

Participation in Christ in 1 Peter

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Thanks in large part to Michael J. Gorman, scholars are using “participation” to describe the apostle Paul’s soteriology. In the opening pages of *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*, Gorman explains that participation is a kind of “umbrella term” that covers other metaphors for what Christ accomplished for humanity, such as liberation, transformation, and justification.¹ Gorman also employs other terms that may be less familiar for Western Christians like theosis, deification, Christification, and Christosis, which “adequately summarize this transformative reality of Spirit-enabled, Christlike participation in the life and mission of God.”² These terms, however, are problematic for some scholars and other readers of the Bible who are not part of the Eastern Orthodox Church.³ In this essay I do not consider whether

1. Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 25.

2. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 7.

3. Cf. Ben C. Blackwell, *Christosis: Engaging Paul’s Soteriology with His Patristic Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), xxx.

On a personal note, I offer my thanks to Michael Gorman for his scholarship and friendship. Not only has Michael’s work been a blessing and help to me, so has his role as dean for my years of teaching at the Ecumenical Institute of Theology. Mike’s pastoral nature had a profound impact on me—as well as on many others. I offer these words from the Hebrew Scriptures, echoed in 1 Pet 2:6 as a blessing for him: “See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

theosis and the related terms are helpful, but I do explore the notion of participation in 1 Peter. Initially, I suggest that 1 Peter makes its own contribution to our understanding of participation in Christ and does not simply copy Paul's teachings, as some scholars allege. However, I do borrow from Pauline studies of participation to explore 1 Peter's presentation of: (1) Jesus's participation in the human condition; (2) participation in Christ through suffering and subsequent glorification; (3) holiness as evidence of divine kinship.

The classic text for exploring participation in Christ in the NT is 2 Pet 1:4: "Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature." This verse raises questions concerning in what sense human beings become sharers (κοινωνοι) in God's nature.⁴ Interest in participation, or what it means to share in divine nature, expanded to include Pauline studies, especially given the apostle Paul's proclivity for using "in Christ" and similar phrases, along with κοινωνία (and its cognates).⁵ However, not much has been written concerning 1 Peter's teachings on participation given that 1 Peter has historically been associated with 2 Peter, and has also been thought to echo Paul's teachings.⁶ Authorship of 2 Peter has long been debated as many scholars deny that the apostle Peter wrote the letter and take the writing to be a clear example of NT pseudepigrapha.⁷ James M. Starr points out, "While assessments vary of how much 2 Peter made use of 1 Peter, it is safe to conclude at least that 2 Peter was familiar enough with 1 Peter to see fit to link his epistle to 1 Peter's."⁸ Questions of authorship aside, it seems reasonable to investigate whether or not there is a Petrine teaching of sharing in Christ. This essay attempts to describe participation, or sharing, in Christ within 1 Peter. Although I argue that 1 Peter does not depend directly upon Paul, we may use the fruit of Pauline studies when examining 1 Peter.

4. See James M. Starr, *Sharers in Divine Nature: 2 Peter 1:4 in Its Hellenistic Context*, ConBNT 33 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2000); Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC 50 (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 179–82; Paul M. Collins, *Partaking in Divine Nature: Deification and Communion*, TTCT (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 42; Jörg Frey, *The Letter of Jude and the Second Letter of Peter: A Theological Commentary* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2018), 261–69.

5. Blackwell, *Christosis*, 3.

6. Starr has a brief discussion of 1 Peter (*Sharers in Divine Nature*, 221–23).

7. For recent synopses of the issues concerning Petrine authorship, see David A. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 777–81; Frey, *The Letter of Jude and the Second Letter of Peter*, 213–20.

8. Starr, *Sharers in Divine Nature*, 221.

First Peter uses some of the formal language of sharing (i.e., κοινωνία) and also describes believers as members of a new family through new birth. Such ideas are similar to those found in Paul's writings as well as the Gospel of John. However, 1 Peter does not generally use the same vocabulary as Paul. Even the new birth language in 1 Pet 1:3, 23 is different from the discussion of new birth in John 3. Yet, with different vocabulary and different emphases, 1 Peter does teach that believers participate in Christ by becoming like him, especially as those who endure suffering without retaliation. I argue that Peter's use of Isa 53:4–6 functions similarly to Phil 2:6–11 in that it shows how participation in Christ follows from Christ's participation in the human condition. As Gorman shows with respect to Paul, believers' participation in Christ relates not only to future salvation but also to present mission in the world. While this missional notion is not the focus of this paper, I hope to show how that topic might be explored in the future.

First Peter's Alleged Dependence upon Paul⁹

First Peter demonstrates a view of salvation as participation similar to that of Paul. For example, Paul's frequent "in Christ" formulation occurs three times in 1 Peter (3:16; 5:10, 14) but not in other NT writings. Gorman notes that the language of being "in Christ" is one of Paul's linguistic features that points to the centrality of participation in Paul's theology.¹⁰ Although 1 Peter does not focus on the language of justification (but note the use of δικαιος in 3:12, 18; 4:18), the letter encourages believers to become the gospel through participation in Christ, specifically in the context of suffering. Daniel G. Powers, within his discussion of Paul's understanding of the vicarious death of Jesus, examines the formula "Christ died for us" and notes, "the same basic formula with minor variations can be found in other New Testament writings that show no influence of Paul; namely, Hebrews and the Gospel of John."¹¹ Powers also mentions 1 Pet 2:21 and 3:18 but adds, "1 Peter is generally thought to be influenced by Paul."¹² For a time, scholars considered 1 Peter to be heavily influenced by Paul. Francis W. Beare, in the mid-twentieth century, asserted that 1 Peter

9. I discuss the issues surrounding the authorship of 1 Peter in *1 Peter*, Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 18–20. For simplicity, in this essay I refer to the author of 1 Peter as "Peter."

10. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 26, 29.

11. Daniel G. Powers, *Salvation through Participation: An Examination of the Notion of the Believers' Corporate Unity with Christ in Early Christian Soteriology*, CBET 29 (Leuven: Sterling, VA: Peeters, 2001), 38.

12. Powers, *Salvation through Participation*, 38n10 (see also 49n50).

is strongly marked by the impress of Pauline theological ideas, and in language the dependence upon St. Paul is undeniably great. All through the Epistle, we have the impression that we are reading the work of a man who is steeped in the Pauline letters, who is so imbued with them that he uses St. Paul's words and phrases without conscious search, as his own thoroughly-assimilated vocabulary of religion. Entire passages are little more than an expansion or restatement of Pauline texts, and whole verses are a kind of mosaic of Pauline words and forms of expression. As a theologian, the writer has a mind of his own and is no mere echo of Paul, but it is abundantly evident that he has formed himself on Paul's writings.¹³

Regardless of the commonalities, 1 Peter should not be viewed as merely a reworking of Pauline thought. Peter contextualizes similar pre-Pauline ideas and offers his own perspective on participation in Christ. Rather than dismiss 1 Peter's theology of salvation as merely parroting Paul, we do well to explore how 1 Peter contributes to our understanding of the union between Christ and his followers. It may be that 1 Peter's notion of participation is not entirely dependent upon Paul. First Peter's theology of salvation certainly resonates with Pauline thought, but there are noteworthy differences. Paul J. Achtemeier juxtaposes references from 1 Peter and various passages from the Pauline corpus (especially Romans and Ephesians) and concludes, "While the relationship of 1 Peter to the Pauline way of theological reflection cannot be denied, how much of the 'Pauline' flavor of 1 Peter is the result of a common use of early liturgical or confessional material is difficult to say with precision. Similarly, whether the author of 1 Peter was aware of the Pauline letters, or had read them, or whether the 'Pauline' material in 1 Peter had already passed into common tradition by the time 1 Peter was written is equally difficult to demonstrate."¹⁴ John H. Elliott's conclusion is that, "The notion of a supposed 'Paulinism' of 1 Peter has no solid basis in the textual evidence and ought finally be abandoned. It is high time for 1 Peter to be liberated from its 'Pauline captivity' and read as a distinctive voice of the early Church."¹⁵ Other scholars

13. Francis Wright Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1947), 25.

14. Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 15–19. Cf. Powers, who observes, with regard to Christ's vicarious death, that "there is a general consensus among scholars that this phrase ['Christ died for us'] does indeed represent a very early, traditional, pre-Pauline formula" (*Salvation through Participation*, 30). Hence, the author of 1 Peter need not have been dependent on Paul for such notions in his soteriology.

15. John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 37B (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 40.

share similar views.¹⁶ David G. Horrell after surveying the evidence, offers a nuanced assessment:

What these various examples show is that there are indeed close points of contact between 1 Peter and the Pauline tradition. The parallels do not suggest that there is a *literary* relationship between the texts, such as we see between the three Synoptic Gospels since the overlaps in wording are generally few and imprecise. But they do suggest that the author of 1 Peter knows and uses in his letter some forms and turns of phrase that reflect some knowledge of Paul's letters. However, this does not mean that we should regard 1 Peter as essentially 'Pauline' in character. . . . 1 Peter has its own distinctive character, its own particular use of tradition.¹⁷

It is not a foregone conclusion that 1 Peter is dependent upon Paul. However, studies of Pauline soteriology provide helpful tools for examining other NT writings. Our understanding of participation in Christ is deepened with increasing appreciation of how Christian tradition is communicated in 1 Peter.

Jesus's Participation in the Human Condition

In the NT, participation in Christ is predicated upon Christ's participation in human existence, especially the experience of suffering. Robert C. Tannehill, while exploring Rom 8:3, asserts that, "Atonement for sin presupposes the prior divine action of sending God's Son to participate in the human situation, an act in which the Son identifies with humanity in its need . . . through the Son, God participates in the situation of human need."¹⁸ Tannehill goes on

16. There are many commentators who conclude that Peter uses common Christian tradition and does not copy Paul. For example, Joel B. Green argues that "Peter is doing more than mimicking early tradition. He appears to have his own access to those elements of the tradition also picked up by Matthew and Luke, Paul and James, and others, and like them he embeds those materials within his own constructive thought by way of addressing the needs of his audience" (1 Peter, THNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 232). J. Ramsey Michaels claims, "Even where 1 Peter appears to be reflecting the thought or language of Paul, it always develops the Pauline ideas, images, or proof texts in such an independent fashion that a direct literary relationship is difficult to establish" (1 Peter, WBC 49 [Waco: Word Books, 1988], xlv).

17. David G. Horrell, 1 Peter, NTG (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 38 (italics original).

18. Robert C. Tannehill, *The Shape of the Gospel: New Testament Essays* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2007), 227.

to review other Pauline texts, particularly Gal 4:4–5, Phil 2:7–8, and 2 Cor 8:9, concluding that, “the self-renouncing identification of God’s Son with humanity in its need is based on divine initiative. The participation is first of all divine participation in the human plight, which makes possible human participation in God’s Son.”¹⁹ Gorman also recognizes how Christ’s participation in humanity is the basis for the believer’s participation in Christ. In *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*, Gorman begins his argument for theosis in Romans by quoting Morna D. Hooker, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Wilhelm Wrede, respectively:

- “Christ became what we are—‘adam’—in order that we might share in what he is—namely the true image of God” (Hooker).
- Christ “became like human beings, so that we would be like him” (Bonhoeffer).
- “Christ becomes what we are, that we through his death may become what he is” (Wrede).²⁰

A few pages later, Gorman offers a summarizing dictum of Irenaeus’s regarding theosis: “He [Jesus] became what we are, so that we might become what he is.”²¹

First Peter likewise affirms that Christ’s solidarity with humanity is for the purpose of human beings becoming like God. As part of his opening greeting, Peter offers a trinitarian description of his readers: “chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood” (1:2). While this is not a direct assertion of the divinity of Christ, Peter offers a picture of the Father, Son, and Spirit working together in the lives of the believers. Furthermore, it is likely that Peter at least affirmed Christ’s preexistence. A few verses later, Peter refers to prophets “who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours” (1:10). Peter likely has OT prophets in view.²² And if OT prophets are indeed the agents of the message,

19. Tannehill, *The Shape of the Gospel*, 229.

20. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 262. See also Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul’s Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 1–8.

21. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 268. In *Christosis*, Ben Blackwell explains, “In the process of restoring divine likeness, Irenaeus regularly employs his exchange formula: Christ became human so humans could become like him” (42).

22. Most commentators share this perspective. E.g., see Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 108 and Elliott, *1 Peter*, 345.

then the assertion that the "Spirit of Christ" (1:11) was at work in those prophets is Peter's way of acknowledging Christ's preexistence, even if not a clear assertion of Christ's divinity. It is this Messiah (Christ) who, in the person of Jesus, shares in the human condition, especially with regard to suffering.

Because Jesus participated in human suffering, he provides an example for Peter's readers in much the same way that the *carmen Christi* of Phil 2:6–11 does for the Philippian Christians. Gorman has written much on Philippians, even referring to 2:6–11 as "Paul's master story."²³ Gorman argues that this master story is also Paul's story as well as that of the Philippians. The story serves to affirm the believers' participation in Christ and in God's mission to the world, especially in light of the pressures the Christians faced to conform to Roman ways. "Perhaps Paul worries that the Philippians will stop confessing that Jesus, rather than Caesar, is Lord and therefore return to public behaviors that demonstrate their loyalty to Rome and their acceptance of Roman values and ideologies—the Roman 'gospel,' the Roman master narrative."²⁴

The pressure of 1 Peter's readers to conform to the Roman way of life is present throughout the letter, and 1 Pet 2:21–25 functions similarly in the letter as Phil 2:6–11 does in its context. Jesus, who suffered but did not retaliate, serves as the ultimate example for Peter's readers. There are several references in 1 Peter to the suffering of Jesus (e.g., 1:11; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1), but 2:21–25 is one that clearly has Isaiah's Suffering Servant in view, even citing Isa 53:5:

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

Richard Bauckham asserts that Phil 2:6–11 reflects a Christian understanding of salvation and the mission of God found in Isaiah's Suffering Servant.²⁵ Early Christians, Bauckham argues, interpreted the person and mission of Jesus through the lens of Isaiah 40–66, equating the Servant of the Lord with

23. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 12; Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 115.

24. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 114–15.

25. *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 197–210.

Jesus Christ. Consequently, Phil 2:6–11 is Paul's way of describing how "the career of the Servant of the Lord, his suffering, humiliation, death and exaltation, is the way in which the sovereignty of the one true God comes to be acknowledged by all."²⁶ The suffering of Jesus is testimony of God's sovereignty, and the suffering of the followers of Jesus is testimony of their allegiance to Christ. The phrase at the start of 1 Pet 2:21, "for to this you have been called" points back to the abuse described in v. 20 and indicates that suffering is not meaningless; it serves a purpose. That purpose is found when considering the suffering of Christ. Indeed, in 1 Pet 2:21–25 we read how suffering characterized the ministry of the Messiah. What Christ went through on earth was for others—even slaves—and provides an example for encouragement and motivation. First Peter 2:21–25 focuses upon the catalytic impact that suffering can have; that is, in the same way that Christ serves as an example for Christian slaves because he endured unjust treatment, the attitude of these slaves during the heat of oppression can also be a witness to onlookers (2:15). Slaves are called to follow in the footsteps of Christ as 1 Pet 2:21–25 does not emphasize the resurrection of Christ but rather his death. Peter encourages his readers, in 2:21–25 and elsewhere, that in their suffering they are participating in Jesus by following in the footsteps of their Lord.

κοινωνία—in Suffering and in Glory

Twice in 1 Peter the language of sharing, specifically κοινωνία or its cognates, occurs (4:13 and 5:1), and points to participation in suffering as well as in glory. Gorman concludes that, "the Pauline language of κοινωνία indicates a deep participation in Christ, especially in his death, that is shared with other believers and that comes to fruition in concrete practices of sacrificial, generous self-giving love and even suffering."²⁷ Peter's language of κοινωνία functions similarly in that believers, together, share in Christ's suffering and also demonstrate self-giving love (1:22; 2:17; 3:8; 4:8; 5:14).²⁸ For Peter, participation in the sufferings of Christ is a cause for great rejoicing.²⁹ Suffering itself is not

26. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 206.

27. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 31.

28. In addition to Peter's explicit love language (i.e., φιλαδελφία and ἀγάπη), he employs other language of self-giving and mutuality (e.g., ὁμόφρων, συμπαθής, εὐσπλαγχνος, and ταπεινότης) in 3:8; ταπεινοφροσύνην in 5:5; ταπεινώθητε in 5:6).

29. Joyful celebration is clearly emphasized in 4:13, as Peter twice uses the verb χαίρω ("rejoice") and also the verb ἀγαλλιάω ("be exceedingly joyful"). Cf. Jas 1:2 and Phil 4:4 (Gorman's evaluation of κοινωνία emerges chiefly from his study of Philippians).

enjoyable; Peter is not a masochist. Rejoicing is possible, however, because through suffering, the faithful follower of Jesus is assured eternal reward—an inheritance (1:4)—when Christ returns. Peter's readers suffer because of their identification with Jesus and are encouraged to endure their suffering with hope.

In 1 Pet 4:16, Peter admonishes the audience not to be ashamed if they suffer for bearing the name "Christian." The word Χριστιανός is rare in the NT (elsewhere only at Acts 11:26; 26:28), and most likely was initially an epithet, coined by outsiders.³⁰ But Peter attempts to turn an insult into a title of honor. David Horrell observes that, "The label Χριστιανός is a stigmatizing label associated not with a facet of personal identity—such as disability or disfigurement—but with a feature of social identity deriving from group membership. In relation to the term Χριστιανός, one thing that is interesting is that it is outsiders who heighten the salience of this label not only by coining it in the first place but also by making it, in judicial settings, *the* crucial identifier that determines whether a person is or is not a social deviant, whether they can be permitted to remain in society or not."³¹ Horrell considers the work of social science and suggests that the use of Χριστιανός in 1 Pet 4:16 is an example of "the strategy of changing the values assigned to the attributes of the group, so that comparisons which were previously negative are now perceived as positive. . . . In other words terms and designators with a negative social-identity value are retained, but reclaimed and reinterpreted, with what we may perhaps call polemical pride, as positive ones."³² A derogatory term is converted into a badge of honor. Shively T. J. Smith applies similar reasoning suggesting, "The cosmology of 1 Peter functions as a narrative of knowledge in which diaspora is transformed from a punitive and embarrassing situation to a condition of being the legitimate people of God. Instead of titles such as 'foreigner' and 'Christian' being pejorative and limiting, the letter tells them to embrace these as markers of the diaspora-Christian situation."³³

Rather than enduring the shame heaped upon them by outsiders, Peter's

30. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 268–69. Michaels points out that the formation "Christian" is analogous to "Herodian," indicating "partisans of Christ" (268). But see Elias J. Bickerman who argues that the Antiochene Christians coined the term themselves ("The Name of Christians," *HTR* 42 [1949]: 109–124).

31. David G. Horrell, "The Label Χριστιανός: 1 Peter 4:16 and the Formation of Christian Identity," *JBL* 126 (2007): 377 (emphasis original).

32. Horrell, "The Label Χριστιανός," 379.

33. Shively T. J. Smith, *Strangers to Family: Diaspora and 1 Peter's Invention of God's Household* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 42.

readers were to find honor in their identification with Christ, even as they endured suffering. After their suffering, which Peter refers to as "a little while" (1 Pet 5:10), there will be glory. "To participate with Christ in suffering is to place oneself in the pattern of Christ's career as Peter portrays it. Drinking deeply from the scriptural wells of the Righteous Sufferer, Peter has plotted a path from suffering to glory for Jesus."³⁴ That path is emphasized in 1 Pet 3:18–22, even though vv. 19–21 are the subject of much confusion and discussion.³⁵ What is clear, in what may be part of a hymn or creedal statement, is that Christ's path starts with suffering (v. 18) and ends with exaltation (v. 22), as is the case with Phil 2:6–11.

Peter's readers are to follow the same path, from suffering to glory. Peter's other use of *κοινωνία* is in 1 Pet 5:1 where Peter, after acknowledging his role as a witness of the sufferings of Christ, asserts that he will share in the glory yet to be unveiled. In the meantime, the Christian family witnesses for Jesus through its humility (5:2–6). I say "family" because Peter's final section is full of familial language: "older" (5:1); "younger" (5:5); ἀδελφότης "fellowship of sisters and brothers" (5:9); "brother" (5:12); "she" or "sister" (5:13). The Christians to whom Peter writes are, as Gorman might put it, an *apologia* for the gospel.³⁶ It is also through the language of family—especially new birth (1:3)—that Peter gets at another aspect of participation: holiness.

Members of a New Family, Characterized by Holiness

While the term "Christian" reflects an allegiance to Christ, with believers sharing in the Lord's suffering and shame, the language of family amplifies the relationship. First Peter opens with what might appear to be contrasting descriptors of the recipients of the letter.³⁷ On the one hand, the first readers of the letter are described as "elect" (ἐκλεκτός), a designation intended to recall the unique relationship of God to God's OT people. This election, based upon God's foreknowledge (1 Pet 1:2), foreshadows descriptions that appear later in the letter, such as the echo of Exod 19:5–6 and reference to Hos 2:23 found in 1 Pet 2:9–10. Election indicates divine initiative. God calls people to live in a

34. Green, *1 Peter*, 154–55.

35. See Edwards, *1 Peter*, 158–67.

36. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 139–40. Gorman refers to the Philippians as an *apologia* for the gospel, particularly through suffering—Paul's and theirs.

37. The commentaries, including my own (Edwards, *1 Peter*) discuss the terms ἐκλεκτός, παρεπίδημος, διασπορά, and πάροικος (1 Pet 2:11) in more detail. My goal here is to emphasize kinship with God.

way that is distinct from the broader society, and that way of life is characterized by holiness (1:15–16). On the other hand, Peter refers to his audience as “exiles of the dispersion” (παρεπιδήμοις διασποράς, 1:1).³⁸ Such language suggests distance, perhaps even from God.

Diaspora implies expulsion from a people’s homeland. Shively Smith, after tracing the meaning of “diaspora” from its earliest usage with regard to Israel, points out that “social and cultural intellectual circles broadened the meaning of diaspora to encompass the migration and dispersal patterns of contemporary migrating populations (e.g., Africans, Armenians, Hispanics, Turks), not just Jews.”³⁹ Given the history of Israel’s relationship to land, diaspora might be viewed as punishment. If diaspora is a form of exile or forced migration, it might be reasonable to conclude that God was responsible for the removal of God’s people from a particular geographic location. Smith, however, does not view dispersion as divine punishment. She explores terms from the Hebrew Bible related to exile and captivity (i.e., גולה, גלות, and גלות) and concludes that “diaspora” “is not used to translate those Hebrew words denoting exile and captivity. It also does not describe the tangible political and militaristic circumstances that gave rise to it like foreign conquests and mass deportations.”⁴⁰ Although “diaspora” does mean “dispersion,” the emphasis, particularly in 1 Peter, is distance from the dominant culture, not distance from God. Therefore, “elect exiles of the dispersion” is not a contradiction; rather, it describes the dynamic tension these early Christians faced. These people are not called into a relationship with God while simultaneously being pushed away by God. On the contrary, because of their calling (i.e., election), they are being alienated by the world (i.e., diaspora). As those rejected by society yet chosen by God, 1 Peter’s readers are shown to be like their Lord, who was the stone rejected by humans but chosen and honored by God (2:4). One of the contributions of 1 Peter is to describe how Christians participate with God while experiencing rejection and the heat of oppression (1:6–7; 4:12).

Familial language is used throughout 1 Peter to explain God’s affirmation of these elect exiles of the dispersion and to highlight their participation with God. In addition to family language found in chapter 5 (mentioned at the end of the section above), Peter refers to believers as those who experience new

38. Smith offers the hyphenated “elect-foreigners” as a “conjoined substantive.” She designates the recipients as “elect-foreigners of the Diaspora” (*Strangers to Family*, 20). Whether or not the terms are taken as a compound noun, they still suggest a contradiction, or at least some ambiguity.

39. Smith, *Strangers to Family*, 7.

40. Smith, *Strangers to Family*, 7.

birth (1:3, 23) and share in the family inheritance (1:4). Furthermore, Peter refers to God as Father (e.g., 1:2, 17) and to the believers as "obedient children" (1:14). Additionally, the church is called "household" (4:17). Participation in 1 Peter includes becoming part of a new family and adopting the values and behaviors of Jesus Christ, the model member of the family. In the opening chapter, when Peter refers to "new birth" (1:3, 23), he uses the only NT occurrences of the word, ἀναγεννάω ("beget again"). However, the concept of spiritual new birth is common in the NT, most notably in the Gospel of John (e.g., John 3:3–7).⁴¹

In *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*, Gorman continues his exploration of theosis and mission.⁴² He seems to have discovered what Collins has observed: "The Johannine corpus in the New Testament has many parallels with the Pauline corpus in terms of the themes of adoption and Christification, even if the vocabulary and phraseology are different."⁴³ Regarding the image of new birth, Gorman writes that, "those who are brought into relationship with Jesus receive the Spirit and become children of God, both of which imply participation in the divine life and sharing in the divine 'DNA.' Such sharing in God's life and such family resemblance imply participation in God's activity, or mission."⁴⁴ Indeed, new birth means a new family identity. In 1 Peter, this new identity entails deliverance "from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors" (1:18) and a commitment to holiness (1:16). "Filiation" is the technical term indicating the status of believers as children of God and is related to the concept of theosis, or deification. In the Pauline literature, adoption (υιοθεσία) is the metaphor indicating filiation (Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5). In 1 Peter filiation is described as new birth. Those who become children of God take on attributes of God, including holiness.⁴⁵

First Peter 1:16 echoes the OT Levitical command, "Be holy, for I am holy" (Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26). This command is linked to the notion of new birth, which is prominent in the first chapter of 1 Peter (noted above). The Christian community is described as children whose character is that of obe-

41. See Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 539–44; Matthew Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings*, AnBib 72 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1977), esp. 163–213 (where Vellanickal details the Gospel of John's language of new birth).

42. Michael J. Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018).

43. Collins, *Partaking in Divine Nature*, 46.

44. Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 56.

45. See Collins, *Partaking in Divine Nature*, 27–28.

dience to God (1 Pet 1:14).⁴⁶ God, the One who calls, is holy, and it is God's holiness that provides the foundation for the behavior of Peter's readers (1:15). First Peter employs the vocabulary of holiness and purity throughout the letter, using ἅγιος (and its cognates), as well as related words: ἄμωμος ("unblemished") and ἄσπιλος ("spotless") in 1:19 and καθαρός ("pure") in 1:22. Elliott catalogs 1 Peter's vocabulary of holiness and observes, "In 1 Peter, holiness is stressed as a paramount quality uniting believers with God and Jesus Christ and distinguishing them from nonbelievers."⁴⁷ Indeed, holiness indicates obedience to God but is not simply conformity to a code; holiness is the result of the relationship people have with God. Believers who are called into a relationship with God (1:1–2, 15; 2:9; 5:10), through new birth (i.e., filiation), are commanded to be holy. Holiness is evidence of union with Christ and leads to noticeable distinction from the broader culture. Holiness is devotion to God that results in separation from what is common or profane. That separation is based on the people of God becoming like God. Scot McKnight asserts that, "Holiness cannot be reduced to separation or difference. At a deeper level, holiness means 'devoted.'"⁴⁸ Regarding holiness in the OT, Morna Hooker observes, "in summoning Israel to be his people, God demanded that they should share his 'otherness.' They must 'consecrate' themselves to him—make themselves holy."⁴⁹ Both Hooker and McKnight suggest holiness is first of all devotion to God, or consecration. Hooker defines holiness as "living according to the revealed character of God" (5). She further explains that holiness for Israel did not mean being aloof and cutting off outsiders, but instead living in such a way as to reveal God's character to the other nations (5–6). With the revelation of Jesus Christ we find out what God is like, so "for the Christian, the command to 'be holy as I am holy,' is a command to be like Christ" (12). Gorman's observations surrounding holiness in Paul resonate with those of Hooker: "As a Jew Paul knows that to be holy is to be *Godlike*; as a Jew in Christ, he knows that to be holy is to be *Christlike*."⁵⁰

The holiness of Christian communities should be a witness to unbelievers.

46. The phrase τέκνα ὑπακοῆς ("children of obedience") is a Semitic construction where "obedience" is an essential quality of "children."

47. Elliott, *1 Peter*, 361.

48. Scot McKnight, *A Fellowship of Differents: Showing the World God's Design for Life Together* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 117.

49. Morna D. Hooker, *Holiness and Mission: Learning from the Early Church about Mission in the City* (London: SCM, 2010), 4. Hereafter, page references are given in parentheses in the text.

50. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 113 (emphasis Gorman's).

Those who observe Christian believers ought to get some sense of what God values and what Jesus is like. This is to say that holiness has a missional component.⁵¹ The community that 1 Peter addresses has the noble but challenging task of modeling Christlike behavior in hostile territory. The suffering of the believers, largely in the form of marginalization and verbal assault from unbelievers, is a direct result of the community's allegiance to Christ. As followers of Christ, the community withdraws from social activities that dishonor God (1 Pet 4:2–4) yet lives as model citizens who respect the government (2:13–17), even though the slaves and Christian wives within the community were prevented from enjoying the benefits of actual citizenship.

Betsy Bauman-Martin points out the vulnerability of the Christian community addressed in 1 Peter under the Roman Empire:

1 Peter was written in a time of, and for an audience that experienced, imperialism (an ideology that upholds the legitimacy of the economic and military control of one country by another), and colonialism (a practice which results from imperialism, specifically the settlement of groups from the more dominant country in the country of the conquered, often for means of control). Asia Minor, the site of the audience for 1 Peter, had experienced imperialism since the time of Alexander the Great and colonialism in the form of taxation and new religious demands, extraction of resources, including human ones, less autonomy for governors, and overall imperial supervision.⁵²

Peter's audience, whose status was that of alien members of diaspora, were in a vulnerable position because their allegiance was to Jesus and not to the empire. It is from their vulnerable position that the early Christians to whom Peter writes witness to what Jesus is like. Gorman observes, with respect to Paul's Letter to the Romans, that the church challenged, albeit implicitly, the values of the Roman Empire.⁵³ The same could be said of 1 Peter's community. People without power or prestige rebuffed the allure of Roman society because life in Christ was more attractive, valuable, and rewarding. There is, of course, much more that could be said about how 1 Peter's community lived as witnesses of the *missio Dei*, but that is beyond the scope of this essay. In any case, 1 Peter

51. See Andy Johnson, *Holiness and the Missio Dei* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016).

52. Betsy Bauman-Martin, "Speaking Jewish: Postcolonial Aliens and Strangers in First Peter," in *Reading First Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of First Peter*, ed. Robert L. Webb, LNTS 364 (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 157.

53. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 293–95.

affirms what Gorman says about Romans: "Theosis is political. It is counter- and alter-cultural. It is missional."⁵⁴

Conclusions

I set out in this essay to demonstrate that 1 Peter's message resonates with Paul's, particularly with regard to participation in Christ. One can see the similarities without having to conclude that Peter merely copied Paul. It may be that 1 Peter and Paul are working from a common Christian tradition. But even though Peter does not necessarily borrow directly from Paul, we can employ Pauline studies as a helpful framework to gain insight into 1 Peter. Michael Gorman's work on theosis in Paul helps to provide a lens and language to explore salvation as participation in 1 Peter, as well as the nature of Christian mission under the Roman Empire.

Believers' participation in Christ follows from Christ's participation in the human condition. Whereas Phil 2:6–11 describes Christ's participation in humanity from Paul's perspective, 1 Pet 2:21–24 fills a similar role in 1 Peter. Christ, who suffered unjustly and did not retaliate, serves as a model for the entire Christian community but especially slaves, who faced the likelihood of physical abuse along with the verbal abuse other Christians experienced (1 Pet 2:20). Sharing in Christ includes conforming to Christ's behavior in the world. The believers in 1 Peter are admonished throughout the letter to participate in Christ. The formal language of sharing, *κοινωνία*, which appears much in Paul, also appears in 1 Peter and points to both participation in suffering as well as in glory. As the believers take on the shame of public scorn, bearing the epithet "Christian," they transform an insult into a badge of honor. The Christians participate in Christ's suffering (4:13) but look forward with joy (4:13; cf. 1:5–6, 8).

The language of family, which permeates 1 Peter, also describes what participation in Christ means. The family, with God as Father, produces obedient children who are holy like their Father. These children are holy not simply because of what they do or what they avoid but because they have a new nature; they have been born anew (1:3, 23). And children will receive an inheritance (1:4).

There is more to be said about 1 Peter and participation that is too much for one essay. For example, 1 Peter has been called a "baptism homily."⁵⁵ A brief

54. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 294.

55. See Horrell, *1 Peter*, 7–8.

discussion of baptism occurs at 1 Pet 3:21. Baptism, as Gorman points out, is by its nature a participatory rite, identifying the believer with Christ and the Christian community.⁵⁶ There may be more to be explored concerning 1 Peter's depiction of baptism as participation in Christ. Furthermore, the fact that the Christian community in 1 Peter is called upon to be witnesses for Christ among hostile unbelievers, requires more missional readings of the letter.⁵⁷

56. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 26–27.

57. See, e.g., Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011) and Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012).