Peter 1:3-4:11. In 4:12-19 the focus returns to the issue of innocent suffering, its inevitability for believers, its positive value and its glorious outcome. The background seems to be similar to that found earlier in the epistle where the people of God are being abused by non-believing outsiders. This suffering, both individual and communal, brought considerable distress to those involved prompting many questions with regard to their salvation and the security they might have expected. Thus in this section, Peter raises the inevitability of suffering for people who follow a Christ who himself suffered unjustly even to the point of death (4:12-13a). Their sufferings ought to be regarded as a divine test which comes to prove and strengthen the faith of Christ's people. Knowing that Christ is in control and that there will come an end to such trials when he returns, should give rise to rejoicing and not despair (4:13b) on the part of believers. In the present, however, the believer can expect the presence of Christ to bring joy in the midst of trials (4:13). Therefore, the believer, belittled by those who employ the name 'Christian' as a pejorative term, should rejoice in the name. For even this label 'Christian' can be transformed into a means of bringing honour to God (4:13,16). Furthermore, this suffering should be regarded as an indication of the inauguration of divine judgement first of all on his own people. Furthermore, this suffering is a sign that the end is near and that salvation is close at hand. This eschatological salvation will necessarily bring an end to the suffering forever (4:18) and therefore all who suffer innocently can entrust their lives to their faithful Creator and thereby persevere in doing what is right (4:19).

¹² Van Rensburg (1990:288) correctly argues that δὲ with τὸ τέλος signals the conclusion to 1 Peter 2:18-3:7.

In his address to the elders (5:1-4) and young people (5:5a), Peter encourages proper pastoral leadership in a time of suffering and hostility. These leaders needed to exhibit consistency in their Christian commitment, perseverance through trials and a willingness to display servant leadership that promotes the interests of the community rather than to advance one's self interests.

Peter concludes the main body of the letter with a fusion of exhortation (5:5b,6a,7a,8-9a) and encouragement (v5c,6b,7b,9b,10-11) aimed at the community as a whole. The Apostle repeats his call for humility both to one another (5:5bc) and to God (5:6a). Only by humbling oneself will one be exalted by God (5:6). Peter calls on the Christian believers to persevere in the face of opposition knowing that God not only cares for them (5:7) he also strengthens them (5:10).

Being under the care of God, however, does not mean that the believer is immune to suffering in a hostile society or even from the Devil himself. It is imperative to note that Peter places the problem of suffering in a cosmic context as well as a social context (5:8-9). Peter portrays the Devil as a roaring lion seeking to devour his prey. The Devil roars like a lion to induce fear in the people of God. In other words, persecution and suffering are roars by which he tries to intimidate the people of God in the hope that they will capitulate at the prospect of hostile suffering. In this way the Devil seeks to bring them back into his fold. Peter thus portrays the Devil as standing behind and orchestrating the hostility and suffering endured by the Christians in Asia Minor and the world (5:9). As was observed in Chapter 2, it was common in the cultures of the first centuries AD to see evil supernatural beings as causing or prompting through human agents all kinds of suffering. Without expanding on the theme, Peter raises the picture of Satan as prowling behind the present suffering endured by the Christian congregations in Asia Minor perpetrated by evil human outsiders. Peter therefore encourages the Christians to withstand the Devil and his evil forces. For Peter, as has been demonstrated by Christ himself (2:22-23), such resistance is possible and to this Christ God has subjected all powers, terrestrial and celestial (3:22), including the Devil and his minions.

In his epistolary postscript (5:12-14), Peter summarises the purpose of his letter in verse 12 as follows—

Διὰ Σιλβανουῦ ὑμῖν τοῦ πιστοῦ ἀδελφοῦ, ὡς λογίζομαι, δι' ὀλίγων ἔγραψα παρακαλῶν καὶ ἐπιμαρτυρῶν ταύτην εἶναι ἀληθῆ χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς ἣν στήτε.

By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God; stand fast in it. (RSV)

Peter's overall purpose is observed as he exhorts his addressees, scattered throughout Asia Minor, to stand fast in this grace in the face of hostility and violent opposition. It is clear, especially with his reference to the Devil (5:8-9), that Peter is concerned that the evil one sought the Christian's downfall through the opposition and suffering perpetrated by human agents and inspired by evil supernatural forces. Christians need to stand firm in the face of such evil and wickedness.

Summary from the Wider Textual Context

The wider textual context reveals points of resonance with 1 Peter 3:18-22. Suffering is the major theme of 1 Peter. Peter is concerned for the Christian believers of Asia Minor who are suffering at the hands of evil outsiders. This opposition may not be organised at a national level nor be as brutal and long-lasting as subsequent persecutions, but this unjust suffering endured at both an individual and communal level is real and life threatening. Christians live in a hostile and antagonistic society which denigrates their faith and their Saviour. Most importantly, behind all this suffering Peter identifies the involvement of Satan (5:9). There exists a malevolent supernatural element to their suffering and estrangement. Peter thus feels it necessary to remind these Christians that despite their suffering Christ is still Lord and in control over all things and will eventually judge the world (3:22, 4:17). In the meantime, Peter's audience is continually implored to live lives that display proper and honouring subordination and humility to each other, the authorities who are oppressing them and especially to Almighty God. By humbling oneself before God, the suffering Christian is promised exaltation and vindication in due time (5:6).

4. The Immediate Textual Context of 1 Peter 3:18-22

This study will now examine the immediate context of 1 Peter 3:19-22 and show how 1 Peter 3:18-22 fits in well with Peter's preceding (3:13-17) and subsequent argument (4:1-6), thematically and linguistically.

The Preceding Exhortations 3:13-17

The theme of doing right in the face of opposition and suffering is explicit in 3:13-17. Having discussed how believers should handle abuse and suffering at the hands of hostile outsiders (3:8-12), the problem of suffering despite doing what is right now receives sustained attention.¹³ This unit is also linked to the preceding section by means of grammatical (linking copulative *καί*) and verbal affinities (especially 3:1-6).¹⁴ The second-person plural imperative verbs and the pronounced focus on 'you' in this section indicate the hortatory mood that distinguishes it from the indicative unit that follows (1 Peter 3:18-22). A threefold inclusion marks its boundaries and signals its central theme of doing right in the face of present suffering.

Undeserved suffering, despite practising good and honourable conduct to outsiders, could yet still result in further suffering. The possibility of more undeserved suffering could lead to discouragement, despair and even defection from the Christian community. Thus Peter looks at the theme of God's protection of his suffering righteous people and assures the people that even in the face of unjust suffering and opposition no harm can ultimately befall God's own faithful people. Those Christian believers encountering evil and unjust suffering should continue to sanctify and honour only Christ as Lord in their hearts (3:15). Verse 15 is of paramount importance in this study. It reads –

κύριον δὲ τὸν Χριστὸν ἀγιάσατε ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, ἔτοιμοι ἀεὶ πρὸς ἀπολογία
παντὶ τῷ αἰτοῦντι ὑμᾶς λόγον περὶ τῆς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐλπίδος

but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence (RSV)

In the face of hostile outsiders inspired by evil supernatural entities, the beleaguered Christians or the community could come to believe that their situations were outside of the control of Christ. Those very human agents of evil and suffering, and perhaps the very evil spirits themselves, could be deemed as being beyond the control of Christ. Peter thus emphasises the supreme Lordship of Christ even in the face of unjust suffering. Christ is still Lord over all and that includes all agents of evil. This emphasis on the Lordship of Christ over every cosmic being will be unconditionally emphasised in 1 Peter 3:22.

In the meantime believers are to live lives worthy of Christ even when outsiders continue to demean, discredit or disparage them. Peter urges them to persist in doing what is right in the face of hostility, for the reality is that they are under Christ's protection and that their unjust suffering will be vindicated. Peter thus presents Christ as the archetypal sufferer who endures unjust suffering and the surety of the believer's vindication is the same resurrected and exalted Christ. These points are accentuated and developed more fully in the following passage (1 Peter 3:18-22).

The Subsequent Exhortation 4:1-6

If 1 Peter 3:18-22, as will be shown in the following exegesis, substantiates Peter's exhortations of the preceding section (1 Peter 3:13-17), then the subsequent section (4:1-6) marks a return to the imperatival mood and resumes the themes of suffering and its moral and social implications. The section again presents the suffering of Christ as a model for suffering believers (4:1ab). In this section, however, the focus is on the break from sinful practices and conduct (4:2-3) that innocent suffering apparently enables (4:1c). It would appear that suffering has not only negative consequences, for it can also facilitate a cessation from sinning. Believers are expected to live in a way which differs markedly from their pre-conversion mode of conduct (compare 1:14-16) and so now live in accordance with the will of the God. Peter is aware that to cease from sinning like the Gentiles will necessarily mark the

¹³ This subject of suffering despite doing what is right was mentioned already in 1:6; 2:12b, 15b, 19-20, 21-24; 3:9ab.

¹⁴ For a list of these verbal affinities see Elliott (2000:618-619).

Christian out as different, and this will likely result in astonishment and resentment on the part of these non-believers and eventually give rise to malicious abuse of the Christian and his community (4:4).

Peter ends this section with the reassuring word that God will bring an end to their suffering, and that those who inflict evil on his people will be judged (4:5). Believers can anticipate the same future as their rejected though now resurrected Lord. Those believers who are already dead, though judged by human opponents, will still live in the spirit according to God's standards (4:6). Peter again makes the point that God will vindicate his people, both the living and those who have died, and that all will enjoy the great reversal. The supreme Lordship of Christ will be evidenced by both unbeliever and believer, both the living and the dead.¹⁵

Summary from the Immediate Textual Context

From the immediate textual context it is clear that the surrounding passages are linked thematically and linguistically with 1 Peter 3:18-22. Perhaps the central focus is on the Lordship of Christ who also suffered unjustly for his people. Peter exhorts his suffering readers to continue to reverence Christ as Lord and that this will involve living and suffering in a way appropriate for Christ's followers.

5. An Exegetical Study of 1 Peter 3:18-22

Methodology

To assist in the exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22 the verses have been subdivided into identifiable clauses or phrases.¹⁶ Each clause or phrase pertinent to the overall purpose of this study will be discussed in turn. The words and phrases of each clause will in turn be examined following an English translation order. This method has been chosen to allow for easier comprehension of the Greek phrase or clause and thus allow Peter's argument to flow as naturally as possible thus allowing the reader to see the author's purpose.

Introduction

In 3:18-22 Peter moves to strengthen the resolve of his readers who have been suffering unjustly for doing what was right (3:13-17). The author, addressing the whole of the church, recalls the innocent suffering of Lord and presents a Christological corroboration for his previous exhortation (c.f. 2:21-25). Peter focuses on the death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement of Christ at God's right hand. He describes clearly the Lordship of Christ over every evil spiritual power and extends the promise that those who suffer for Christ will ultimately be glorified and vindicated just as he was.

5.1 Verse 18

ὅτι καὶ Χριστὸς ἅπαξ περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἔπαθεν,
δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων,
ἵνα ὑμᾶς προσαγάγῃ τῷ θεῷ
θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκὶ
ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι·

¹⁵ According to some scholars 4:6 is an elaboration of what is communicated in 3:19, however, now (in 4:6) all those who have died have the gospel proclaimed to them. Some have suggested that the audience should be limited to those who died without hearing the gospel; and others to all those who have died without exception. For some proponents of this position see, Bigg (1910:170-171); Beare (1970:156); Cranfield (1957:371-372), (1960:110) and Goppelt (1993:289). Nevertheless, this proposal should be rejected for several reasons. First, as shall be observed, 3:19 refers not to preaching the gospel at all but to a proclamation of triumph (over spiritual powers). This wish to see a correspondence between 3:19 and 4:6 may well be motivated more by dogmatic rather than exegetical concerns; namely a desire to find here a biblical warrant for the universality of salvation (see Elliott (2000:731)), or for the possibility of repentance after death. Second, the passive verb εὐηγγελίσθη (4:6) does not refer to the preaching by Christ but the preaching that has Christ as its content. Third, an interpretation that suggests those sinners and those who have rejected the gospel in this life would have a second chance after death is incompatible with the purpose of the entire letter. Such a notion of Christ's universal redemption, or second chance to those who died before Christ, is inconsistent with the theology, ethics and purpose of 1 Peter and should therefore be rejected. In 4:6, Peter is considering the case of Christian believers who have died after hearing and responding to the gospel. While opponents of Christianity might raise the problem of the dead, believers can have confidence in the God who raised Christ from the dead.

¹⁶ This subdivision and numbering of each verse has been influenced by Elliott (2000).

5.1.1 Verse 18a

ὅτι καὶ Χριστὸς ἅπαξ περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἔπαθεν
For Christ also suffered for sins once and for all

The opening words ὅτι καὶ Χριστὸς, echo 1 Peter 2:21-25 and indicate that 3:18-22 is to function in a similar way.¹⁷ By introducing this section with the causal conjunction ὅτι the author provides a Christological motivation for his readers to help them endure the suffering they are experiencing. The author again points to the suffering of the innocent Christ in order to support what has been discussed in 3:17-18 concerning doing right in the midst of abuse and hatred. Similarly the conjunction καὶ (as in 2:21a) also links 3:18 with the preceding section.¹⁸ It must, however, be stressed that the author is not implying with his use of καὶ ('too'/'also') that the analogy between Christ's suffering and that of Christians is exact. Peter will point out later in 3:18 that the sufferings of Christ are unique and have redemptive significance.

Commentators are divided in their views on the function of ὅτι in 3:18, since they have different ideas about the precise relationship between 3:18-22 and the preceding passage. A number of authors excuse themselves from further investigation by maintaining that 3:18-22 is an interpolation, or at least a digression. However as Dalton (1989:122) comments, this is 'a counsel of despair, particularly since the author of 1 Peter normally shows himself quite practical in his pastoral method'.

Rather than see these verses as an interpolation or the remnant of a creed with little or no relevance to Peter's immediate argument and purpose, these verses should be seen as integral to the author's thought. Section 3:18-22 therefore supports not only the 'better' course of action, as outlined in 3:17; it also provides a Christological basis for the entire exhortation of 3:13-17.

The similarities between 1 Peter 3:18-22 and 2:21-25 are obvious and striking. The major point of similarity is the use of the identical phrase ὅτι καὶ Χριστὸς... ἔπαθεν in 3:18a and 2:21b. Furthermore, the immediate contexts of these passages involve Christological statements linking the suffering of believers (2:18-20 and 3:13-17) with the suffering of Christ (2:21-25 and 3:18-22). In both passages Christ is portrayed as the supreme example of innocent suffering for doing what is right.¹⁹ Another point of similarity is the vicarious nature of Christ's sufferings. Christ is said to have died ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων (for the unrighteous, 3:18ab; compare 2:21, ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν 'for you'). The passages both make clear that Christ's suffering has atoning significance. In 3:18a, Peter indicates that Christ suffered 'for sins' (περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν) while in 2:24a the author goes further and recognises that the sins Jesus bore belonged to Peter and his addressees.²⁰

While points of similarity exist between 1 Peter 2:21-25 and 3:18-22, the latter passage shows some emphases that are uniquely its own. First, the unique once-for-all nature of Christ's suffering is emphasised (ἅπαξ, 3:18a).²¹ Secondly, the cosmic presentation of Christ and his movements is accentuated (3:19-22). And thirdly, the vindication of Christ's suffering by God is presented by mention of Christ's resurrection, ascension and presence at God's right hand (3:21-22). As a result, while Christ and his sufferings are presented in 1 Peter 2:21-25 as an example for those Christians suffering for their faith, the passage in 3:18-22 emphasises a Christ who is far greater than a mere example. He alone is the one greatly exalted over all the cosmic forces and powers. Thus only Christ can provide comfort and assurance to those who understood their suffering as stemming from the direct involvement of spirits or

¹⁷ Elliott (2000:639) is probably correct when he sees the variant reading of the articular noun, ὁ Χριστός (in P⁷², N, vg^{mss}) as possibly being influenced by the articular formulation of 3:15a.

¹⁸ Καὶ is omitted in P⁷². The NIV omits καὶ in its translation of 3:18a.

¹⁹ Compare 1 Peter 3:18ab and 4:1 with 2:21-23.

²⁰ 1 Peter 2:24a reads: ὃς τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν (He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, RSV).

²¹ The distinctiveness of Christ's death is featured here, for even though believers suffer, they do not suffer for the sins of others, nor does their suffering constitute a sacrifice for others, nor is the suffering ever totally innocent. Peter does not countenance any notion that the suffering of believers is a means of leading unbelievers to God.

demons. Christians by virtue of their being brought to God through Christ (3:18c) and their salvation (3:21a) are granted the ability to withstand their suffering.

περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἔπαθεν he suffered for sins

A glance at the apparatus indicates a number of further textual variants to the preferred reading, 'he suffered for sins' (περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἔπαθεν). Metzger (1975:692) lists the 'bewildering diversity of readings' and acknowledges the difficulty in ascertaining the original text.²²

The main point of disagreement is whether the original text read ἔπαθεν ('he suffered') or ἀπέθανεν ('he died'). While both verbs receive strong manuscript support, the preferred reading should probably be περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἔπαθεν ('suffered for sins'). The verb πάσχω is certainly a favourite with Peter as it occurs several times in 1 Peter.²³ Furthermore, the use of ἔπαθεν carries on the thought of 3:17 whereas ἀπέθανεν abruptly introduces a new idea. While the readings incorporating ἀπέθανεν can be explained in part by scribes reflecting the more traditional formulation, it is difficult to see how, with the mention of περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν, one would replace ἀπέθανεν with ἔπαθεν. Therefore, ἔπαθεν is the relatively simple reading which is appropriate to the immediate context and Peter's usage in his epistle.²⁴

While the variants may appear significant, this is not really the case. The context here, unlike that of 1 Peter 2:21 which recalls the events of Christ up to his death, refers clearly to Christ's death and its decisive effect on sin. The reference is the same regardless of which verb is read. The sufferings of Christ in 3:18 must refer to his redemptive suffering on the cross for sin which necessarily includes his death.²⁵ This usage carries on Peter's comparison of the unjust suffering of the Christian with the unjust suffering of Christ as referred to in 1 Peter 3:13-17 and this theme, which implies that the followers of Christ must not expect less than what happened to the One they follow, is resumed in 4:1.²⁶ The author is not suggesting a comparison between the deaths of Christians with the death of Christ; on the contrary, he is comparing the unjust suffering of Christians with 'Christ who also has suffered', implicating that the followers of Christ must not expect less than what happened to the One they follow. Christ himself said as much to his disciples in Luke 9:23-25.²⁷

Ἔλεγεν δὲ πρὸς πάντας· εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἔρχεσθαι, ἀρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καθ' ἡμέραν καὶ ἀκολουθείτω μοι.²⁴ ὃς γὰρ ἂν θέλη τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν· ὃς δ' ἂν ἀπολέσῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ οὗτος σώσει αὐτήν.²⁵ τί γὰρ ὠφελεῖται ἄνθρωπος κερδήσας τὸν κόσμον ὅλον ἑαυτὸν δὲ ἀπολέσας ἢ ζημιωθείς;

And he said to all, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? (RSV)

While the phrase περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἔπαθεν ('he suffered for sins') is unique in the New Testament, the passage echoes the formulation found in 2:21b - Χριστὸς ἔπαθεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ('Christ suffered for you'). The terminology employed is derived from the language of the Septuagint where it refers to the effects of the sacrifices. The propitiatory nature of Christ's suffering/death is made all the clearer with the author's mention of the 'righteous one for the unrighteous ones' (δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων). Therefore, the example of Christ's suffering is more than an example. His death is related to sin as his followers suffering and deaths cannot be. Christ's suffering is supremely redemptive in nature.

²² Elliott (2000:640) helpfully lists all the alternative readings.

²³ For the use of πάσχω ('suffering') in 1 Peter see 2:19,20,21,23; 3:14,17,18; 4:1,15,19 and 5:10. For the use of πάθημα ('suffering') in 1 Peter see 1:11; 4:13; 5:1,9.

²⁴ Kelly (1969:147-48), Marshall (1991:119), Best (1971:137-38), Clowney (1988:155-56) and Grudem (1989:155) prefer the reading - περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἀπέθανεν.

²⁵ France (1977:279), Dalton (1989:132-33), Davids (1990:134-35), Michaels (1988:195), Elliott (2000: 639-40) and Schreiner (2003:181) are among those who support the reading with ἔπαθεν.

²⁶ 1 Peter 4:1: Χριστοῦ οὖν παθόντος σαρκί, (Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, RSV).

²⁷ Christ warns his disciples of the likelihood of persecution (Mark 10:33) and that they should be prepared to give up everything (Luke 14:33).

Περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ('for sins') clearly is being used here with a sacrificial meaning though the phrase does not in itself explain precisely what effects Christ's sufferings had on sins.²⁸ The author simply gathers up a phrase used earlier in 2:21-24 and in its immediate context (ἔπαθεν), shows how these sufferings include the sacrificial death of Christ 'for sins'. The actual effect of Christ's death on sins will be unpacked later by the author in 4:1-2.

The nature of Christ's suffering is further qualified with use of the adverb ἅπαξ ('once and for all'). The use of the adverb ἅπαξ with the aorist ἔπαθεν indicates the once for all nature of Christ's atonement.²⁹ In connection with the phrase περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν and its background found in the Old Testament sacrificial system with its demands for continual annual sacrifices, the use of ἅπαξ denotes the unique and decisive once-for-all nature of Christ's sufferings and sacrifice. This further limits the analogy just introduced with ὅτι καὶ Χριστός. The suffering of Christ is more than an example for harassed believers to follow; it has in itself unique and totally sufficient redemptive qualities. This redemptive suffering of Christ is now complete and finished and needs no repetition.

5.1.2 Verse 18b

δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων the righteous (one) for the unrighteous³⁰

The phrase, which is made up of two anarthrous adjectives functioning as substantives (Elliott 2000:641), carries on the theme of verse 18a. Peter again emphasises not only the paradigmatic suffering of the innocent Christ but also the vicarious and atoning nature of his suffering and death.

δίκαιος ('righteous/righteous one')

The specific use of δίκαιος continues the sacrificial allusion by reminding the reader of the substitutionary principle which required an unblemished and perfect animal to be sacrificed in the Jewish sacrificial system. The innocence and sinlessness of Christ is a common feature in 1 Peter (1:19; 2:22-23; 4:1) and is brought to the fore here by the use of the familiar term δίκαιος. It is uncertain whether Peter is using δίκαιος as a title³¹ here; but the innocence and sinlessness of Christ is well attested elsewhere in the New Testament.³²

Perhaps it is correct in detecting the influence of Isaiah 53 and the portrayal of the Suffering Servant on 1 Peter 3:18b.³³ The Septuagint clearly presents the Suffering Servant as the righteous one (δίκαιον, 53:11) who becomes the 'sin offering' (περὶ ἁμαρτίας, 53:10) in order to make many righteous. This theme of the Righteous One was taken up in later Jewish thought during which the term was to assume Messianic connotations. This can be observed clearly in Wisdom 2:18.³⁴

εἰ γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ δίκαιος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἀντιλήμψεται αὐτοῦ καὶ ῥύσεται αὐτὸν ἐκ χειρὸς ἀνθεστηκότων. (LXX)

for if the righteous man is God's son, he will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. (RSV)

It was natural therefore that the early Church saw in Christ the embodiment and fulfilment of Isaiah 53 and concurred with those who recognised the Messianic nature of Isaiah's Suffering Servant figure. This

²⁸ The phrase περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ('for sins') is used in the book of Hebrews (5:3; 7:27; 10:18,26) and 1 John (2:2 and 4:10) in a sacrificial sense as are the related phrases ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν ('for sins', Hebrews 5:1; 10:2) and περὶ ἁμαρτίας ('sin offering', Hebrews 10:6,8,18; 13:11)

²⁹ See also Hebrews 9:26, 28 for the use of ἅπαξ. See Hebrews 7:27; 9:12; 10:10 and Romans 6:10 for the use of ἐφάπαξ in relation to Christ's death.

³⁰ The phrase δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων fails to appear in only one manuscript, Ψ 044, but is otherwise unanimously attested.

³¹ Best (1971:138) takes δίκαιος as a title here. See Acts 7:52; 3:14 and 22:14 where δίκαιος is almost certainly used as a title.

³² See Matthew 27:19; Luke 23:47; James 5:6; 1 John 2:1,29 and 3:7

³³ See Dalton (1989:133), Michaels (1988:202), Davids (1990:135-36) and Elliott (2000:641).

³⁴ Compare also the use of 'the Righteous and Elect One' in 1 Enoch 38:2,3 and 53:6.

view persisted in the writings of the early Church where the epithet δίκαιος is readily bestowed upon Jesus Christ.³⁵

The portrayal of Christ in the New Testament as someone righteous and innocent is consistent. This opinion is found both on the lips of believers and also by outsiders.³⁶ This righteous and innocence of Christ the Servant is ultimately related to the notion of his sinlessness (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15 and John 19:4, 6) and therefore his suitability in fulfilling the law and being sacrificed for the unrighteous.

Peter stands consistently in this identification of Jesus as the just or righteous one and explicitly presents him as innocent (1:19; 2:22) and obedient to the will of God (1:2). This shows not only Christ's righteous standing but also his righteous behaviour.

ὕπερ ἀδίκων (for the unrighteous)

The phrase reiterates the vicarious and atoning effect of Christ's suffering while deliberately contrasting the innocence of Christ (singular - δίκαιος) with the unrighteousness of those (plural - ἀδίκων) for whom he suffered and died. With such a startling contrast the readers of the epistle, presently suffering unjustly at the hands of unjust and unrighteous individuals, are invited to see themselves as having once been numbered among the unrighteous. Indeed Peter here employs the term ἀδίκων, to refer to all humans acting contrary to the will and law of God.³⁷

The preposition ὑπερ ('for', 'on behalf of', 'for the sake of') already appears in 2:21b to express the beneficiaries of Christ's suffering ('for you', ὑπερ ὑμῶν). Indeed the use of the preposition is found throughout the New Testament to explain the Christ's substitutionary death for others. This contrast implied with the use of ὑπερ has echoes in Romans 5:6-8 where Paul writes that Christ died for the 'ungodly' (v6, ἀσεβῶν), that is 'sinners' (v8, ἁμαρτωλῶν).

The complete phrase δίκαιος ὑπερ ἀδίκων is unique in the Bible, but the theme it expresses finds echoes in the Old Testament with Isaiah's righteous suffering servant (Isaiah 53:11) who faithfully fulfils the will of God and suffers at the hands of evil men on behalf of the unrighteous.³⁸ Nevertheless, while this Christological formulation of 3:18a and 3:18b support the exhortation in 1 Peter 3:13-17, it also, as in 2:21-24, distinguishes Christ as the one who removes sin and thereby enables the unrighteous to live righteously. The righteous Christ dies for the unrighteous, who deserve only suffering and death, so that he might lead them to God.

5.1.3 Verse 18c

ἵνα ὑμᾶς προσαγάγη τῷ θεῷ that he might bring you to God

Peter uses a ἵνα clause to express the purpose of this atoning death of Christ for the unrighteous. In this instance the inescapable conclusion is that Christ's innocent suffering is intended to bring believers into the very presence of God.³⁹

The reading ὑμᾶς ('you' plural)⁴⁰ should be preferred here to the variant ἡμᾶς ('us').⁴¹ The former reading has perhaps the support of the better manuscripts and the second person plural does seem appropriate

³⁵ Elliott (2000:641) and Michaels (1988:202) note those instances in the early Christian literature where δίκαιος is used as a title for Jesus. See Letter to Diognetus 9:2; Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho 17 and Melito's Peri Pascha 94.

³⁶ See Luke 23:47; Matthew 27:19; Mark 15:14; 23:4,14,22; John 19:4,6.

³⁷ In 4:18, Peter, quoting from Proverbs 11:31, contrasts the future judgement of the 'impious' (ἀσεβῆς) and 'sinner' (ἁμαρτωλός) with that of the righteous man (δίκαιος).

³⁸ For other Petrine references to Isaiah 53 see 1 Peter 2:22,24-25.

³⁹ Peter's use here of the ἵνα clause is similar to that in 2:21d. In 2:21d Christ's unjust suffering provides an example for Christians suffering unjustly.

⁴⁰ This reading is found in P⁷², B, P, Ψ, π, z vg^{mss}, syr etc.

⁴¹ The variant reading is found in the following manuscripts: N², A, C, K, L 3.81, 614, 630, 945, 1241, 1739. vg sy^{hmg}; Cyprian Cyril. Dalton (1989:134-135), believing that the passage originated from a creedal or hymnic tradition, argues that the stronger manuscript evidence supports the ἡμᾶς ('us') reading.

as it carries on the terminology of 3:13-17 and fits in well with the following passage (4:1-6).⁴² The use of ὑμᾶς makes it unmistakably clear that the unjust who needed reconciliation were indeed the epistle's first readers. These beneficiaries of Christ's suffering were no better or worse than the inflictors of evil on Jesus Christ or his people in Asia Minor.

The suffering and death of the Righteous One brings access to God. The verb προσάγω occurs occasionally in the New Testament⁴³ and has a variety of meanings: 'lead' or 'bring'; 'provide persons access to another person'; 'bring before a tribunal or present before a royal court'⁴⁴; 'bring sacrifice before God'⁴⁵; 'bring' persons before God to be consecrated for cultic service⁴⁶.

However, Peter seems to be more concerned with matters soteriological than ecclesiological, and the idea of priesthood is completely absent in this passage.⁴⁷ This soteriological understanding of προσάγω is further supported by Exodus 19:3-6 which lies behind 1 Peter 2:9 (and 5).⁴⁸

αὐτοὶ ἐωράκατε ὅσα πεποίηκα τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις καὶ ἀνέλαβον ὑμᾶς ὡσεὶ ἐπὶ περὺγων
ἀετῶν καὶ προσηγαγόμεν ὑμᾶς πρὸς ἑμαυτὸν (LXX)

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. (RSV)

The expression προσηγαγόμεν ὑμᾶς πρὸς ἑμαυτὸν speaks about God's saving act and this is probably the preferred understanding of προσάγω in 1 Peter 3:18. This soteriological understanding finds further support from the other appearances of the noun προσαγωγή in the New Testament. In these occurrences it refers to "access to" and union with God.⁴⁹

Peter indicates that the goal of Christ's suffering and death is to lead believers to God (τῷ θεῷ)⁵⁰ a thought which will be to the fore in 3:19-22.⁵¹ While the thoughts expressed here by Peter reflect that found elsewhere in the New Testament the terminology employed is particular to the author of this epistle.

Peter reminds his audience that the grossly unjust suffering of Christ had a redemptive purpose and by his suffering they will be brought to God by Christ himself. From 3:18d-22 the aim of Peter is to show that the very Christ whom they are to revere as Lord (3:15), is the one who has been raised from the

⁴² Metzger (1975:693) states that 'the Committee was inclined to prefer ὑμᾶς ... because copyists would have been more likely to alter the second person to the first person (as more inclusive) than vice versa'. Regardless of which reading is preferred, the exegesis of the passage is not affected significantly (France 1977:279).

⁴³ The verb προσάγω occurs in Matthew 18:24; Luke 9:41; Acts 12:6; 16:20 and 27:27.

⁴⁴ See Kelly (1969:149) who finds this legal meaning in the Septuagint and in Classical Greek. And perhaps is reflected in Acts 16:20. This usage is also found in the Septuagint in Exodus 21:6; Numbers 25:6 and 27:5.

⁴⁵ This sacrificial understanding of προσάγω is found in the Septuagint (Exodus 29:10 and Leviticus 1:2) and in Classical Greek.

⁴⁶ For this meaning of προσάγω see Exodus 29:4,8; 40:12; Leviticus 8:24 and Numbers 8:9-10. Dalton (1989:135), influenced by the earlier phrase, 'holy, priestly community' (2:5-9), is supported by Kelly (1969:149) who states that 'there may have been a blending of consecratory and sacrificial associations in the writer's mind.'

⁴⁷ Michaels (1988:203), Elliott (2000:643) and Selwyn (1947:196) reject the understanding of προσαγωγή which sees Peter as referring to the consecration of priests. The priesthood metaphor and the idea of worship are absent in 3:18.

⁴⁸ For this illustration see Elliott (2000:643).

⁴⁹ See Romans 5:2, Ephesians 2:18 and 3:12.

⁵⁰ The fuller reading has the support from the greater and more impressive manuscripts (P⁷², A, P, Π, lat syr) compared to the omission of the phrase (B) or the variant reading 'to the father' (τῷ πατρὶ, only in a few manuscripts).

⁵¹ The idea of the believers having access into the presence of God through the sacrifice of Christ is also found in Hebrews 10:19-20; 6:19-20 and 7:25.

dead and now sits in the position of authority at the right hand of God, with every 'power' subjected to him (3:22).

5.1.4 Verse 18d

The first part of this explanation consists of a pair of parallel phrases asserting Christ's death and his resurrection (3:18d and e). This couplet (θανατωθεῖς μὲν σαρκὶ ζωοποιηθεῖς δὲ πνεύματι) is made up of two parallel aorist participles but contains no finite verb, nor does it have an explicit subject, though Christ (3:18a) is certainly the implied subject. The lack of a particle and the asyndetical juxtaposition of the couplet mean that 3:18de is loosely connected with the preceding phrase (3:18c) and instead seems to be closely related with 3:19a with its use of a third participle (πορευθεῖς). The couplet is unique in the New Testament and these phrases do not occur elsewhere in the New Testament whether independently or in such a combination. However, the concepts of Christ's death and resurrection are regularly found together in the New Testament.⁵²

θανατωθεῖς μὲν σαρκὶ "Having been put to death in the body".

The aorist passive of θανατώω⁵³ is used in the first of the parallel phrases. The implied subject is Christ (3:18a) while his executioners are the implied agents of the passive. The result of Peter's use of such a strong word to describe the suffering and death of Christ would resonate with his audience who were also suffering for their faith in the one who was 'done to death'.⁵⁴ Whether Peter is using terminology in these parallel phrases from an existing creed or kerygma is uncertain, but it is clear that both θανατωθεῖς and ζωοποιηθεῖς are not used elsewhere in this epistle.

μὲν

The particle μὲν is missing in some manuscripts (P⁷², A*, Ψ, vgst), but the majority and best (Ⲛ, A, B, C, P, π, vg^{cl} syh) express the contrasting parallelism of these two clauses with a typical μὲν... δέ construction.⁵⁵ However, it is the appearance of δέ in the second half of the couplet (18e) that is ultimately persuasive for the inclusion of μὲν. Peter uses μὲν... δέ constructions elsewhere in his epistle (1:20; 2:4; 4:6) in an attempt to present antithetical positions often contrasting the benefits to believers of Christ and his suffering. In this instance the contrastive particles underline the participles and their qualifying states. They present to the readers the differing types of treatment Christ received from men (3:18d) and from God (3:18e).

σαρκί

Σαρκί can be literally taken as 'in the flesh' (or 'with respect to the flesh'). Normally the term σάρξ designates the tissue, muscles and fleshy part of a person's anatomy rather than the bones, blood and internal organs. However, when contrasted to spirit (πνεῦμα), as in this instance, σάρξ usually refers to the earthly, physical and mortal existence of an individual. The Greek philosophical understanding that σάρξ and πνεῦμα refer to the two parts of man, the material and the immaterial, should be rejected here.⁵⁶ Peter is not contrasting the two parts of the person of Christ, the body of Christ which dies, and the spirit/soul of Christ which survives.⁵⁷ Such a distinction naturally leads to seeing these terms as referring to the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ. This is not a valid interpretation.⁵⁸

⁵² For New Testament examples where the death and resurrection of Christ are combined together see Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; Luke 24:7,46; Acts 2:23-24; 4:10; 5:30-31; 10:39-40; Romans 6:9,10; 8:34; 14:9; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:15 and 1 Thessalonians 4:14.

⁵³ Θανατώω can be translated as 'intentionally kill' or 'put to death', and is used especially of the death sentence and its execution. See Bauer (1979:351).

⁵⁴ France (1977:268) stresses the aspect of judicial killing in θανατωθεῖς.

⁵⁵ See Michaels (1988:195) for some hypotheses to explain the omission of μὲν.

⁵⁶ See Best (1971:139), Michaels (1988:204), Marshall (1991:120-121), Dalton (1989:135-138), Davids (1990:136-137) and Elliott (2000:645).

⁵⁷ Davids (1990:137) notes that such a Greek distinction was read into 1 Peter 3:18 by both Origen (Cels 2.43) and Epiphanius (Haer 69.52). This distinction is adopted by Reicke (1946:99) who regards the 'spirit' as that which 'appears as a person's vital principle after the destruction of the body'.

⁵⁸ See France (1977:267) who reminds his readers that this is the New Testament and not a fifth-century doctrinal work. Furthermore, the New Testament never speaks of two natures in Christ, let alone using σάρξ and πνεῦμα to describe them. For others who dismiss this understanding of σάρξ and πνεῦμα see also Michaels (1988:204), Marshall (1991:120-121) and Elliott (2000:645).

Both *σαρκί* and *πνεύματι* should be regarded as datives of respect qualifying the participles *θανατωθείς* ('put to death') and *ζωοποιηθείς* ('made alive'). The datives should not be regarded as datives of instrument because this understanding just cannot fit *σαρκί*. Christ was put to death 'in the flesh' not 'by the flesh'. The meaning of the two datives is also shaped by the respective participles they modify.⁵⁹ These datives therefore denote the differing, but complementary, physical and spiritual states of Christ's existence.⁶⁰ Thus *σαρκί* indicates that it was in the sphere of the 'flesh' that Christ was put to death. This understanding of *σάρξ* is found elsewhere in 1 Peter (1:24, 4:1,2).

While the death of Christ is immediately followed by a reference to the resurrection (3:18e) Peter is not providing a model for believers to emulate as willing martyrs.⁶¹ Peter takes the example of unjust and innocent suffering of Christ at the hands of men and presents it to his audience suffering for their faith in this very same Jesus Christ. The mention of Christ's death is no passing recitation of a traditional creedal formula but is the presupposition of all that follows in 1 Peter 3:19-22.

5.1.5 Verse 18e

ζωοποιηθείς δὲ πνεύματι but made alive in the spirit.

ζωοποιηθείς

In the parallel phrase the focus turns to the resurrection of Christ. Indeed the pairing of the two participial expressions by the use of the *μέν... δέ* construction has the effect of subordinating the first to the second. Thus it could be translated 'though put to death in the flesh, he was made alive in the spirit'. The shame of Christ having been put to death at the hands of human opponents was removed by his having been made alive and honoured by God. The suffering and death of Christ and the positive consequences of this event have already been noted earlier in this verse (3:18abc). The verse now closes with the emphasis clearly on the second part of the couplet thus underlining the importance of Christ being 'made alive again in the spirit'.

This is the only occasion in the New Testament where *ζωοποιέω* is used of Jesus' resurrection.⁶² Nevertheless, *ζωοποιέω* often occurs in the New Testament in parallel with *ἐγείρω* ('raise') which is the verb used commonly to describe God raising Christ from the dead.⁶³ Elliott (2000:646) rightly concludes that this parallelism suggests that *ζωοποιέω* can act as synonym for *ἐγείρω*, so that 'having been made alive' is equivalent to 'having been raised from the dead'.

While the passive form in the first half of the couplet, *θανατωθείς*, suggests that Christ was put to death by the hands of human agents, the passive in the second half of this couplet, *ζωοποιηθείς*, implies that the agent of his resurrection is God himself. This understanding appears to correspond with the usage of the passive form of *ἐγείρω* ('raise') which usually sees God as the agent of the resurrection.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Michaels (1988:204-205) and Elliott (2000:645) highlight the importance of the participles in shaping their respective datives.

⁶⁰ A similar contrast using *σάρξ* and *πνεῦμα* can be observed in the Pauline corpus (Romans 8:10; 1 Corinthians 5:5; Galatians 5:16-25 and 1 Timothy 3:16). Compare also the use of *ψυχικός* and *πνευματικός* in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44. The phrases *κατὰ σάρκα* and *ἐν σαρκί* function in a similar way. The former indicates the Christ's nature as a human being (2 Corinthians 5:16) or his physical descent of the line of David (Romans 1:3). The latter refers to a person's physical and mortal body (1 Corinthians 7:28; 2 Corinthians 4:11; 10:3; Galatians 2:20; 4:13-14 and Philippians 1:22,24.)

⁶¹ Contra Reicke (1946:218).

⁶² As *ζωοποιέω* ('make alive') occurs only once in 1 Peter but repeatedly in other New Testament kerygmatic passages, Elliott (2000:646) is probably correct when he proposes that the author received this from early Christian tradition.

⁶³ *Ζωοποιέω* and *ἐγείρω* are used together in John 5:21; Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22,35-36,42-45.

⁶⁴ For the passive form of *ἐγείρω* ('raise') implying the agency of God in the resurrection of Christ see Matthew 27:64; 28:6,7; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:6,34; John 21:14; Romans 4:25; 6:4,9; 1 Corinthians 15:4,12,13.

Although Peter uses ζῶοποιέω in this instance, the resurrection of Christ is mentioned elsewhere in the epistle and in these instances traditional terminology (ἐγείρω and ἀνάστασις) is employed.⁶⁵ It is likely that Peter did not envision Christ merely living in the interval between his death and resurrection in terms of his human spirit. Peter's thought here is of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Thus for Peter the bodily resurrection of Christ is assumed and it is this resurrected and exalted Christ who brings comfort and assurance to the suffering believers in Asia Minor.

πνεύματι

The form πνεύματι⁶⁶, like its parallel σαρκί, should be taken here as a dative of reference qualifying its respective participle even though such a literal translation may be regarded as meaningless for a modern English reader.⁶⁷ The parallelism has been already noted and so, in such a closely welded phrase, it seems necessary to take both datives as performing exactly the same function. Therefore as σαρκί refers to Christ's human sphere of existence, so πνεύματι should be taken as the sphere of existence entered into by Christ after being made alive. If this desire to maintain the parallelism between the clauses is correct, then it is appropriate to understand πνεύματι as referring not to the Holy Spirit (or 'Spirit' with a capital letter⁶⁸) but to the 'spirit' (lower case). The place of the Holy Spirit cannot be ignored, but in this instance πνεύματι refers to that state of Christ's existence most demonstrably controlled and animated by God's life-giving Spirit. Just as Christ was raised by the Holy Spirit so also shall those who belong to Christ, even though they suffer, will ultimately share in this resurrection.

Furthermore, πνεύματι should not be understood as a reference to Christ's divine nature in contrast to his human nature (the flesh), nor his 'soul' in contrast to his body. This latter view can give rise to the interpretation that Christ's soul descended to Hades in order to preach to the spirits in prison during the *Triduum Mortis*.⁶⁹ However, the text says nothing about what Christ did as a soul before his bodily resurrection. Indeed as Dalton (1989:137-137,140-141) has shown the New Testament knows nothing of a resurrection of Christ's soul.⁷⁰ This Body-Soul distinction has no support and should be rejected.

What Peter is contrasting here is the 'body/flesh' and the 'spirit'; and this comparison, between σὰρξ and πνεῦμα, finds echoes throughout the New Testament especially in similar creedal-like passages.⁷¹ In most of these occurrences of the flesh-spirit distinction it is clear that that it refers to two orders of being. On the one hand the flesh representing human nature in its weakness and its proclivity to evil; while on the other hand the spirit representing the consequence of God's salvation and the resulting activity among people of the Spirit of God. Paul in Romans 8 deliberates upon this interrelation of the human spirit as animated by the Divine Spirit quite extensively. In Romans 8:10 the contrast can be observed between the person's body that dies and the person's spirit that lives. Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 5:5 and 1 Corinthians 15, Paul goes further by contrasting the death with respect to one's flesh and life with respect to one's spirit.⁷²

The parallels with the Pauline literature are clear to see, but is there any further evidence in 1 Peter of such a flesh-spirit contrast? In 4:6, σαρκί and πνεύματι appear as contrasted datives of respect. Here the future experience resurrection of believers is based solely on Christ's resurrection (3:18de).

⁶⁵ See 1 Peter 1:3,21; 3:21d.

⁶⁶ The variant reading ἐν πνεύματι ('in his spirit', or 'by the Spirit of God') should be rejected here as it is not only poorly attested (found only in P⁷² Or^{lat}), but it also disrupts the balance of the couplet as the first clause cannot be understood as 'having been put to death by the flesh'.

⁶⁷ While Marshall (1991:121) criticises the NIV in breaking up the parallelism and translating πνεύματι as a dative of instrument thus translating it as 'by the Spirit', he argues that such a literal rendering would be meaningless to a modern reader.

⁶⁸ The AV, NKJV and the NIV all translate πνεύματι as "Spirit". Schreiner (2003:184) and Van Rensburg (1997:14-16) both prefer understanding πνεύματι as 'Spirit'.

⁶⁹ See Reicke (1946:99), Cranfield (1957:370) and Beare (1970:144-145).

⁷⁰ Michaels (1988:204-205), Marshall (1991:120-122) and Elliott (2000:647) are among some of the scholars who support Dalton's rejection of the body-soul hypothesis.

⁷¹ The flesh-spirit contrast appears in Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38; John 3:6; 6:63; Romans 1:3-4; 8:4-13; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Galatians 3:3; 4:29; 5:16-17, 19; Colossians 2:5; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 12:9 and 1 Peter 4:6.

⁷² For a very useful review of these parallels from the Pauline literature concerning the flesh-spirit contrast see Dalton (1989:138-140) and Elliott (2000:647).

In summary, the phrase, ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι, means simply that Christ was raised from the dead, not as a spirit, but bodily and in a sphere of existence in which the Spirit and power of God are displayed without hindrance or human limitation. Death in the flesh is now totally conquered and reversed and Jesus Christ is now free to complete his mission.

5.1.6 Summary of Verse 18

Writing to a people suffering for their faith in Jesus Christ, Peter contrasts their unjust suffering at the hands of men with the suffering and death of the righteous and blameless Christ. Despite being killed by men, Christ was made alive in the spirit in order to lead his people to God. In the midst of suffering these believers can rely on the resurrected and vindicated Christ. 3:18, and especially parts *d* and *e* concerning the death and resurrection of Christ, is important in providing the framework (along with the reference to the ascension of Christ in 19a and 22) and terms of reference in order to understand the rest of this pericope and especially 3:19-21.

5.2 Verse 19-20a

ἐν ᾧ καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν πορευθεὶς
ἐκήρυξεν, 20 ἀπειθήσασίν ποτε

3:19 marks an abrupt stylistic change from its immediate context (3:18,22) adopting a series of subordinated or parenthetical phrases or clauses containing information not normally associated with the kerygmatic material echoed in 3:18,22. Instead Peter seems to incorporate material from the Intertestamental Jewish literature based on and expanding Genesis 6-8. While this sudden change has led some to believe that 3:19-21 should be regarded as an interpolation⁷³ or a digression⁷⁴, the general scholarly opinion is that these verses form a coherent part of Peter's argument.

5.2.1 Verse 19a

ἐν ᾧ καὶ⁷⁵ in which also

ἐν ᾧ

The first question that must be resolved is the actual antecedent of ἐν ᾧ. Moule (1959:131) contends that the interpretation of ἐν ᾧ 'is of some exegetical moment' (contra Michaels (1988:205)). The matter of the antecedent demands a satisfactory explanation which takes into consideration the immediate context of 3:18-22 and in particular the participles (θανατωθεὶς and ζωοποιηθεὶς) of the preceding verse.

The main four possibilities with regard to the antecedent of ἐν ᾧ are:

- i. The immediately preceding word πνεύματι.⁷⁶
- ii. The preceding phrase as a whole – ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι. Hence taking ἐν ᾧ as 'in which process' or 'in the course of which'.⁷⁷
- iii. Or ἐν ᾧ is used as a relative causal conjunction, 'for which reason'.⁷⁸

⁷³ See Reicke (1946:49-50) and Dalton (1989:49-50).

⁷⁴ See Beare (1970:170).

⁷⁵ For a discussion with regard to the merits of the conjectured textual variants see Chapter 3 and Elliott (2000:652). These proposed textual conjectures are based on similarities between ἐν ᾧ καὶ and Ἐνώχ in uncial script.

⁷⁶ This proposal finds support from scholars who espouse various understandings of when the preaching of Christ (3:19) actually took place. See, among others, Bigg (1910:162), France (1977:268-269), Grudem (1988:157, 226-228), Marshall (1991:122), Feinberg (1986:318) and Schreiner (2003:190). Feinberg and Grudem understand ἐν ᾧ as an instrumental dative referring to Christ as a spirit proclaiming to the spirits now in prison through the preaching of Noah. Dalton (1989:144-149) and Kelly (1969:152) following ancient commentators (Clement of Alexandria and Origen) understand ἐν ᾧ as referring 'in which sphere of the spirit' [of Christ in his risen state].

⁷⁷ Proponents of this view point that ἐν ᾧ appears in 1 Peter with this meaning (see 2:12; 3:16; 4:4 and probably 1:6) and so could be regarded as a favourite idiom of the author. The other main reason for supporting this understanding of ἐν ᾧ is that an adverbial dative, such as πνεύματι, is never found as an antecedent to a relative. See Selwyn (1947:197) and Davids (1990:138).

- iv. Or ἐν ᾧ is used as a relative temporal or circumstantial conjunction, 'on which occasion' or 'in this connection' or 'in the course of which'.⁷⁹

Commentators have exhaustively debated these options but a brief perusal of the commentaries confirms that little consensus has been found. However, bearing in mind the context, and especially the participles in 3:18 and the going of Christ (πορευθεῖς) in 3:19, it is clear that the focus of the entire section is less about the mode of Christ's going ('in his spirit'), but on the events involved in the occasion of his going, namely his resurrection (3:18e, 21d) and ascension into heaven (3:22). If this is correct then it is likely that ἐν ᾧ acts as a temporal or circumstantial conjunction, as elsewhere in the letter (1:6; 2:12; 3:16; 4:4) and should be translated as 'in this connection' or 'on which occasion'. 'Ἐν ᾧ thus provides a link between the resurrection of Christ (ζωοποιηθεῖς δὲ πνεύματι, 3:18) and his subsequent actions of 'going and preaching' to the spirits and his ascension into heaven (3:22).

Furthermore, this rendering is strengthened by the use of the accompanying conjunction καί ('also').⁸⁰ While the construction is unusual in that one would expect the conjunction καί to be followed by the verb (as in 3:14), this construction with καί separated from its verb by intervening words does occur elsewhere in 1 Peter (4:13). Michaels (1988:206) correctly raises the possibility that the placement of the phrase about 'the spirits' immediately after καί may do 'double duty': 'Christ went and preached "even" to the spirits who were disobedient to God in Noah's time – i.e., he went to the most remote and unlikely audience imaginable ... This is Peter's way of dramatizing concretely the universality of Christ's lordship, which he will make explicit in v22.'

The adoption of this understanding of ἐν ᾧ καί, automatically eliminates the Augustinian interpretation which sees this as a reference to the pre-existent spirit of Christ preaching through Noah. Furthermore, by linking ἐν ᾧ to the preceding participles with their reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus (3:18), the interpretation that takes 3:19 as an allusion to the travelling and preaching of Christ's soul during the *Triduum Mortis* becomes very unlikely.

πορευθεῖς ἐκήρυξεν he went and proclaimed

πορευθεῖς

The aorist participle of the verb πορεύομαι, also seems to describe a single action like the similar aorist participles (θανατωθεῖς and ζωοποιηθεῖς) in 3:18. Used in its simple and primary meaning of 'go', the verb contains no indication as to the direction of Christ's movement either 'ascend' or 'descend'. Any conclusion as to the direction of Christ's going must be determined primarily by the immediate context and not from alleged supporting proof texts from elsewhere in the New Testament.⁸¹

In 3:22b the aorist participle πορευθεῖς also appears and refers clearly to the ascension of Christ into heaven (πορευθεῖς εἰς οὐρανόν). This is significant. For while πορευθεῖς in 3:19 may indeed be pleonastic lending a certain vividness without really describing the journey, it does seem to anticipate the decisive πορευθεῖς εἰς οὐρανόν ('gone to heaven') in 3:22. 1 Peter 3:22 speaks of a real journey, Christ's ascension, and it is in the light of this major expedition that insight is provided in understanding πορευθεῖς in 3:19.

In the rest of the New Testament πορεύομαι is used to refer to the Christ's ascension to heaven (Acts 1:10,11, c.f. John 14:2,3,12,28; 16:7,28). Furthermore, πορεύομαι is never used in the New Testament with the sense of 'going down' or 'descending'. This usage would militate against any interpretation which saw this 'going' of Christ as a descent to Hades in order to preach to the inhabitants thereof.⁸² Indeed, whenever the New Testament refers to Christ's visit to the abode of the dead, it is always stated

⁷⁸ This proposal is suggested, though not supported, by Michaels (1988:205).

⁷⁹ See Reicke (1946:103-115) for a lengthy argument in support of this position. Fink (1967:35-38) and Elliott (2000:652) also prefer this understanding of ἐν ᾧ.

⁸⁰ See Dalton (1989:148), Elliott (2000:652) and Michaels (1988:206) for an analysis of καί.

⁸¹ Based on the possible evidence in the New Testament of a journey (Acts 2:25ff; 13:35; Romans 10:7; Matthew 12:40; Hebrews 9:1-10:14 and Luke 23:43), Best (1971:141-142) takes πορευθεῖς as a reference to a journey prior to Christ's resurrection. For a critique of this position see Dalton (1989:161-163).

⁸² For this understanding see Cranfield (1957:370).

that he went down.⁸³ Since καταβαίνω ('descend') is not used here, it would be unwise to see this going as a journey to the abode of the dead situated somewhere under the ground.⁸⁴

The best understanding of πορευθείς in 3:19 is that it refers to the ascension of Christ. This conclusion logically takes into consideration the preceding references to the death (θανατωθείς, 3:18d) and resurrection (ζωοποιηθείς, 3:18e) of Christ and to the subsequent unambiguous reference to the ascension of Christ (πορευθείς 3:22). The events described in 3:19b-21 are all linked to, and somehow reveal the implications of, the threefold event of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension.

The comments of Dalton (1989:163) are worth noting. 'Let us recall again that we are dealing not with a thesis of abstract theology, but with a story which the reader is meant to picture and share. Thus we are justified in imagining a definite going of Jesus in keeping with the primitive narrative of salvation. There is no doubt about the importance of the ascension in this narrative. In this setting, a meeting of the risen Christ with the fallen angels in the heavens is a mythical way of depicting Jesus as Lord and Saviour.' Peter's emphasis on the supremacy of Christ over all the spirits as evidenced in his ascension would have been a source of comfort to those readers of the epistle unjustly suffering for their faith in the resurrected and ascended Christ. It is in the Ascension that the supremacy of Christ over every spiritual entity is revealed. Only this journey, and no other going (πορεύομαι), would prove to be so cosmically significant and so pastorally important.

Some scholars⁸⁵ have accurately noted the similarity between Christ's going to the spirits (3:19) with the travels of Enoch ascending into 'heaven' and going (πορεύομαι⁸⁶) to the disobedient angelic spirits of the Flood period to publicly announce to them of their divine condemnation and judgement. This is agreed by many to be the closest analogy for the action described here in 1 Peter 3:19-20. The verb πορευθείς acts in a way as to link the salvation-motifs of Christ's ascension with the Jewish Intertestamental tradition of Enoch and his 'going' to the disobedient angelic spirits. For Peter, Christ acts in a sense as a latter day Enoch travelling through the heavens to the disobedient spirits in prison in order to announce to them his ultimate victory over death and their condemnation and judgement.

This close affinity between the Flood narrative in the Jewish Intertestamental literature and 1 Peter 3:19-20 argues strongly against those interpretations which regard πορευθείς as a reference to Christ's descent during the *Triduum Mortis* or to Christ in a pre-existent state preaching to the contemporaries of Noah through the Patriarch (the Augustinian position).

The double use of πορευθείς is therefore very important as these references to the ascension of Christ (3:19,22) are positioned in such a way as to provide a framework whereby the readers can understand the intervening verses (3:19-21) with their mention of the salvation of Noah and his household through the Flood and the correspondence of these events with the salvation of Peter's readers.

⁸³ For those New Testament texts that speak of Christ's descent see in particular Matthew 12:40; Acts 2:23-31; Romans 10:7 and possibly Ephesians 4:9. For a review of 1 Peter 3:19 and its relation to the doctrine of Christ's descent see Elliott (2000:706-710).

⁸⁴ See Kelly (1969:155-156) and Davids (1990:140).

⁸⁵ See Selwyn (1947), Kelly (1969), France (1977), Michaels (1988), Dalton (1989), Davids (1990), Marshall (1991), Elliott (2000) and Schreiner (2003).

⁸⁶ Πορεύομαι is used in 1 Enoch 12:4; 13:3 and 15:2 with regard to the heavenly journey of Enoch (cf Elliott, 2000:654).

τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ⁸⁷ πνεύμασιν⁸⁸ 'to the spirits in prison'

The identity of these 'spirits' (πνεύμασιν) and the precise location of the 'prison' (ἐν φυλακῇ) have been the subjects of much scholarly debate. Debate has centred on whether these spirits should be identified in the light of the Pseudepigraphical Noahic tradition. To whom is Peter referring, and what is his purpose in adopting such material? However, if the immediate context with its reference to the Flood tradition (3:20) is used as a guide, then a probable identification of both the 'spirits' and the 'prison' can be arrived at with a little more ease.

τοῖς...πνεύμασιν 'to the spirits'

Who are these spirits? 3:20 clearly locates them 'in the days of Noah' (ἐν ἡμέραις Νῶε) just before the flood. But are they the souls of human beings who perished in the flood,⁸⁹ or are they the 'sons of god' of Genesis 6:2, whom Jewish and early Christian tradition understood as angels whose misbehaviour with the 'daughters of men' brought about the flood as God's judgement on a sinful world?⁹⁰ Or are they in some way a combination of both human souls and angelic beings?⁹¹

Is there any New Testament evidence that can be called upon to support the contention that Peter is referring to the souls of dead human beings? While some might point out to the usage of Luke 23:46 and Acts 7:59 as evidence of such a belief, the problem is that neither reference is conclusive as both are a popular description of the moment of death.⁹²

In the whole of the New Testament the plural 'spirits' (πνεύματα) is used only once in Hebrews 12:23 and clearly refers to the souls of human beings who have died.⁹³ However, it is important to note that unlike the occurrence in 1 Peter 3:19 which is absolute, the use of πνεύμασιν ('spirits') in Hebrews 12:23 is actually qualified with the accompanying genitive δικαίων ('of just men'). Therefore, 'spirits' (πνεύματα) is an unusual term for speaking about human beings or their souls. On the contrary, πνεύμα[τα] is the normal word found throughout the New Testament to designate a 'spirit' in the sense of a superhuman or supernatural being, both benevolent angels⁹⁴ and malevolent 'unclean spirits' or demons.⁹⁵ Furthermore, in the New Testament the term, both singular (πνεύμα) and plural (πνεύματα), is often used simply without qualification or explanation. It can hardly be denied, therefore, that the evidence of New Testament usage strongly favours the meaning of supernatural beings.

⁸⁷ The manuscript evidence for ἐν φυλακῇ ('in prison') is stronger than that for both τῷ ᾅδῃ ('to Hades', see 614, a few other manuscripts and Ambrosiaster) and the obviously later reading φυλακῇ κατακλεισμένοις ('locked in prison', see C, other Greek manuscripts, vg^{mss} and Augustine).

⁸⁸ The plural 'spirits' (πνεύμασιν) should be preferred here to the singular (πνεύματι) which is less well attested (P⁷², 614, 1881, vg^{mss}) and may be explained as a scribal mistake in simply repeating the πνεύματι of 3:18. Michaels (1988:195) and Dalton (1989:151) consider whether the singular reading was a deliberate attempt to link the journey and proclamation of 3:19 with the 'spirit' (πνεύματι) in 3:18. Hence the text might be understood as 'in which spirit he went and made proclamation to those in prison', or 'in which [i.e. in the spirit] he went and by the spirit made proclamation even to those in refuge'. Such a reading does not explicitly identify those in prison as angels, spirits or human beings; although the impression conveyed is that they are human beings. Dalton and Michaels correctly reject this reading as lacking any real evidence.

⁸⁹ Cranfield (1957:369-370 and 1960:102), Beare (1970:172), Syngé (1970:311) and Goppelt (1993:258-260) adopt this view. Dalton (1989:151) lists other scholars who subscribe to this understanding of πνεύμασιν.

⁹⁰ For some scholars who understand πνεύμασιν as referring to angelic beings (or in the case of Michaels their evil progeny), see Stibbs (1959:142-143), Kelly (1969:153-156), Best (1971:142-143), France (1977:269-270), Dalton (1989:151-154), Michaels (1988:206-208), Marshall (1991:125-128), Davids (1990:139-141), Elliott (2000:655-658) and Schreiner (2003:185-186).

⁹¹ For those who adopt this combined position see Reicke (1946:52-92), Hanson (1982:102) and also, if somewhat equivocally, Selwyn (1947:198-200).

⁹² For an analysis of both of these supposed proof-texts see Dalton (1989:152).

⁹³ For a comparison of these texts see Dalton (1989:152-153) and Elliott (2000:656).

⁹⁴ See Hebrew 1:14; Revelation 1:4; 3:1; 4:5 and 5:6.

⁹⁵ See Matthew 8:16; 10:1; 12:45 (cf Luke 11:26); Mark 1:27; 3:11; 5:13; 6:7; Luke 4:36; 6:18; 7:21; 8:2; 10:20; Acts 5:16; 19:12-13 and Revelation 16:13-14 for instances of the plural πνεύματα. See Matthew 12:43 (cf Luke 11:24); Mark 1:23, 26; 3:30; 5:2, 8; 7:25; Luke 8:29; 9:39, 42; 13:11; Acts 16:16, 18 and 19:15-16 for instances of the singular πνεύμα.

The Jewish Pseudepigraphical literature use the term 'spirits' (πνεύματα) in the same way as that of the New Testament. While the term occasionally refers to human beings, it is never used absolutely but is always qualified. For example, 1 Enoch, which well may have influenced Peter here, refers to the 'spirits of humans' (1 Enoch 20:6; 22:13) or to 'the spirits of the souls of the dead' (1 Enoch 22:3 compare 22:9).⁹⁶ However, when the term is used absolutely, as in 1 Peter, 'spirits' (πνεύματα) denotes either those disobedient angel-spirits (who are called the 'sons of God' in Genesis 6:1-4) or their evil progeny. Both are taken together as both are held responsible for the introduction and continuation of evil; and both are subsequently judged by God and destroyed by the Flood.⁹⁷

This interest displayed in the Jewish Pseudepigraphical literature concerning these disobedient evil angels/spirits and their subsequent imprisonment when coupled with the mention of the Flood and Noah in 1 Peter 3:20, seems to settle the matter that the πνεύματα ('spirits') in 3:19 is a clear reference to these angels and their evil spirit progeny.⁹⁸ If this is indeed the import of 3:19 then there is no compelling reason to take πνεύματα ('spirits') as a reference to deceased human souls alone or even to deceased human beings along with sinful angels/spirits. The use of πνεύματα ('spirits') with regard to human beings is rare, and even then it is always qualified. Furthermore, when the Bible refers to deceased human beings in Hades or the underworld the term employed is not πνεύμα ('spirit') but rather ψυχή (soul).⁹⁹ Indeed in 3:20 Peter refers to the Noah and his family as 'eight souls' (ὀκτώ ψυχαί).¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, in the Jewish Intertestamental literature based on the Flood tradition those imprisoned or bound in chains are not deceased humans but rather the disobedient angels/spirits.

Finally, when all this is taken into consideration, the reader is left with the twofold correspondence between 3:19 and 3:22. There is first the double use of the verb πορευθεῖς and also the reference to the spirits (3:19) and the ἀγγέλων καὶ ἐξουσιῶν καὶ δυνάμεων ('angels, authorities and powers', 3:22). Peter is presenting a picture of Christ going to the evil angels/spirits of the Flood narrative tradition (3:19) during his ascension to make some kind of announcement, before his enthronement in 3:22 when the revelation of the cosmic supremacy of the resurrected and ascended Christ over every evil supernatural power shall be made manifest.

ἐν φυλακῇ 'in prison'

These evil angels/spirits are described as being 'in prison' (ἐν φυλακῇ). The principle meaning of φυλακή is that of the action of guarding or keeping for the sake of custody or security.¹⁰¹ Thus it can refer to a condition or a place. In 3:19 because of its association with 'going' (πορευθεῖς), it is natural to consider φυλακή ('prison') as a place.

Although the term ἐν φυλακῇ is used to denote a place of confinement for human beings on earth, it is never used to denote the place of punishment for human beings after death.¹⁰² In Revelation 20:7, φυλακή is used to describe the incarceration of Satan for a millennium. While this particular text does not refer to the πνεύματα ('spirits'), and is to do with the future, the usage of φυλακή as a 'prison' is

⁹⁶ See also 1 Enoch 9:3, 10 and 10:3. Dalton (1989:153) notes that Josephus uses the expression, "the spirits of wicked men" (*BJ* VII, 6.2).

⁹⁷ See 1 Enoch 15:4,6,7,8,10a,12; 16:1; Jubilees 10:7; 10:3 ('evil spirits'); Philo QG 1.92 ('angels', 'sons of God' 'spirits' πνεύματα); 1 Enoch 19:1 ('spirits of the angels'). See also God as "Lord of the spirits", 1 Enoch 54:5,6; 55:3; etc.

⁹⁸ This conclusion is reached by, among others, Selwyn (1947:198-200), Kelly (1969:153-155), Best (1971:142-143), Michaels (1988:207-208), Dalton (1989:151-154), Davids (1990:139-140), Marshall (1991:125-128), Elliott (2000:656-657) and Schreiner (2003:187-189).

⁹⁹ See Acts 2:27; Psalm 48:16 [49:15]; 4 Ezra 4:35,42, 7:32; and 2 Baruch 30:2-5.

¹⁰⁰ For Peter's usage of ψυχή see Dalton (1989:152).

¹⁰¹ In the New Testament φυλακή denotes 'guarding' (Luke 2:8), 'guard' or 'sentinel' (Acts 12:10), the 'watch' of the night (Matthew 14:25; Mark 6:48), 'haunt' (Revelation 18:2) and most commonly 'prison' (Matthew 14:3,10; 25:36,39,43-44; Mark 6:27; Luke 3:20; 21:12; 22:33; Acts 5:19,21; Revelation 2:10 and 20:7).

¹⁰² See Reicke (1946:53, 66-67), Dalton (1989:159-161), Achtemeier (1996:256), Elliott (2000:657-58) and Schreiner (2003:187).

clear.¹⁰³ France (1977:271) is correct when he comments that 'Christ went to the prison of the fallen angels, not to the abode of the dead, and the two are never equated. Nowhere in the biblical literature is the world of the dead or hell or Hades referred to as φυλακή'.¹⁰⁴

But does this concept of imprisoned evil spirits find resonance in the Flood tradition as expounded in the Jewish Pseudepigraphical literature? The answer is a resounding yes even though the terminology employed to describe the incarceration of the angels/spirits does not include the term ἐν φυλακῇ. The sinful angels/spirits are described in the Jewish tradition as being 'bound' or thrown into a 'prison house'.¹⁰⁵ The Greek terms used include δεῖν ('to bind'), δεσμοτήριον ('prison'), δεσμοί ('bonds'), συσπλείσας ('confinement') and συνέχειν ('to shut or restrain').¹⁰⁶

Importantly, the imprisonment of the spirits is similarly known and commented upon in other New Testament texts.

Jude 1:6 ἀγγέλους τε τοὺς μὴ τηρήσαντας τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχὴν ἀλλὰ ἀπολιπόντας τὸ ἴδιον οἰκητήριον εἰς κρίσιν μεγάλης ἡμέρας δεσμοῖς αἰδίοις ὑπὸ ζόφον τετήρηκεν

And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day (RSV)

2 Peter 2:4 Εἰ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἀγγέλων ἀμαρτησάντων οὐκ ἐφείσατο ἀλλὰ σειραῖς ζόφου ταρταρώσας παρέδωκεν εἰς κρίσιν τηρουμένου

For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of nether gloom to be kept until the judgment (RSV)

It is probable that Peter is also influenced by the Jewish Pseudepigraphical Literature and that 3:19-20 should be understood as a reference to these primordial disobedient angels/spirits who because of their sin were imprisoned.

Feinberg (1986:330-331) questions the validity of the Enochic background and asks why only these particular spirits of Genesis 6 should be addressed and singled out by Christ and not all evil spirits. This argument is in some regards a red herring. It is clear in contemporary Jewish thought, and this may have continued to be adopted by many in the early Christian communities, that there existed a preoccupation with these particular spirits/angels which gave rise to the Noachic Flood. The enormity of their sin and rebellion against God and the rise of evil and suffering in the world because of their activities, had gained particular notoriety and given rise to widespread speculation. Peter, drawing on this Pseudepigraphical tradition, brings the speculation to an end and shows that these evil supernatural spirits that had in some way brought forth a great outpouring of evil in the world had been finally and conclusively dealt with by Christ. Peter thus presents Christ as both proclaiming victory over these

¹⁰³ Michaels (1989:208-209) appeals to Revelation 18:2 as evidence that φυλακή should be rendered in 1 Peter 3:19 not as 'prison' but rather a 'refuge' largely because the spirits are still active rather than restrained. Michaels overlooks the possibility that only one group of spirits is under restraint while others are still active. Furthermore the thought as a whole is quite unrelated to 1 Peter 3:19. Davids (1990:141) rightly notes that φυλακή as referring to a place of refuge is unattested in the literature.

¹⁰⁴ Dalton (1989:160) notes that the Syriac Peshitta version of 1 Peter 3:19 renders ἐν φυλακῇ as 'in sheol'. However, this interpretation, rather than translation, is dependent on the later church tradition of Christ's 'harrowing of hell' which taught that Christ descended and liberated all the souls of the dead. Indeed, Ms 614 and Ambrosiaster assumed that Peter was writing about the underworld here and intentionally replaced ἐν φυλακῇ with a reference to Hades (τῷ ᾄδῃ).

¹⁰⁵ See in particular 1 Enoch 10:4-6, 12-14; 13:1-2; 14:5; 18:13-16; 21:1-10; 54:4-6; 67:4; 69:28; 88:1-3; 2 Enoch 7:1-3; 18:3; Jubilees 5:6-11; 10:4-11; 2 Baruch 56:13; 4QEnoch I 6,22; 1QGenApoc 2:1, 16; Testament of Naphtali 3:5 and Sib Or 1:100-104.

¹⁰⁶ The Greek terms are noted in Dalton (1989:169-171), Michaels (1988:208) and Elliott (2000:658).

infamous and archetypal evil spirits before his enthronement and subjection over every evil cosmic power (see also 3:22).¹⁰⁷

Where about is this 'prison' (φυλακή)? The location of this place of incarceration must in some way be linked with the 'going' (πορευθείς) in 3:19 and in 3:22. If this going of Christ refers to his Ascension, then it would be logical to assume that the prison containing the disobedient angel/spirits is located somewhere in the lower heavens through which Christ travelled on his way to God in the highest heaven. There existed in the Jewish Pseudepigraphical literature and in contemporary Hellenistic cosmology a belief in the plurality of the heavens. In 2 Enoch, these evil spirits are found in both the second and the fifth heavens (2 Enoch 7:1-3 and The Testament of Levi 3:2-3). In both these instances the spirits are referred to expressly as 'bound'. It is likely that Peter (and other contemporary Christian writers) shares this belief in the plurality of heavens.¹⁰⁸

Concluding Thoughts

Unlike contemporary Jewish literature, Peter does not elaborate on either the identity of the spirits or the precise location of their incarceration. It seems reasonable to deduce from the Jewish Pseudepigraphical literature that the spirits in 3:19 are those disobedient angels of Genesis 6 and their evil progeny. If Peter is using the Enochic tradition, as seems probable, then it is also likely that the contemporary cosmology of this Jewish literature may also be influential on the author of 1 Peter. If this is correct, then it provides some help in identifying the general location of the prison in which these angel/spirits bound as one or other of the heavens.

5.2.2 Verse 19b-20a

ἔκήρυξεν ἀπειθήσασίν ποτε

'he announced to these [spirits] who had once disobeyed'

ἀπειθήσασίν ποτε 'to these who had once disobeyed'

This particular phrase further qualifies τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν ('the spirits in prison'). The verb ἀπειθέω in Hellenistic Greek, the Septuagint and in the New Testament has the same fundamental meaning, 'to be disobedient', 'to disobey'.¹⁰⁹ The use of accompanying adverb ποτέ ('once' or 'formerly') indicates that this disobedience has occurred in the past¹¹⁰ and in this case the reference to the 'in the days of Noah' and the Flood (3:20b-d) relates these spirits and their disobedience to the event of the Flood.

The causal force of the aorist participle (ἀπειθήσασίν) explains why these spirits were imprisoned. Peter, therefore, uses the participle to describe the rebellion of the angel/spirits against God as portrayed in Genesis 6:1-4 and elaborated on in the Jewish Pseudepigraphical literature. This disobedience is variously described in the Pseudepigraphical literature as transgression, illicit intercourse, boundary violation, impurity and sin.¹¹¹ It is important to note that the actual sin condemned in the Jewish Intertestamental tradition is that committed by the supernatural angel/spirits and not the sins of Noah's human contemporaries. It is the disobedience of these supernatural beings which has

¹⁰⁷ See Schreiner's (2003:190) analysis of Feinberg's position.

¹⁰⁸ See 1 Enoch 18:4,10; 71:1; 2 Enoch; 3 Enoch 12:4; 17:2; 18:1 etc; Testament of Levi 2:7-8; 3:1-9; 13:5; 14:3 etc; Testament of Dan 5:13; Testament of Dan 5:13; Testament of Asher 2:10; 7:5; Testament of Benjamin 10:7; Ascension of Isaiah; Apocalypse of Moses 3 Baruch; Apoc Zeph; 4 Ezra; 2 Maccabees 2:2; Wisdom 9:10; Tobit 8:5. Compare also the New Testament use of the plural οὐρανῶν ('heavens') in 2 Corinthians 12:2,43 and in 1 Peter 1:4. Elliott (2000:654-655) notes how this cosmology with its plurality of heavens is also reflected in contemporary Hellenistic literature where even Hades is 'relocated' to be now above the earth. Furthermore, Elliott notes the popularity of journeys through the heavens in Jewish literature (see especially Testament of Levi 2:6-5:2), in the New Testament (Hebrew 4:14 and Ephesians 4:10) and in the Ascension of Isaiah (3:13-4:2; 9:6-18) and 10:7-11:33) where the resurrected Christ passes through the six heavens to be enthroned in the seventh heaven at God's right hand.

¹⁰⁹ The form ἀπειθήσασίν is the dative, aorist, active participle and qualifies the preceding dative 'spirits' (πνεύμασιν).

¹¹⁰ Ποτέ is used elsewhere in 1 Peter (3:5; 2:10) when referring to some past event.

¹¹¹ See 1 Enoch 6:3; 9:7-9; 10:11; 12:4; 15:3-12; 16:1; 18:15; 21:4-6; 106:14; Jubilees 5:1-11; 7:21; 10:1-6; Testament of Reuben 5; Testament of Naphtali 3:5; 2 Baruch 56:12; See also 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6.

subsequently led to the escalation of sin and evil committed by humans which is ultimately judged and eradicated by God in the Flood.

Grudem (1988: 215-217) and Clowney (1988:162) contend that since ἀπειθέω can also mean 'unbelief' this should be taken as further evidence that the spirits (πνεύμασιν) must be the human contemporaries of Noah. In short, they argue that as angels cannot 'not believe' then Peter must have unbelieving humans in view here. This proposal is tenuous and not satisfactory.¹¹² However, as Marshall (1991:126) correctly notes, 'to disobey' is essentially the same as 'disbelieve'. The Flood tradition argues decisively that the 'spirits that once disobeyed' should be understood not as humans who perished in the flood, or even to the souls of the dead (good or evil), but rather to the sinful angel/spirits whose evil inaugurated the evil which resulted in the Flood.

While the verb ἀπειθέω is not used in 1 Enoch in the descriptions of the angels and their evil progeny, it does appear elsewhere in 1 Peter.¹¹³ In these references the term is employed to describe the enemies, usually Gentiles, of God, God's agent of salvation Jesus Christ and Christians in Peter's own day.¹¹⁴

In 1 Peter the Christian faith is contrasted with the attitude of the hostile surrounding community. This hostile attitude is described in 1 Peter as the disobedience of unbelief and a refusal to accept the Christian kerygma. It is important that the concept of angelic/spirit disobedience in 3:19-20 should be observed against the background of Peter's understanding and usage of 'disobedience' elsewhere in his letter. In 2:7-8 those who reject Christ are described as having disobeyed the message concerning him. In 3:1 the verb is used of disobedient (unbelieving) husbands; whereas in 4:17 the term appears to describe those who disobey the gospel of God. Peter's conclusion is that those inflicting suffering on Christ's people are enemies of Christ and Christians. His choice of words is no accident, but suggests a close connection in Peter's mind between the disobedient primeval spiritual beings and the human opponents inflicting evil and suffering upon the people of Christ. In 1 Peter the disobedient, whether spiritual entities or human beings, are characterised as those who oppose God, Christ the agent of salvation or the bringers of God's message. The message of hope in Peter's message is that all who are 'disobedient' are being (3:16) and will be (4:17) judged by God.

Michaels (1988:211) may well be correct when he notes that Christ's travel and proclamation to these evil angel/spirits, long after the time of Noah, points to something more than an analogy. These disobedient angel/spirits who committed such archetypal acts of sinful rebellion against God (Genesis 6:1-4) may be regarded as in some way influencing the present persecution and suffering experienced by the individual Christian believer or the Christian church. Christ's entrance into the abode of these spiritual entities and his proclamation may be a source of hope to a suffering people whose affliction they may have attributed, like the worldviews of their day, to the involvement of evil spiritual beings.

The reason why the verb ἀπειθέω is chosen to describe the sin of the spirits in prison is clear. This is an apt description of these supernatural unbelievers whose disobedience against God, according to Jewish tradition, was the cause of such a considerable outpouring of evil, sin and unbelief in the world. The good news is that Christ has now gone to these spiritual entities. The reason for that journey will be revealed fully by Peter in 3:22. In the meantime, Peter refers to Christ's proclamation to these imprisoned evil spirits.

ἐκήρυξεν 'he announced'

Κηρύσσω, the only finite verb in 3:19-20a, expresses the main thought of the section. When did this proclaiming occur? Standing in a sequence which begins with the participles in 3:18 (θανατωθεῖς and ζωοποιηθεῖς) and 3:19 (πορευθεῖς) it is best to see the verb indicate an announcement by Christ made after his resurrection and during his ascension to heaven.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Similarly Goppelt (1993:257-260) is not correct to see these disobedient spirits as examples of the unrighteous for whom Christ had died (ἀδίκων, 3:18). See Dalton (1989:149) and Achtemeier (1996:259).

¹¹³ The verb ἀπειθέω appears also in 1 Peter 2:7-8; 3:1 and 4:17.

¹¹⁴ In the rest of the New Testament the verb ἀπειθέω is used to describe the Jews rejection of the Christian message. See Acts 14:2; 19:9; Romans 10:21; 11:31-32; 15:31. Compare also 1 Clement 58:1.

¹¹⁵ This conclusion naturally rules out the possibilities that Christ's announcement took place during the *triduum mortis*, or during the time of Noah by a pre-existent Christ or by the Holy Spirit through Noah, the

The absolute use of ἐκήρυξεν, however, with no additional information as to the content, has given rise to much speculation as to the substance and intent of Christ's announcement.

It must be admitted that in the New Testament the verb κηρύσσω often appears in connection with the verb εὐαγγελίζω and the noun εὐαγγέλιον.¹¹⁶ Thus the term is most commonly used to denote the 'heralding' of the good news of salvation.¹¹⁷ Is this the meaning of ἐκήρυξεν here in 1 Peter 3:19? Some scholars suggest that ἐκήρυξεν (3:19) should be interpreted in the light of 4:6, where εὐηγγελίσθη¹¹⁸ appears. If this is correct then it implies that Christ's preaching was one of repentance and salvation to the souls of deceased humans.¹¹⁹ However, this conclusion can be challenged in that when κηρύσσω is used in the New Testament of delivering good news this is customarily made explicit.¹²⁰ Furthermore, there is no demonstrable connection between the thought of 1 Peter 3:19-20 and 4:6. As a result, any supposed insight to be gained in understanding ἐκήρυξεν (3:21) by the use of εὐηγγελίσθη (4:6) is highly unlikely. A brief comparison between the two passages indicates that not only are the proclamations performed by two different subjects,¹²¹ but that these announcements are performed in front of two completely different audiences,¹²² and with two different fates.¹²³ As 3:19-20 and 4:6 are not linked, it is wrong to understand ἐκήρυξεν in the light of εὐηγγελίσθη.¹²⁴ Thus it would be best to take ἐκήρυξεν in a more neutral sense of 'to proclaim', or to 'act as a herald', with no reference to the proclamation of the Gospel.¹²⁵

However, in adopting the neutral interpretation of ἐκήρυξεν there still remains the question as to the substance of Christ's proclamation. A variety of solutions have been suggested. Some believe it involved a proclaiming of repentance or an offer of salvation. However, this would only really make sense if πνεύμασιν ('the spirits') in 3:19 were the souls of deceased human beings. This suggestion does not seem very likely especially considering the close points of connection between 3:19-20 and the Jewish Pseudepigraphical literature concerning the evil angels/spirits. Indeed such an interpretation would also be inconsistent with the rest of 1 Peter which portrays divine judgement for one's deeds (1:17; 4:17-18) and the condemnation of the disobedient (2:7-8; 4:17-18). Furthermore, as was noted by critics of this position during the time of the Reformation, this idea of a second opportunity for salvation offered to the dead would be unique in the teaching of the New Testament.¹²⁶

Preacher of Righteousness. See Grudem (1988:160-161, 225-239) Feinberg (1986:325-330) and Skilton (1996:1-9).

¹¹⁶ Dalton (1989:154-155) examines the usage of the verb κηρύσσω (and its noun κήρυξ, 'herald') in Classical Greek and the Septuagint. The Septuagint lacks the religious overtones as found in Classical Greek, and instead of expressing the action of a 'religious herald', the terminology has the simple meaning of 'to cry aloud' or simply to bring news either good or bad. However, in Isaiah 61:1 and Jonah 1:2, κηρύσσω seems to have a fuller meaning to include the substance of the message to be proclaimed.

¹¹⁷ See Matthew 24:14; Mark 1:14; 13:10; Luke 8:1; Colossians 1:23 and 1 Thessalonians 2:9.

¹¹⁸ Εὐηγγελίσθη is the third person singular aorist passive of εὐαγγελίζω.

¹¹⁹ Bigg (1910:162), Cranfield (1957:371), Johnson (1960:48-51), Beare (1970:147), Syngé (1970:311), Hanson (1982:100-112) and Goppelt (1993:257-260) are some of the scholars who link 1 Peter 3:9 with 4:6, and espouse the view that Christ is preaching to seek the salvation of spirits. Some scholars believe that the audience should be limited to the souls of Noah's contemporaries, see Reicke (1946:14-27) and Dalton (1989:24-37).

¹²⁰ See Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; 26:13; Mark 1:14; 13:10; 14:9; 16:15 and 1 Thessalonians 2:9.

¹²¹ Christ is the subject of ἐκήρυξεν (3:19) but not that of εὐηγγελίσθη (4:6) which has Christian preachers as the implied subject.

¹²² The human dead (νεκροῖς) of 4:6 are not the same audience as the spirits in prison (τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν, 3:19) who are probably the disobedient angel/spirits of Genesis 6.

¹²³ The fate of the human dead in 4:6 who are to be judged in the flesh according to human standards (ἵνα κριθῶσι μὲν κατὰ ἀνθρώπους σαρκί) is completely different to that of the disobedient angel/spirits in 3:19-20, who, in the Flood tradition, were condemned by God according to divine standards.

¹²⁴ See Best (1971:144), Michaels (1988:235-238), Davids (1990:140-141), Marshall (1991:128), Dalton (1989:154-159), Achtemeier (1996:260-262), Elliott (2000:660) and Schreiner (2003:206-210), who reject any connection between 1 Peter 3:19-22 and 4:6.

¹²⁵ For the neutral sense of κηρύσσω see Luke 12:3; Romans 2:21 and Revelation 5:2.

¹²⁶ This interpretation depends also on the validity of the alleged correlation between ἐκήρυξεν (3:19) and εὐηγγελίσθη (4:6).

Others see in the announcement of Christ some kind of self-presentation to these spirits in prison as to the nature of his person, or the victory he has achieved over the powers of evil. Reicke (1946:120) interestingly sees the content of Jesus' announcement as 'the secret about Himself as the humbly suffering, and thereby victorious, Messiah.' Similarly, Dalton (1989:26,154-159) believes this proclamation refers to "Christ's self-presentation as risen Lord to the angelic powers in the heavens on the occasion of his ascension, an idea, echoed in different terms, in the subjugation of the 'angels, authorities and powers' in 3:22."¹²⁷ The connection between 3:19 and 3:22 by the double use of πορευθείς does seem to suggest a connection between the archetypal disobedient spirits (3:19) and the cosmic spirits (ἀγγέλων καὶ ἐξουσιῶν καὶ δυνάμεων) in 3:22. Their subordination to Christ (3:22) would be a visible confirmation of the condemnation of the spirits in prison who had once disobeyed (3:19-20).¹²⁸

It is the Flood tradition which seems to provide a satisfactory framework to understand the proclamation of Christ to the spirits in prison. As has been observed, Enoch is presented as embarking on a journey to heaven during which he went to the evil angels/spirits whose defiance of God had eventually resulted in the Flood. It was during this visit that Enoch announces their doom and condemnation.¹²⁹ This theme of the angel/spirits being condemned is a common one in the Pseudepigraphical writings concerning the Flood tradition and the motif also finds resonance in the New Testament (2 Peter 2:3-4 and Jude 6) where the events are employed to encourage the Godly of the certainty of God's judgement on the unrighteous.¹³⁰ The Enochic pronouncement of God's judgement and condemnation of the angels/spirits acts as a prototype of God's coming judgement of all who oppose Him and afflict his people. In the light of the Jewish Flood tradition and 1 Enoch in particular, perhaps it is best to understand Christ's 'announcement' (ἐκήρυξεν) in 1 Peter 3:19 as involving the condemnation of the disobedient spirits.¹³¹

Nevertheless, there is little real difference between these two proposals. Whether Christ's proclamation is understood as an announcement of victory or subjugation or a pronouncement of condemnation, the point remains clear: Christ reigns supreme over these defeated and condemned angels/spirits (3:22).

Christ's proclamation (3:19) should not be interpreted as an evangelical sermon. Such an interpretation would seriously undermine Peter's stress on consistent righteous living in the face of opposition and suffering. Furthermore, it would also undermine the message of hope to believers based on the certain condemnation of all who disobey God, whether spiritual or human, and the certainty of Christ's sovereignty and control over every cosmic power. Christians, suffering at the hands of disobedient humans and who understood these attacks as being inspired by evil spiritual beings, would be greatly comforted by knowing that they belonged to a Lord who is all powerful, and by the truth that God's justice would indeed prevail over every evil spirit/angel and their human agents.

5.3 Verse 20b-21

This study only briefly examines 3:20b-21 as it is not integral in identifying the 'spirits in prison' or the nature and content of Christ's proclamation. Nevertheless, 3:20b-21 is integral to Peter's argument and pastoral concern in showing how God continues to care for his righteous people and save them from a world of evil spirit inspired wickedness, suffering and hostility.

3:20b-21 consists of a series of complex subordinate clauses extending through to 3:22, which link and qualify the 3:18-19 in regard to time and setting of the disobedience by the spirits. The interest moves

¹²⁷ Selwyn (1947:200) also regards the contents of Christ's message as essentially a declaration of victory.

¹²⁸ Because of his desire to understand ἐν φυλακῇ as a place of 'refuge' rather than a prison, Michaels (1988:210) understands Christ's proclamation as an act of 'domestication' by which those protected from the presence of the Lord are made subjects of Christ the Lord either willingly or unwillingly. This interpretation is unsatisfactory.

¹²⁹ For the condemnation of these evil spirits in Enochic literature, see 1 Enoch 12:4-6; 13:1-10; 14:1-7; 15:1-16:3 and 2 Enoch 7. See 1 Enoch 10:4,11; 12:4; 13:1,3; and 15:2 for examples of the condemnation of the evil spirits being carried out by one or more of the righteous angels.

¹³⁰ See 1 Enoch 67:4-69:1 where the judgment of these evil spirit/angels is deemed a suitable warning to all humanity of God's impending judgment.

¹³¹ This understanding of ἐκήρυξεν is adopted by among others Selwyn (1947:200), Dalton (1989:154-158), France (1977:271-272), Davids (1990:140141), Marshall (1991:128) and Schreiner (2003:189).

from the going of Christ and his condemnation of the disobedient angel/spirits to the events and time of disobedience leading up to the flood and to the flood itself. The clause ἐν ἡμέραις Νῶε clarifies that Peter (3:19) is referring to the angelic spirits who disobeyed at the time of the Flood; an identification further accentuated by the mention of the building of the ark (κατασκευαζομένης κιβωτοῦ), Flood itself and the salvation of Noah and his family (εἰς ἣν ὀλίγοι, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ὀκτῶ ψυχαί, διεσώθησαν δι' ὕδατος).

The Flood narrative (Genesis 6:1-8:22) was by the time of 1 Peter a classic illustration in Jewish literature of both divine judgement upon the evil angels/spirits and the divine salvation of the righteous Noah. This tradition concerning Noah and the Flood naturally found acceptance within the Christian community and its literature.¹³² It is probable that Peter saw parallels between the suffering endured by the believers of Asia Minor for their faith, especially if these attacks were believed to be inflicted by evil spirits/angels, and the events during the days of Noah. As God acted in the days of Noah to save his righteous people from the evil of the world, so the same God will act today for his righteous people. The perpetrators of evil, both supernatural and human, will certainly be judged.

Peter allows his audience to draw an obvious conclusion when he emphasises the small number who were saved from the Flood. The suffering Christians in First Century AD Asia Minor were, like Noah, few in number and aware of their powerlessness in the face of the surrounding non-Christian majority among whom they lived. However, it was Noah and his family who were saved by God when he brought down the judgement of the Flood on the world which resulted in the destruction of the world. God saves his people regardless of how few they are in number, or how insignificant they might be in the eyes of the world or even how fierce the evil opposition might be.¹³³

In 3:21 Peter draws an analogy between the salvation of Noah through the water and the Christian believer's salvation through the waters of baptism (δὲ καὶ ὑμᾶς ἀντίτυπον νῦν σφύζει βάπτισμα). In both verses (3:20,21), however, it is clear that the common saving agent is God. It is this divine act of salvation that constitutes the chief analogy between the experience of Noah and his family and that of Christian believers. God rescues his righteous people and judges their evil enemies.

For those baptised believers in Asia Minor suffering for their faith in Christ, those confident days of their baptism may have seemed a distant memory. Peter reminds these believers that they can be confident today in the midst of suffering just as much as when they were baptised. This confidence is not in any magical qualities in the water, nor in the spiritual state of their conscience, but in the basis of the work of Christ on the cross and in his resurrection (δι' ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Any baptismal pledge to God (ἐπερώτημα εἰς θεόν) to maintain a good conscience and mindfulness (συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς) toward God shall therefore be rewarded.

5.4 Verse 22

ὅς ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ [τοῦ] θεοῦ
πορευθεὶς εἰς οὐρανόν
ὑποταγέντων αὐτῷ ἀγγέλων καὶ ἐξουσιῶν καὶ δυνάμεων.

The concluding verse (3:22) is joined thematically and syntactically to the preceding phrase, δι' ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ('through the resurrection of Jesus Christ' 3:21d). The mention of Jesus' resurrection brings Peter's thought back to the couplet in 3:18de θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκὶ ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι and to the subsequent reference to Christ's journey to the spirits in prison.¹³⁴

In 3:22, Peter, by use of the participial expression πορευθεὶς εἰς οὐρανόν ('gone into heaven', 3:22b), provides the third and final element of Christ's journey. This mention of Christ's journey into heaven is further described by two traditional phrases which depict Christ's exaltation. Peter emphasises that the

¹³² See Hebrews 11:7; 2 Peter 2:5-6; 3:6-13 and 1 Clement 7:6 and 9:4.

¹³³ The fewness of those being saved is seen in Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:14; 9:37; 22:14; Luke 10:2 and 13:23-24. Compare also 1 Corinthians 1:26 and Revelation 3:4 and 1 Peter 2:4 where Christ is rejected by men in general.

¹³⁴ It is strange that Dalton (1989:215-218) spends barely three pages in discussing 3:22 despite its importance in understanding 3:18-22.

resurrected Christ is exalted to a position of supreme privilege at the right hand of God; and this exaltation involves his supremacy over all cosmic spiritual powers.¹³⁵

Peter's mention of the resurrection and exaltation of Christ (3:21d and 22) resumes the resurrectional theme first mentioned in 3:18e and appears to situate the intervening verses (3:19-21c) within the context of Christ's resurrection and ascension. It is clear that the function of 3:19-21c is to explain the implications of Christ's resurrection and ascension for both the disobedient spirits and the baptised believers.

5.4.1 Verse 22a

ὅς ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ [τοῦ]¹³⁶ θεοῦ¹³⁷ 'who is at the right hand of God'

ὅς ἐστιν

The antecedent of 'who is' (ὅς ἐστιν) is clearly 'Jesus Christ' (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, 3:21d) who is raised from the dead. The use of ὅς ἐστιν is unlikely to be derived from any traditional Christian creedal formulation and is probably Peter's way of making a transition from 'the raising of Jesus Christ' (3:21d).¹³⁸

The entire clause, ὅς ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ [τοῦ] θεοῦ, including the definite article τοῦ accompanying God, also appears in Romans 8:34.¹³⁹ In both instances the content of the clause seems to reflect Christian tradition concerning Christ's resurrection and exaltation to the privileged position at the right hand of God. References to the 'right hand of God' (ὅς ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ [τοῦ] θεοῦ) in connection with Christ's exaltation are very common in the New Testament.¹⁴⁰

These references to the 'right hand of God' seem to reflect either a direct appropriation of the language of Psalm 109[110]:1 in the Septuagint¹⁴¹, or a remoter looser recollection of this influential text.¹⁴² While Peter's terminology is relatively remote to that of the Psalm (e.g. the singular ἐν δεξιᾷ, with Paul and Hebrews, instead of the plural ἐκ δεξιῶν, and also without the verb κάθημαι, 'sit', or καθίζειν, 'seat') it would be wrong to suggest that Peter is neither quoting nor alluding to this well known Psalm, but simply adopting a popular Christian phrase to describe Christ's position of royal dignity and authority.¹⁴³ Peter appears to be appropriating the language of Psalm 109[110]:1 for his own purpose in demonstrating the cosmic supremacy of Christ.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁵ With respect to the temporal sequence, the second phrase πορευθεὶς εἰς οὐρανόν ('having gone into heaven', 3:22b) logically precedes the actions in 3:22a,c.

¹³⁶ The definite article τοῦ is found in the majority of manuscripts (including P⁷² \aleph^2 A C P Π) but is missing in a number of early manuscripts (including \aleph^* B Ψ 33). Regardless of which reading is adopted, the understanding of 3:22 is not effected.

¹³⁷ Most manuscripts of the Vulgate insert *deglutiens mortem ut vitae aeternae haeredes efficeremur* ('swallowing up death that we might be made heirs of eternal life') after the reference to 'the right hand of God' (*qui est in dextera Dei*). It is likely that this addition is a Latin translation of a Greek gloss (see Metzger (1975:693-694)).

¹³⁸ See Michaels (1988:218) and Elliott (2000:682). Compare 1 Peter 2:21-25 where a series of ὅς-clauses appear which do seem to be expansions by Peter on elements of early Christian traditions based on the vicarious suffering and death of Christ.

¹³⁹ Romans 8:34 reads: ὁὗς καὶ ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ ('who is at the right hand of God', RSV).

¹⁴⁰ See Mark 14:62/Matthew 26:46; Mark 16:19; Acts 2:31-36; 5:30-31; Ephesians 1:20-22; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12 and 12:2. The clause in 1 Peter 3:22a is very similar to the formulation found in Colossians 3:1 (οὗ ὁ Χριστός ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενος, 'where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God', RSV) which was later incorporated into the Church's creed.

¹⁴¹ See Matthew 22:44/Mark 12:36/Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34 and Hebrews 1:13. See also 1 Clement 36.5 and Barnabas 12.10 for examples of allusions to Psalm 109[110]:1 in the literature of the Apostolic Fathers.

¹⁴² See Matthew 26:46/Mark 16:19/Luke 22:69; Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55-56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12 and 12:2.

¹⁴³ Michaels (1988:218-219) prefers this hypothesis to explain the variant ἐν δεξιᾷ θεοῦ.

¹⁴⁴ Interestingly, in Acts 2:34-35, Luke records Peter's sermon at Pentecost in which the Apostle clearly cites Psalm 109[110]:1 and also endorses Davidic authorship.

τῷ Δαυιδ ψαλμός εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου (LXX)

The LORD says to my lord:
"Sit at my right hand,
till I make your enemies your footstool." (RSV)

While Psalm 109[110] has generated much discussion among Old Testament scholars concerning the origin and purpose of the Psalm and also the contents thereof,¹⁴⁵ it must be concluded that generally the New Testament appears to understand the Psalm messianically.¹⁴⁶ Jesus Christ is portrayed in the New Testament as completely fulfilling Psalm 109[110] by sitting down at the right hand of God with the bestowal of royal honour and power.

The early Church appears to use Psalm 109[110]:1 in a variety of ways in order to highlight three differing implications of Christ's ascension and exaltation. First, the early Church emphasises the divine vindication and glory of Jesus Christ at the right hand of God and/or the accompanying glory or empowerment of the Holy Spirit bestowed on believers. Secondly, Jesus is identified as the Messiah or Christ. Thirdly, the early Church uses the Psalm to underscore the total subjection of the cosmic powers to the resurrected Christ. While the second element is not to the fore in 1 Peter 3:22, the first and third features are certainly present.

The 'right hand' (δεξιὰ) traditionally was regarded as the favoured and honourable hand to be used when showing respect, blessing and salvation.¹⁴⁷ In the Old Testament God is portrayed as saving his people by his 'right hand'.¹⁴⁸ In the New Testament the term was used to signify the hand of power,¹⁴⁹ honour¹⁵⁰ and place of privilege.¹⁵¹ Thus for the resurrected Jesus Christ to be seated at God's right hand was sufficient evidence to show that he enjoyed the ultimate favour of God. Christ has been enthroned by God to the place of supreme authority from which he will reign supreme. This mention of the authority of Christ repeats the concept of Christ's Lordship mentioned in 3:15. In that verse, Peter urges the believers to reverence Christ as Lord in the midst of persecution. As Christ is Lord and sovereign over all things, even those individuals who persecute his people, so the resurrected Christ is enthroned Lord over all the evil cosmic forces who seek the harm of God's people.

Through the resurrection, God, first and foremost, vindicates Jesus Christ (3:18e and 2:4) who has suffered unjustly even though he himself was righteous (3:18ab, 2:4,21-24). Similarly it is this resurrection of Christ which also leads to the exaltation of Christ and his enthronement at God's right hand in power. Furthermore, it is this same resurrection which provides comfort and assurance for those baptised believers who are suffering unjustly at the hands of evil men and women because of their faith in this same Jesus Christ. These believers share, by nature of their baptism into Christ (3:21), in the resurrection of Christ and thus they enjoy now the benefits that flow from it. Those suffering Christians shall also be vindicated and share in the glory with Christ (see 1:6-8; 4:13 and 5:10). Since Christ is now situated at this place of privilege beside the right hand of God, believers need not fear about who is ultimately in control over the whole universe. It is Christ who reigns over everything including the evil spirits and their human agents on earth.

¹⁴⁵ For a discussion of the various proposals concerning the possible original *Sitz im Leben* and the different interpretations of Psalm 110, see Allen (1983:78-87) and Van Groningen (1990:390-397).

¹⁴⁶ For citations or allusions to Psalm 109[110] in the New Testament, see Matthew 22:41-46; 26:64; Mark 12:35-37; 14:62; 16:19; Luke 20:41-44; 22:69; Acts 2:33-36; 5:31; 7:55-56; Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:20; 2:6; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22 and Revelation 3:2. For a list of citations and allusions of Psalm 109[110] in early Christian literature see Elliott (2000:683).

¹⁴⁷ See Psalm 16:11 and Proverbs 3:16. Elliott (2000:683) lists references from Plutarch that show this same usage of the term 'right hand'.

¹⁴⁸ See Psalm 107:7[108:6]; 59[60]:7; 97[98]:10 and 107[108]:7

¹⁴⁹ See Revelation 1:16,17,20; 2:1; 5:1,7.

¹⁵⁰ See Acts 3:7; Galatians 2:9 and Revelation 10:5.

¹⁵¹ See Mark 10:40/Matthew 20:23.

5.4.2 Verse 22b

πορευθεὶς εἰς οὐρανόν 'gone into heaven'

The phrase πορευθεὶς εἰς οὐρανόν ('having gone into heaven') echoes traditional Christian kerygmatic and creedal language. In this instance, the link is made between the resurrection of Christ and his subsequent ascension into heaven to sit at the right hand of God. 3:22ab, therefore, resumes the Peter's thought line of 3:19 and provides a fuller description of the action of Christ's 'going'. The use of πορευθεὶς ('having gone') in both 3:19 and 3:22b acts as an *inclusio* drawing together the concepts expressed in 3:19-22 while tying them in with the immediately preceding thoughts of 3:18de.

As was noted earlier, the sequence of Christ's ascension (πορευθεὶς, aorist tense) into heaven temporally precedes his being (ὄς ἔστιν, present tense) at the right hand of God in 3:22a.

πορευθεὶς εἰς 'gone into'

In this phrase the aorist of πορεύομαι ('go', 'depart') appears here with the preposition εἰς ('to', 'toward'). This combination of verb and preposition is very popular in the New Testament.¹⁵²

The whole phrase (πορευθεὶς εἰς οὐρανόν), indicates the direction of Christ's going into heaven and echoes and endorses the report of the ascension of Jesus as recorded in Acts 1:10-11. The verb πορεύομαι is often used alone to refer to Christ's ascension especially in John's gospel.¹⁵³ However, the authors of the New Testament employ a number of synonyms and other related terms in order to describe the ascension of Christ into heaven.¹⁵⁴ While it might not be popular with modern minds to speak about 'heavens' in spatial terms or accept a physical understanding of Christ's ascension (Grudem 1988:165), it would be wrong to simply dismiss the ascension of Christ as simply further metaphorical elaboration on the nature and significance of Christ's resurrection; namely, his elevation to the presence of God in the highest heaven (see Elliott 2000:685).

Other examples of privileged individuals journeying through the heavens or ascending to heaven exist in the Old Testament, the Intertestamental literature and also the New Testament. Those Old Testament figures who were said to have ascended include Enoch (1, 2 Enoch and Hebrews 11:5; compare Genesis 5:24), Elijah (2 Samuel 2:1-12), Isaiah (Ascension of Isaiah; compare Isaiah 6:1-13) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 11:1). In the New Testament, Paul describes ascending to the third heaven during his own lifetime (2 Corinthians 12:2), while John similarly records his ascension to the heavenly regions (Revelation 4:1). However, while these 'ascensions' show the privileged position of these individuals before God, what marks Christ's ascension as totally unique is his enthronement at the right hand of God. Those other 'ascensions' may be thought of as either a reward from God to his faithful servants or as a means whereby God reveals his will and truth to his people. Christ's ascension is never portrayed as a mere reward, but as part of God's vindication of his ministry, and especially his death and resurrection, a revelation of his identity as the Messiah/Christ, and proof of his exclusive Lordship over all the cosmic forces. While other 'ascensions' exist in the biblical and extra-biblical literature only Christ's ascension is depicted as unique and inimitable. Only Christ's ascension results in his enthronement at God's right hand in the highest heaven.

For Peter, Christ's resurrection is not the end of the story. The ascension of Christ through the heavens to sit at the right hand of God is an important part of the story as it not only reiterates the Lordship of Christ, but provides pastoral comfort to those suffering at the hands of evil men and women. Christ, who

¹⁵² The New Testament uses the phrase to express travelling into a region, a city, or figuratively, to express going to death (Luke 22:33) or to the eternal fire (Matthew 25:41).

¹⁵³ For this use of πορεύομαι without the preposition εἰς to refer to Christ's ascension, see John 14:2,3,12,28; 16:7,28.

¹⁵⁴ These other synonyms and related terms include μεταβαίνω, ἀπέρχομαι, ἐξέρχομαι ('leaving' the world); ἀναβαίνω, ὑπάγω ('going (up)' to God, see in particular John 6:62; 7:33; 8:14; 13:1,3,33,36; 14:1-4; 16:7,28; 20:17); ἀναβαίνω ('going up', 'ascending'), ἀναφέρω (being 'taken up' into heaven, see Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; John 3:13; Acts 1:11; 1 Timothy 3:16; The Ascension of Isaiah 9:16-18; 3:18; Testament of Benjamin 9:4; and Sibylline Oracle 1.381); ὑψόω (being 'lifted up' from the earth, John 12:32,34); ἀναβαίνω ('ascending above all the heavens', Ephesians 4:10) and διέρχομαι ('passing through the heavens', Hebrews 4:14).

has gone and now sits in the presence of Almighty God, is Lord over all. This must have been a source of great comfort and assurance to Peter's suffering audience. The implication of the phrase is clear. It implies that as Christ, who suffered and died unjustly at the hands of evil men, was raised by the Father and ascended into the place of privilege at God's right hand, so therefore Christ will eventually bring his people, for whom he died (3:18ab), to God (3:18c).¹⁵⁵

Peter will now go and flesh out a little more what exactly this Lordship entails with regard to the cosmic forces.

5.4.3 Verse 22c

ὑποταγέντων αὐτῷ ἀγγέλων καὶ ἐξουσιῶν καὶ δυνάμεων
'with angels, authorities and powers subjected to him'

The third and final phrase of 3:22 is another genitive absolute construction (see 3:20c and 4:1). In this phrase Peter emphasises the cosmic implications of Christ's enthronement at the right hand of God. These evil cosmic spiritual powers of the universe are now completely and eternally subjected under the authority of the reigning and supreme Christ. This motif of the resurrection and ascension of Christ and his subjection of the cosmic forces is a common New Testament and early Christian tradition.¹⁵⁶

Who are these 'angels, authorities and powers'? While the first two terms in this triad (ἄγγελος and ἐξουσία) could be used to describe human agents or messengers or human figures of authority, it is unlikely that this is how they are being used here. When, however, these terms are combined with the third term, δύναμις ('power'), to form this triad, the phrase seems to refer exclusively to inimical spiritual figures over which the resurrected and exalted Christ has authority and dominion. Peter's use of this triad seems to echo that of Paul's in 1 Corinthians 15:24-25 which also appears to refer to the subjection of these hostile spiritual powers under the authority of the exalted Christ.¹⁵⁷

It is interesting that the inclusion of the angels (ἄγγελοι) within the triad of cosmic powers occurs only here in the New Testament and appears to be a deliberate addition (see Elliott 2000:688). The intentional reference to these supernatural beings may well have been included because of the reference in 3:19 to the disobedient spirits in prison (τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν). A number of synonymous terms existed in the Pseudepigraphical literature to describe those Noahic supernatural entities. Among those terms which could be used interchangeably were 'spirit' and 'angels'. In the immediate context it is likely that the deliberate use of 'angels' in 3:22c embraces the 'disobedient spirits' of 3:19. This equation is further supported by the double use of the verb πορευθεῖς in 3:19a and 3:22b.

By deliberately combining (angels) with 'authorities' and 'powers', Peter seems to be including the disobedient angels/spirits of 3:19 as being among the number of those supernatural entities subordinated to the resurrected Christ.¹⁵⁸ Christ's exaltation and heavenly enthronement is the final confirmation of their condemnation.¹⁵⁹ Contextually it would make little sense to emphasise that Christ ruled over the good angels.¹⁶⁰ Peter reassures the suffering Christians of Asia Minor that they have not been forgotten or surrendered into the hands of evil spirits even if they suffer to the point of death. Every cosmic evil power including the infamous angels/spirits of the Flood tradition have been made subject to Christ.

As was observed in Chapter 2, the belief in the existence and operation of supernatural entities, both good and evil, was a prominent feature of Hellenistic, Jewish and even Christian thought during the time of 1 Peter. This belief in spirits, angels and demons was common to all social and religious

¹⁵⁵ This hope that Christ will eventually bring his people to God appears in Hebrews 4:14-16; 9:11-14; 12:2; Colossians 3:1-3 and Ephesians 4:8-13.

¹⁵⁶ For this traditional combination and sequence of Christ's ascension and subjection of the cosmic forces, see also Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:3-13; 2:5-9 and 10:12-13.

¹⁵⁷ This use of a triad also appears in the Ascension of Isaiah 1:3 which reads, 'the prince of this world and his angels and his authorities and his powers'.

¹⁵⁸ This point is emphasized by Dalton (1989:215-218) and Elliott (2000:688).

¹⁵⁹ An earlier and similar thought appears in 1 Enoch 55:4.

¹⁶⁰ This point is correctly noted by Schreiner (2003:198), Achtemeier (1996:274), Selwyn (1947:208) and Kelly (1969:164).