



Called to Bless:

Considering an Under-appreciated Aspect of “Doing Good” in 1 Peter 3:8–17

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Abstract

This article investigates the notion of mission as blessing in 1 Peter 3:8–17. Drawing on insights from both Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Narrative Transportation Theory (NTT), I consider how the use of Old Testament quotations and allusions are deployed in such a way as to subvert normal social identity processes by exhorting the recipients of 1 Peter to pursue a life oriented towards blessing one’s opponents through the refusal to retaliate; the pursuit of holistic well-being; and the willingness to defend the hope of one’s faith.

Key words: 1 Peter 3; blessing; doing good; social identity; narrative; mission

The founding pastor of one of America’s most infamous “churches” died on the evening of Wednesday, March, 19, 2014. The late Fred Phelps of Westboro Baptist “Church” left a legacy of hatred and bigotry that many (though not all) of his family now inherit. Their notoriety stems from their public vitriol, most famously directed at gay people, but also towards the American military, other churches, shops, and more (Theroux). I bring up Phelps and his legacy because it raises a question for churches about issues of cultural engagement. How is the church to relate to people, communities, cities, even nations, with whom they disagree on significant or fundamental life issues? The answer for Phelps and his ilk was unadulterated hatred. But if 1 Peter is to be believed, there is a better way, and it has been the focus of scholarly debate in recent decades.

The discussion began and was most starkly presented in the well-known Balch-Elliott debate during the 1980s. Balch suggested that the *Haustafel* presented in 1 Peter was a move towards assimilation with the greater culture (influenced particularly by Plato and Aristotle) (23–62), which in turn assisted the church in its wider witness because of its willingness to con-

form. According to Balch, “Christians *had to* conform to the expectations of Hellenistic-Roman society so that society would cease criticizing the new cult” (88, emphasis added). Elliott, focusing on the language of *paroikoi* and *parepidemoi*, argued almost the exact opposite; that such language was designed to develop a sense of corporate identity in order to *resist* any social pressure to assimilate. Against Balch in particular, he writes that “nothing in 1 Peter, including its discussion of household duties, indicates an interest in promoting social assimilation. It was precisely a temptation to assimilate so as to avoid further suffering that the letter intended to counteract” (72–73).

More recently, the debate within Petrine scholarship has

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questioned the polarizing choices of assimilation versus isolation presented by Balch and Elliott respectively. Miroslav Volf wrote a pertinent article defending a stance he labeled “soft difference” to describe the church’s missional posture. According to Volf, Christians who adopt a posture of soft difference are

strong, but not hard. . . . They have no need either to subordinate or damn others, but can allow others space to be themselves. For people who live the soft difference, *mission fundamentally takes the form of witness and invitation*. They seek to win others without pressure or manipulation, sometimes even “without a word (3.1) [17–18, emphasis added].

Many scholars have since followed in Volf’s footsteps, albeit with various nuances; so, for example, Joel Green’s “Holy Engagement” (322–24), Armand Tárrech’s “attractive community” ideal (235, 237, 240, 242–43, 245, 247), and David Horrell’s “polite resistance” (236–37). Here, I propose a different way to approach the problem.

One neglected area of research with regard to the question of cultural engagement in 1 Peter has been any talk of blessing as a missional strategy. In 1 Peter we read, “Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing” (3:9, ESV). Underlying the importance of 3:9 is its placement at the conclusion of the *Haustafel* that is addressed to the whole church (3:8ff). My thesis is that through strategic use of the OT, Peter is calling on the Anatolian churches to actively seek the blessing and prosperity of their unbelieving neighbors—even as they face opposition from them—in three particular ways: the refusal to retaliate (3:9); the pursuit of peace (3:11); and the willingness to defend the hope of one’s faith (3:15).

Our analysis of the text will be informed by both Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Narrative Transportation Theory (NTT). I begin then, by outlining some key definitions and insights from SIT and NTT and consider their implications for how one might gain a deeper appreciation for Peter’s use of the OT in 1 Peter 3:8–17 and how it shapes the identity and mission of the church.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory is a branch of social psychology that investigates the impact of group membership on an individual’s identity. According to SIT’s founding father, Henri

Tajfel, one’s social identity is but one facet of an individual’s identity that is grounded in “their knowledge of their membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value of and emotional significance attached to that membership” (2).

Two features of social identity formation warrant mentioning for this investigation. First is the role of exemplars and prototypes who embody the prototypical characteristics of the in-group which are consequently expected of the whole group, and of everyone who claims allegiance to the group (Eiser: 135; also, Smith & Zárate: 321). And second, there is the strategy of *social creativity* which seeks to gain a positive sense of social identity in various ways (Milner: 249–68). Pertinent here is the ability to invert previously negative comparisons and claim them as positive.

Narrative Transportation Theory

Narrative Transportation Theory is a social-psychological theory initially advanced by Michelle Green and Timothy Brock that suggests people may be absorbed into narratives to such a degree that the narratives impact on their beliefs in the real world, regardless of whether the stories are fictional or factual (2000: 703, 707). Green and Brock’s theory is established on a metaphor found in the work of Richard Gerrig, whom they quote in full:

Someone (“the traveller”) is transported, by some means of transportation, as a result of performing certain actions. The traveler goes some distance from his or her world of origin, which makes some aspects of the world of origin inaccessible. The traveler returns to the world of origin, somewhat changed by the journey [Gerrig: 10–11].

On this basis, the power of narrative or story is apparent: a story well told and subsequently imbibed by its recipient(s) has the power to shape one’s beliefs, identity, actions, and even way of life. It is, therefore, no overstatement when Tom van Laer et al., remark that “nothing is less innocent than a story” (798).

There are a number of antecedents which impact narrative transportation and persuasion. With regards to the storyteller, three antecedents are particularly pertinent: identifiable characters; an imaginable plot; and verisimilitude (van Laer et al.: 802–03). An *identifiable character* is one whom the story recipient is able to pinpoint on the basis of what the storyteller provides in any given context (van Laer et al.: 802; following

Küntay: 77–101). To be “identifiable,” the storyteller must present characters in a way that recipients of the story share in the experiences and feelings of the character as if they were their own (van Laer et al.: 802; cf. Escalas & Stern: 575–76; Slater & Rouner: 178), thus, the more “identifiable” a character is, the more likely the recipient of the story is to embrace that character’s bias regarding the narrative being presented (van Laer et al.: 802; following Hoffner et al.: 282–302).

An *imaginable plot* refers to a story’s ability to stimulate mental imagery in the mind of the recipient (van Laer et al.: 802). Research suggests that the greater the level of mental imagery encouraged by the narrative, the greater the level of narrative transportation and/or persuasion is likely (Green & Brock 2002: 316–17). The final antecedent on the part of the storyteller is *verisimilitude*, which refers to the realism or believability of a story, i.e., its “lifelikeness” (van Laer et al.: 802; quoting Bruner: 11). In other words, the events portrayed in a story (whether fiction or non-fiction), must be likely to happen (or to have happened), in real life.

The implications for the Christian believer and the church become apparent. The Christian gospel (including its OT foundation), at its heart, is a story; it is “the gospel of God” (1 Pet 4:17). And as this gospel is proclaimed consistently, the likelihood is that its narrative will not only shape the life of the one proclaiming it, but also encourage them to share it with others. Likewise, the church-at-large, functioning as the “organization-as-storyteller,” also benefits from proclaiming the gospel to those within and without the church.

What follows here, then, is a consideration of 1 Peter’s call to blessing in 3:8–17 in light of these methodologies. I seek to ascertain how Peter’s use of the OT narrative provides exemplars and, on occasion, even counter-exemplars, by which the fledgling Anatolian church might understand themselves in relation to God and their mission of blessing in relation to the world.

Blessing as Non-retaliation (1 Peter 3:9)

The exhortations of 1 Pet 3:9 regarding conduct towards outsiders grow organically out of his earlier concerns for conduct towards those inside the church (3:8). In my Ph.D. thesis, I observe that the five adjectival imperatives here present prototypical characteristics that cultivate communal cohesion for the church but also leave outsiders perplexed by the combination of virtues (Shaw: 259). For example, *φιλάδελφοι* stands at the centre of a brief chiasmic structure that places the

notion of brotherly love as Peter’s central concern. Cervantes Gabarrón (195) shows Peter’s emphasis on the familial nature of church (cf. 1:3–4, 14, 17, 22–23; 2:9–10, 17), buttressing further their identity as God’s “elect kinsfolk” or family (2:9). This is an important feature in the development of the church’s social identity in that brotherly love was a central virtue within both Graeco-Roman and Jewish worldviews (DeSilva: 166–68; also Bartchy: 284–85).

Plutarch, for instance, speaks of brotherly unity and love as “a sweet and blessed ‘sustainer of old age’ for their parents” (*Frat. amor.* 480 B–C). The perplexing nature of Christian brotherly love, however, was that it is not restricted to blood relations alone but extended to anyone who shared the faith. Consequently, Christians were criticized because such love implied the rejection of deeply held social values concerning the honoring of one’s family and their gods. Hence Lucian’s reproach:

Their first lawgiver [Jesus Christ] persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another after they have transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws. Therefore they despise all things indiscriminately and consider them common property [*Peregr.*: 13].

What was so striking about the early Christians in their Graeco-Roman context—for better or worse—was their willingness to extend brotherly love to those who were, by definition, not biological family (contra, Harland: 68–72). This would have been undoubtedly controversial, for as Bartchy has noted, “the tightest unity of loyalty and affection in the world of the early Christians was found among siblings” and further, “sibling loyalty and solidarity constituted the apex of positive human relationships” (285). For this reason, the simple act of becoming a Christian and calling non-blood relatives “brother” or “sister” constituted a daring act of social creativity that challenged cultural norms by determining that “race” and bloodline would no longer be the primary loci of one’s identity (Jobes: 214; Bartchy: 285). Anatolian believers now belonged to a new family where faith in Christ was the centerpiece of one’s self-understanding (Kelly: 79). Perhaps sensing the tension that would arise from a way of life that mingled respectable social values with others that diverged from perceived norms, Peter turns his attention to how believers ought to relate to non-believers when faced with hostility.

The initial command of v 9, “Do not repay evil for evil, or reviling for reviling,” echoes Peter’s earlier description of

Jesus as the Suffering Servant (2:23), suggesting that Christ serves as the example, not only for slaves but also for the whole church. That is, the church's attitude towards conflict ought to be in step with that of Christ, who in his suffering embodied prototypical non-retaliatory characteristics towards his opponents and thus serves as exemplar for the rest of the church (Piper: 223, n. 49). One must hasten to add, however, that the basis of Peter's exhortation lies not only in Jesus' example, but also in his teaching conveyed in the Gospels (e.g., Matt 5:38–42; Luke 6:27–28), as Schelkle notes: "In all these injunctions of the Apostle, the word of Jesus . . . and the example of Jesus is at work" (Schelkle: 94; also, Gundry: 342; contra, Best: 105). In what ways, then, might church members find themselves in the position of needing to refrain from retaliation?

In *Persecution in 1 Peter*, Travis Williams determines after exhaustive analysis that the Anatolian church's suffering likely included enduring verbal and physical assault, legal actions, potential domestic violence, economic oppression, social ostracism, and spiritual affliction (2012: 299–326). The temptation to revile in return for reviling would have been immense, and it is against this backdrop of what may be described as holistic oppression that Peter issues the surprising command to the churches to bless those who cause their suffering.

The language of calling to bless echoes the earlier call to the gracious endurance of suffering (2:21). One of the central themes shared by 1 Peter 2:21–25 and 3:8–12 is the emphasis on the non-retaliatory behavior of Jesus in the face of suffering that is likewise expected of those who follow him. In this sense, one might say that the first act of blessing is the (in) action of non-retaliation, that is, a summons to actively absorb evil, thus preventing its perpetuation. As Swartley notes:

the prescribed response is first and foremost that of remaining faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ and thus presenting a witness to society with transformative intention and effect. Their response was not violent revolution, *nor passive subjection*, nor endorsing the status quo of societal conventions, but seeking good in the face of evil and mediating blessing even to those who abuse and persecute [269, emphasis added].

The grounds upon which they might do this is found earlier in Peter's address to bondservants, which also presents the example of Jesus (2:18–25). It is no coincidence that bondservants are addressed first in Peter's *Haustafel* because it is they in the congregation who most closely resemble Jesus, the

Suffering Servant, and who are together presented as prototypical examples for the whole church to emulate (Shaw: 202). If Peter's churches follow in the footsteps of their servant members (2:18–20) and Servant Master (2:21–25) in their willingness to absorb evil, then they actively entrust their life and the lives of their enemies to the Judge (2:23), and enact blessing by refusing to retaliate (Zerbe: 270–90, especially pp. 289–90; also, Schertz: 258–86).

On this account, the identity and mission of the Anatolian church is both fashioned and tested in the cauldron of intergroup conflict. Situations of intergroup conflict and perceived external threat, like those faced by the Anatolian churches, tend to enhance in-group identification and cohesion by fuelling three social identity processes: engendering a greater sense of similarity among in-group members (in-group homogeneity); engendering a greater sense differentiation with an out-group (in-group bias); and a greater tendency to perceive out-group members as all alike (out-group homogeneity) (Kuecker: 131, following Rothgerber: 1209–10; Dietz-Uhler & Murrell: 24–35).

Generally speaking, SIT predicts that the social identity of the in-group will be enhanced because of the processes outlined above; it also predicts an increased likelihood that hostility may develop between the conflicting groups (Dovidio et al.: 109–20). In other words, SIT ordinarily predicts that a marginalised group (like the early church), will likely display hostility toward those who oppose them, yet as Kuecker notes regarding Acts 2:47, Luke's account asserts that the church exhibited favor toward outsiders (133–34). Peter's appeal to the Anatolian Christians to "bless" those who cause their suffering parallels the reality portrayed by Luke concerning the early church; the idea being that like the Jerusalem church in Acts, the Anatolian churches would act with "favor toward all the people."

The church's display of out-group love in Acts and the summons to bless opponents in 1 Peter 3:9 present the reader with a subversion of expected social identity processes in that the church is both called and enabled to display love, not only for the insider, but also for the outsider (Kuecker: 134). According to Kuecker, this is an expression of "allocentric identity" that is "nothing less than a *different way of being human in community*" (48–49, 134, emphasis original). In 1 Peter, this "different way of being human in community" is the expression of the priestly identity that has been bestowed upon the church (1 Pet 2:4–10), and part of that ministry is to be a people who bless the "other." Given this context, one ought

also to contemplate the significance of this priestly ministry to bless by considering the OT from where such language and imagery is drawn.

To that end, I consider the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 12:1–3 on account of its focus on blessing (“bless” and its cognates appear five times within Genesis 12:1–3), alongside Israel’s priestly commissioning in Exodus 19:4–6 because of its intertextual relationship with both Genesis 12:1–3 (Sailhamer: 282; Dumbrell: 114; Zeller: 40) and 1 Peter 2:9. The intertextual relationship of these verses cannot be ignored if we are to ascertain what Peter meant when he called the Anatolian churches to be a blessing (Schelkle: 94). Because the Abrahamic covenant sets the tone of Israel’s priestly commissioning, we consider each aspect in the order presented above, both by considering the calling of Abra(ha)m to be a blessing, and by examining Israel’s commissioning as a priestly nation.

From a NTT perspective, the narratives of Abraham (an individual identifiable character) and Israel (a corporate identifiable character) provide an invitation into the history of God’s dealings with his chosen people. Both Abraham and Israel’s stories parallel the experiences of the Anatolian believers in particular ways that would be readily identified thus allowing them to be “transported,” such that their faith and actions in their immediate context might positively mirror those of their forebears.

Abraham: Sojourner and Administrator of Blessing (Genesis 12:1–3)

Abraham’s calling might be considered “the first exodus by which the imperial civilizations of the Near East in general receive their stigma as environments of lesser meaning” (Voegelin: 140). Simply put, “[i]t is a *calling* out of the world” (Goldingay: 61, emphasis added). Moreover, Abraham’s calling is increasingly intimate: he is to leave his country (the least intimate aspect of his identity); his kindred (the middle ground of his identity); and finally, his father’s house (the most intimate aspect of his identity) (Wright: 201). Ultimately, Abraham is to be a sojourner; a resident alien among the nations (cf. Gen 23:4).

The goal of Abraham’s leaving all that he once held dear was that he be blessed, and be a blessing. For the blessing to be manifest in Abraham’s life and in the world, he must leave his father’s house and embrace his new identity as elect of God and sojourner in the world. In this sense, the life of

Abraham parallels that of the Anatolian believers whom Peter urges to “not be conformed to the passions of [their] former ignorance” (1:14), because they had been “ransomed from the futile ways inherited from [their] forefathers” (1:18). The Petrine communities are to live as “sojourners and exiles” in the world (2:11), even as they “declare the mighty acts of him who called [them] out of darkness into his marvelous light” (2:9). In other words, they, like Abraham, must embrace their calling to be sojourners who administer blessing (Tàrrech: 243). Indirectly then, Abraham appears in 1 Peter as a prototypical exemplar of the elect-sojourning life of blessing to which the church has been called.

According to Wright, YHWH’s declaration of blessing on Abraham, together with the expectancy that all families and nations will be blessed through him, provides the answer to the dual problems of curse and exclusion pronounced in Genesis 3 (Wright: 212). If Wright is correct, the promise and blessing of the Abrahamic covenant, at its most fundamental level, is about the peace between—and reconciliation of—humankind to God. In other words, the promised blessing is that God, through Abraham and his descendants, will reconcile the world to himself, a theme that appears at regular intervals throughout Genesis, as Wright observes (e.g., Gen 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14) (Wright: 216–18; Kaiser Jr.: 11; Allis; Grüneberg). To this point, we may say that the church embodies Abraham’s call to be a blessing by embracing their elect-sojourning status, so that as a community, they may be agents of peace and reconciliation. As can be seen, the plot and verisimilitude (life-likeness) of Abraham’s elect-sojourning status provide the Anatolian believers with a narrative that they might embrace and embody in their own lives in relation to the communities around them.

On a corporate level, the narrative of Israel is presented in a similar manner and offers a similar opportunity. It is in Israel’s exodus story that the nature of blessing and reconciliation, and how it is administered, are revealed. At a fundamental level, this includes YHWH’s redemption of Israel from slavery in Egypt, and his ongoing care for them in the wilderness (Wright: 215). It is this context—and specifically Israel’s commissioning as a priestly kingdom—to which we now direct our attention.

Israel: A Priestly Kingdom (Exodus 19:4–6)

At first glance, the leap from Genesis 12:1–3 to Exodus 19 may seem a step too far, but as has been noted previously,

the catalyst for Israel’s exodus from Egypt was YHWH’s desire to fulfil his promises made to Abraham (Exod 2:24–25; also 6:4) (Enns: 387). Another way to put it may be to say that the Sinai covenant is best understood as the development and deepening of the earlier Abrahamic covenant (Dumbrell: 110–11; contra, Knutson: 194). In some respects, therefore, the promises made to Abraham find a level of fulfilment here. That is, God’s plan to bless the nations through Abraham’s descendants emerges in Israel’s constitution as a priestly kingdom and a holy nation in Exodus 19:4–6.

There are three facets of this ministry that culminate in Israel’s priestly vocation making possible a relationship between the Lord and the nations (Blackburn: 91):

- As the priest(s) represented the Lord to Israel, so Israel was to represent the Lord to the nations.
- As the priest(s) represented Israel to the Lord, so Israel was to represent the nations before the Lord.
- Consequently, Israel, as a priestly kingdom, makes possible a relationship between the Lord and the nations.

As a priestly nation, Israel would be the means by which God would make his character known among the nations (Blackburn: 95). In other words, the blessing is that people of all nations would come to know and love Israel’s God and be welcomed into his family. This is the blessing that the Anatolian Christians have received through their reception of the gospel (cf. Gal 3:6–9): that is, through the sanctification of the Spirit (1 Pet 1:2), they have become children of obedience (1:14), who call on God as Father (1:17); they are God’s treasured possession who declare his mighty acts (2:9–10), and must be a blessing in the world (3:9), even as they live as sojourners and resident aliens in their homelands (2:11). Peter’s call to bless, therefore must be understood likewise: the Anatolian believers enact blessing through the execution of their priestly ministry which is primarily to make God’s character known in their communities and beyond.

Having sketched non-retaliatory behavior and being a conduit of blessing as dual means by which Anatolian believers model Christ and make God’s character known, one might argue further that such behavior also models Christ in his priestly role of bearing judgment and sin (2:24). If so, this would be a deeper fulfillment of Aaron’s priestly role in bearing Israel’s judgment and sin (Exod 28:30, 38) (Blackburn: 91). The Christian believers’ refusal to retaliate means that they bear the sin of the evildoer by denying themselves the

occasion to respond in kind. Hence, the Anatolian believers emulate Christ’s priestly ministry and display God’s character to the world. This is not to say, however, that believers’ suffering and sin-bearing holds atoning value in the same way as Christ’s, but rather that the believers’ suffering may be a window through which non-believers may see and embrace the atoning death of Christ for themselves (Joseph: 120).

Like Abraham, then, Israel is presented as an identifiable character, although this time in terms of conveying the priestly ministry of blessing to which the Anatolians are called. Just as Israel was summoned in Exodus to be a priestly nation for the benefit of the nations, so now the Anatolian church is invited to embrace that narrative—to be transported into it, as it were—and allow it to shape their faith and the mission to which God has called them in Christ. That is to say, the stories of Abraham and Israel are now also the stories of the Anatolian believers; in Christ, this is their family history and it is that history that must now shape every aspect of their lives.

Two more features of blessing are unpacked through the quotation of Psalm 33 LXX that follows in 1 Peter 3:10–12, as well as in the ensuing exhortations of 3:13–17. The first is the pursuit of peace (3:11), while the second is having a ready defense for the hope of one’s faith (3:15). Each one will be dealt with in turn.

Blessing as Seeking Peace

Peter builds his case for a lifestyle characterized by humility, unity, and blessing by grounding his exhortation (3:8–9) in Psalm 33 LXX, interpreted in light of “the experience of Christ that finds articulation in the Christological foundation described in 1 Pet. 2:21–25” (Goppelt 1993: 232; cf. Chapple: 168). It is well known that Psalm 33 LXX is about the Lord’s deliverance from suffering, making it especially relevant for the context of this epistle (Horrell 1998: 64; Schreiner: 165). Given the strong diaspora/sojourning motif found in 1 Peter, Psalm 33 LXX is well suited to the narrative that Peter advances (Jobes 2002: 1–14). It is worth noting that in an unquoted part of Psalm 33 LXX, there is a significant translation from the MT to the LXX that often goes overlooked and is important for our potential understanding of 1 Peter’s use of the psalm. In Psalm 34:5b MT (Hebrew), *הַרְוֵנוּ* (*megurah*), is most commonly translated as fear or terror. Yet the LXX translators do not use φόβος as might be expected. Rather, the LXX writers choose to translate *הַרְוֵנוּ* as *παροικιδῶν* (i.e., sojournings; Hebrew, *רוֹגַם*) (Woan: 142–43). While Woan finds the the change

to be inconsequential, it can be argued that the LXX translators were making a play on the two Hebrew words allowing them to capture the sense of both fear and sojourning apparent in the Hebrew. It is this point that plays into Peter's use of the imagery: *παροικιῶν* is the same word used in 1 Peter 1:17 and 2:11, where Peter defines the socio-spiritual location of his readers as sojourners through their faith in Christ.

In Jobes's estimation, LXX translators took David's quandaries to be the fears that arose during his sojourn with the Philistines while on the run from King Saul (see 1 Samuel 21ff) (Jobes 2005: 220). This is significant because while many scholars acknowledge that Psalm 33 LXX is about the Lord's deliverance from suffering, few go beyond this assessment. Chapple's recent work, however, has shown—convincingly in my opinion—that the exodus narrative and sojourning motif present therein, play the decisive role in 1 Peter's theology and parenesis (Chapple: 165ff; cf. n. 90).

How then does the use of Psalm 33 LXX fit into this understanding? I contend that the idea of sojourning plays an important role in how one reads the quotation of Psalm 33 LXX in 1 Peter 3:10–12. As just noted, the psalm is explicit in referring the reader back to 1 Samuel 21, which details David's sojourning among the Philistines as he fled from Saul. However, the larger narrative of David's relationship with Saul is just as important for our understanding of 1 Peter's use of Psalm 33 LXX. Initially, we must recall that the kingdom of Israel was stripped from Saul because of his disobedience in 1 Samuel 15. In the following chapter, the shepherd-boy David is anointed to be the next king of Israel (1 Sam 16:11–13). This is the beginning of David's life between God's promise and the inheritance of that promise, specifically in his ascension to Israel's throne. Beginning in 1 Samuel 18, Saul begins to resent David and is unsuccessful in his attempt to kill him. By 1 Samuel 19, David is forced to flee for his life and goes to Samuel at Naioth. From this point onwards, David lives as a fugitive until Saul dies in 1 Samuel 31. It is not until 2 Samuel 2:4 that David receives the kingdom that had been promised back in 1 Samuel 16.

I summarize this narrative of David's life to make the point that in addition to it demonstrating that the Lord delivers the righteous one from adversity, it also reveals the various struggles and trials David encountered as he lived his life between the promise of kingship (1 Sam 16:11–13) and his inheritance of the crown (2 Sam 2:4). The use of Psalm 33 LXX thus points the recipients of 1 Peter to see that they share in this very same

reality: that like David, the Anatolian churches live between promise and inheritance (Chapple: 167, cf. n. 112). David's sojourns between the promise of the kingdom and its inheritance typologically align with the Anatolian church's own experience under the new covenant (Chapple: 170).

In short, David's story is also the story of the Petrine churches that are called to understand that their various trials, sufferings, and difficulties take their "meaning from the pattern of the Suffering and Vindicated Righteous that runs like a thread through the fabric of Israel's Scriptures and that comes to decisive expression in the career of Christ" (Green 2007: 227). The ethical exhortations of the passage are to be understood as being lived out between promise and inheritance, and David provides the OT prototype to which the author of 1 Peter refers (Goppelt 1982: 152–58). From a SIT perspective, one might say that Israel provides the communal type in 1 Peter 1:1–2:10, while in the present context, King David and Abraham provide individual types in 3:10–12 and 3:9, respectively. (Similarly, Sarah [3:5–6] acts as an individual type in 1 Peter, as does Noah [3:20]; both of whom—like David, Abraham, and the nation of Israel—lived between a God-given promise and the fulfilment of that promise in their respective ways).

The primary goal of blessing one's opponents is that they might see a demonstration of God's character and come to know him in the person of Christ. Up to 1 Peter 3:9 this is demonstrated in one's refusal to retaliate and so bearing the opponent's sin, yet now the summons to bless manifests itself in the active seeking of peace with one's opponent(s). Here, we now note that the narrative of David's sojourn while on the run from Saul displays uncanny linguistic echoes that find resonance in 1 Peter. From the perspective of NTT, this story, like the stories of Abraham and Israel described prior, contains all the elements required to persuade and/or transport its readers in terms of a life-like plot, relatable characters, climax, and outcome, all of which Peter seeks to align with the experience of his recipients.

In 1 Samuel 24, David is presented with the opportunity to kill Saul, yet does not. Rather, he says to Saul:

See, my father, see the corner of your robe in my hand. For by the fact that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, you may know and see that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you hunt my life to take it [1 Sam 24:11].

In this dramatic turn of events, David refuses to repay evil with evil (in line with 1 Peter 3:9–11). Saul’s reply is no less vital for our purposes:

[17] You are more righteous than I, *for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil*. [18] And you have declared this day how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the Lord put me into your hands. [19] For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safe? *So may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day*. [20] And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that *the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand* [1 Sam 24:17–20, emphasis added].

Concerning Saul’s response and our understanding of the use of Psalm 33 LXX in 1 Pet 3:10–12, we may say three things:

- Saul confirms David’s action in not repaying evil for evil. In fact, he acknowledges that *David has repaid him good . . . and dealt well with him* (v 18; cf. 1 Pet 3:9–11);
- he asks further that the Lord would reward David for such actions (v 19; cf. 1 Pet 3:9, 12); and
- Saul comes to understand that the Lord would *fulfil his promise in establishing David as king* (v 20). That is, David would receive the inheritance of the throne that was promised to him back in 1 Samuel 16.

This conversation between David and Saul thus neatly captures the entire thrust of 1 Peter 3:10–12, showing how David’s righteous conduct during a tumultuous sojourn ultimately led to his promised reward.

By alluding to David’s sojourn via Psalm 33 LXX, Peter invites the Anatolian Christians to understand their own lives in light of David’s story: they also have been promised an inheritance (1:4; 3:9; 5:10); they also are to live righteous lives both within and without the church even as they suffer (2:11–12, etc.); finally, they also will receive their inheritance should they continue in righteousness (1:3–7; 5:10). The Anatolian Christians must understand, however, as David apparently did (1 Sam 24:8–13), that sin and evil will not reap an inheritance from the Lord. Thus, Peter offers David’s period of sojourn (indirectly via Psalm 33 LXX), as prototypical of the life the church is living, and of the characteristics he desires the congregation to embody. By contrast, Saul is the implied anti-prototype, the one who sought to take David’s life in spite of his righteous conduct. In 3:10–11, therefore,

David is presented (albeit indirectly), as the exemplar of the righteous sojourner who seeks the peace of his enemy, Saul. Meanwhile, Saul stands as the inferred anti-exemplar who seeks the destruction of the one who has done no wrong.

The overall tenor of the passage—to be a blessing to hostile outsiders, and to proactively seek their holistic wellbeing—honors the humanity of the people in question (cf. 2:17, “Honor *everyone*”). Psychiatrist Jonathan Shay, investigating the impact of combat trauma on US soldiers in Vietnam, notes how dehumanizing the enemy led to psychological damage of the soldiers:

Restoring honor to the enemy is an essential step in recovery from combat PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). While other things are obviously needed as well, the veteran’s self-respect never fully recovers so long as he is unable to see the enemy as worthy. In the words of one of our patients, a war against sub-human vermin “has no honor.” This is true even in victory; in defeat, the dishonoring absence of human *thémis* linking enemy to enemy makes life unendurable [115].

Piper is right, therefore, when he observes that “one cannot truly bless while inwardly desiring someone’s hurt” (Piper: 230) because it is a dishonoring of the *imago Dei* that each person bears. To vilify, or to desire the cursing of one’s enemy, is to forget that they too are human and that they too bear the *imago Dei*. The Anatolian believers were to show grace to those who opposed them, just as God showed them grace when they opposed him. In Peter’s words, they too were formerly ignorant (1:14), needing to be ransomed from futile ways through the blood of Jesus (1:18). Having been born again to a living hope (1:3), to be a holy priesthood (2:5, 9), they are commissioned to proclaim God’s mighty acts and do good for his glory (2:9–12). In so doing, the Anatolian Christians would fulfil their priestly commission, seeking to bless their enemies as they had first been blessed by God. We may say, therefore, that the blessing to which the Anatolian Christians are called is first to actively absorb the evil perpetrated against them, and second to respond to such evil with blessing. The third act of blessing is to provide a reason for the hope within, to which attention is now directed.

Blessing as Sharing the Hope of One’s Faith

So far, I have observed subtle allusions to Abraham (3:9), followed by David and Saul (3:10–11). Abraham and David

both embodied prototypical characteristics in terms of maintaining a posture of blessing amidst suffering while also embracing their elect-reject status. Saul, by contrast, provided the implied antitype to be avoided in his pursuit of the “other’s” destruction. Peter spells out the implications of what has gone prior in vv. 13–14a by drawing on Isaiah 8:2–13 in vv. 14b–15. They are to be fearless in their relations with those who oppose them (14b), and they are to honor Christ as Lord “in [their] hearts” (Schreiner: 172–73). The reference to Isaiah 8:12–13, by extension, brings with it another indirect allusion, this time to King Ahaz (cf. Isa 7–8; 2 Kgs 16, and 2 Chron 28).

The narrative pertaining to Ahaz reveals that Peter’s indirect reference to him serves alongside that of Saul to provide another antitype and one final identifiable character from which the Anatolians might learn (this time as a counter-example whom they should not follow). While Saul embodied the desire to seek the destruction of the “other,” Ahaz embodies the fear of man; a life-like scenario that the Anatolian believers might experience on a daily basis. The narrative context of Ahaz is instructive: as king of Judah, Ahaz learned that Syria had formed an alliance with the northern kingdom of Israel to attack Judah. If successful, the plan was to install the son of Tabeel as king (Isa 7:1–6). Isaiah records that Ahaz and his people were filled with fear (7:2), yet the Lord commands him to remain calm and not to fear (7:4). Thereafter, the Lord urges Ahaz to ask for a sign so that the Lord may demonstrate his faithfulness (7:10). In chapter 8, the Lord again urges his people not to fear the plot laid by Syria and Israel, but to continue trusting in him for their protection (8:11–15). Despite the word of YHWH through Isaiah, we read in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles that Ahaz sought the assistance of the King of Assyria instead of trusting the Lord (2 Kgs 16:7; 2 Chron 28:16), and ultimately fell into idolatry (2 Chron 28:22ff), while scores of Judeans were killed or taken captive by Syria and Israel (2 Chron 28:5–8).

Thus, in contrast to Ahaz, the Anatolian Christians are commanded “Do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled” (1 Pet 3:14b, NASB). At this point, v 15, provides the positive counterpart to being fearless, exhibiting two key facets: believers are to honor Christ as holy in their hearts, and they must be prepared to speak of their faith when called upon to do so. How these verses work themselves out in the daily life of believers has been a point of contention among scholars recently, and Warren Carter has been at the forefront of the discussion. Specifically, Carter has argued that 1 Peter

calls for external public compliance, while honoring Christ in one’s heart, and that by so doing, the Anatolian believers may become more socially acceptable and integrated (Carter 2004: 25, 28). He suggests further that 1 Peter encourages Christians to “go all the way” with regard to pagan worship, sacrifice, and feasting, especially in regards to the Roman imperial cult (2011: 146ff).

A full critique of Carter’s position is beyond the scope of this essay but has been offered elsewhere (Williams 2014: 206–08; Shaw: 286–90). Of particular interest here—as I note in my thesis—is the subtle allusion to the narrative of Ahaz as an antitype outlined above. The reference to Isaiah 8:12–13 draws the reader to consider the narrative arch of Ahaz’s kingship in contrast to David’s sojourn: having been threatened by Syria and Israel, but commanded by the Lord not to fear them, Ahaz proceeds to form foreign alliances that end in the death and enslavement of many Judeans as well as his own descent into idol worship. If our assessment of Peter’s allusion to Ahaz as antitype is correct, Carter finds himself in the unenviable position of arguing for the very thing that Peter is urging believers to avoid! The “heart” ought not be considered equivalent to one’s private life as Carter suggests. Rather it is the source of one’s conduct (Schreiner: 173–74) which, for the believer, will be demonstrated in the pursuit of the calling to be a blessing by embracing non-retaliatory behavior towards their adversaries, seeking their *shalom*, and being able to give a reason, or defense, for their hope.

The counter-intuitive actions of the Anatolian Christians to be a non-retaliatory community that seeks the *shalom* of its oppressors leads Peter to anticipate that such a way of life may be the catalyst for questions about their faith. To that end, he exhorts the community to be ready to defend the hope that they possess with “gentleness and respect [φρόβου]” (cf. parallels regarding such language elsewhere in the NT, including Col 4:6; Luke 12:1–12; 21:12–19). The present context (3:14), and earlier use of φρόβος (e.g., 1:17; 2:17; 3:6), suggests that fear of God is in view (Bechtler: 164). The use of “hope” throughout 1 Peter (1:3, 13, 21), suggests that the word revolves around eschatological inheritance (Brox: 17), but this would be reductionistic because it overlooks the foundation of that hope—the past event of the death and resurrection of Christ upon which they have forgiveness of sins and new life in righteousness (1:21; 2:24). A defense of Christian life and conduct must incorporate both future and past aspects of that hope (Piper; Feldmeier: 65–70; cf. Condor: 303).

Treating authorities and citizens with gentleness (i.e., neither repaying evil for evil, nor reviling for reviling), and retaining fear of God over man are what allow one to retain a clear conscience before God (v 16). "So that" (ὅτι) introduces the purpose clause describing the result of such conduct, specifically, that their opponents may be "put to shame." Some perceive such shame to pertain to this life, while others see the shaming as eschatological judgment (Feldmeier: 197; Schreiner: 177, respectively). The latter is more likely, for as Schreiner notices, given that Christians are already under duress for their good conduct, it is difficult to see how *more* good conduct will somehow lead to non-believing opponents suddenly feeling shame (Schreiner: 177). Again, this is not to discount the fact that some *may* come to the faith, but that the norm (for the time being, at least), is that opposition will continue and that those who oppose God's people will ultimately be opposed by God and subject to judgment at the Last Day.

A thought-provoking feature of the pericope becomes salient at this point. We observed in our discussion of v 8 that some aspects of Christian conduct would have been endorsed in Graeco-Roman culture (e.g., brotherly love, compassion). However, it was the unconventional way in which these virtues were practised by the Anatolian Christians that caused offence (i.e., such virtues were expressed to those who were not biological family). Social Identity Theory speaks to this issue in an unexpected way, providing insight as to a further reason why Christians suffer, especially in relation to the uncertainty surrounding people's various responses to the new faith and to the good that believers seek to perpetuate.

It is rightly accepted that the Anatolian Christians suffered for being different from their opponents because of their conversion to Christ, and there is nothing to discredit this claim as it appears in 1 Peter itself (especially 4:1–4; 14–16). Nevertheless, the situation may, in fact, be more complex. Recent studies in SIT have shown that under certain circumstances, intergroup conflict may be more likely when one group perceives an out-group to be too *similar* to itself. The latter group thus stands as a threat to the former group because they impinge on their distinct identity (Jetten, Spears, & Postmes: 874). This is especially so for those who strongly identify with the threatened group, especially if there is the prospect of intergroup competition (Moghaddam & Stringer: 113; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead: 622). Such high identifiers are likely to act in order to restore and/or maintain intergroup distinctiveness (Jetten, Spears, & Postmes: 864). It may be, therefore, that those out-

side of the Christian faith persecuted early believers not only because of differences that manifested in their new faith, but also because, in some sense, they were still so similar and retained some of the core identity features of the persecutors. The Epistle to Diognetus may point us in this direction:

[1] For Christians are *not distinguished from the rest of humanity* by country, language, or custom. [2] For nowhere do they live in cities of their own, nor do they speak some unusual dialect, nor do they practice an eccentric way of life. . . . [5] They live in their own countries, but only as *nonresidents* [πάροικοι]; they participate in everything as citizens, and endure everything as *foreigners* [ξένη]. . . . [15] They are cursed [λοιδοροῦνται], yet they bless [εὐλογοῦσιν], they are insulted, yet they offer respect. [16] When they do good [ἀγαθοποιούντες], they are punished as evil-doers [κακοί]; when they are punished, they rejoice [χαίρουσιν] as though brought to life. [17] By the Jews they are assaulted as foreigners, and by the Greeks they are persecuted, *yet those who hate them are unable to give a reason for their hostility* (Diogn. 5.1–2, 5, 15–17) [Holmes: 701, 703, emphasis added].

Most striking is the language both 1 Peter and Diognetus share, e.g., *πάροικοι* (cf. 1 Pet 2:11), *λοιδοροῦνται* and *εὐλογοῦσιν* (cf. 1 Pet 3:9) *ἀγαθοποιούντες* (cf. 1 Pet 3:13), *κακοί* (cf. 1 Pet 3:17), and *χαίρουσιν* (cf. 1 Pet 4:13). Notable too, is that according to the author of the Letter to Diognetus, those who hate Christians "cannot explain the cause of their enmity" (5:17). This may serve as an important reminder that in many ways, Christians were just like everyone else. Yes, their religious outlook had changed on account of receiving the gospel, but they still lived in the same places, looked the same, spoke the same, ate the same, and worked the same as anybody else.

It is not difficult to imagine that for the outsider looking in, this familiarity was threatening because it masked a difference that, as they saw it, had the potential to bring the misfortune of the gods (whom these new Christian believers had now displeased); indeed, such conversion might even undermine the *Pax Romana*. In this sense, Peter's use of the terms *παροίκους* (sojourners) and *παρεπιδήμους* (resident aliens) (2:11) is certainly appropriate. These new believers were in every sense, still residents of the cities and villages in which they inhabited and yet now, as result of their new-found faith, they were also aliens. Perhaps it was the "*resident-alien-ness*" of the new Christian communities and the message that they shared that both attracted new believers

and at the same time threatened the identity of out-groups to the degree that they sensed the need to vilify the young church to set themselves apart.

To put it another way, the resident-alien-ness of the new Christian community was simultaneously both the reason for their success at winning people to the faith, but also the reason for their persecution! Moghaddam and Stringer's research supports this conclusion by suggesting that mixed responses are not uncommon in situations of intergroup similarity:

the differentiation-provoking effect of similarity can come into play in conditions in which the basis of similarity is important enough to lead to identification with the in-group; but that at the same time, the potential exists for identification with an out-group that is also similar on the same important criterion [113].

I suggest that this notion of out-group similarity causing contention, as I have outlined above, explains why Peter appears to expect mixed results in terms of conversions and social ostracism in these verses. Given this scenario, high identifiers of a given non-Christian group would be most likely to present the early Christian church the most cause for concern in terms of vindictive behavior, while low identifiers may be more likely to convert to the faith. That said, even so-called high identifiers may be won to the faith. One need only look at the Apostle Paul as a prime example. "If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ" (Phil 3:4–7). We might also include Lydia, a gentile God-fearer (Acts 16:11–15), and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:25–40), as other examples. As a God-fearer, Lydia's conversion would make it likely that she strongly identified with the Jews and their faith, while the Philippian jailer's loyalties would almost certainly have been tied strongly to the Roman Imperial Cult. The early success of the church in winning people to the faith from various walks of life and their subsequent sufferings suggest that this is precisely what happened throughout the Roman Empire, including Anatolia.

Conclusion

I have sought to demonstrate how Peter draws upon OT allusions and quotations in order to narrate a particular way

of life that is characterized by blessing. The call to be a blessing as elect-sojourners and a priestly people echoes the same calls to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3) and Israel (Exod 19:4–6) respectively, and summons the Anatolian church to embrace the same mission and status before God and the world through non-retaliation, seeking the peace of the "other," and sharing the hope within. Such a life is then grounded in the quotation of Psalm 33 LXX which itself thrusts upon the reader the sojourns of David while he awaited the throne. Though tempted to return evil with evil in relation to Saul, David chose the path of blessing. Finally, allusions to Isaiah 7–8 present King Ahaz as an anti-type to be avoided. His life stands as a warning to fear God and not to fear man; his narrative is drawn upon to encourage Anatolian believers not to shy away from sharing the hope of the gospel when called upon whether under formal trial or in the everyday travails of life. In summary, Peter's creative use of specific OT narratives and allusions shapes the identity and mission of the church, exhorting the young Anatolian believers towards a life of blessing to the glory of God for the benefit of the world at large.

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